

***Rules, rights and responsibilities:  
Becoming ‘responsible’ students  
in upper-primary school  
contexts***

by

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made. All research procedures reported in the thesis have received approval from the relevant Ethics Committee/s.

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*What we have to face is that the more we 'manage' students' behaviour and try to make them do what we say, the more difficult it is for them to become morally sophisticated people who think for themselves and care about others*

(Kohn, 2006[1996], p.62)

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates how the discourses embedded in education policy and mediated through principal and teacher pedagogy work to shape upper-primary students' understandings and experiences of responsibility for self and others. The study analyses findings from a poststructuralist educational ethnography undertaken in three case study sites from Catholic, Independent and State schooling sectors. These case study schools are located in a regional city in the Australian state of New South Wales. The study critically examines how every day, taken-for-granted, discursive practices of policy-makers, teachers and students work to construct ir/responsible subjectivities. Data was generated through observational field notes, semi-structured individual or focus-group interviews with principals, teachers and students, and document archiving. The study is situated in a policy context in which national, state and school-level policies shape definitions of responsibility applied in schooling contexts. The study explores how such definitions are mediated through pedagogies applied and rationalised by educators, and also considers how students negotiate often contradictory discourses of responsibility in order to understand and become 'responsible' subjects. The study highlights distinctions between pedagogies of control that normalise compliance and submission through practices of surveillance, punishment and reward; and pedagogies of agency and alterity that facilitate students' understandings of ethical responsibility by offering opportunities for negotiation, encouragement, emotional labour and open dialogue. It is argued throughout the thesis that such negotiation is a complex and often impossible task as students are simultaneously expected to unquestionably conform to authority on the one hand and exercise their independence and ethical deliberation on the other. Furthermore, educators also face institutional pressures to shape their pedagogies in ways that encourage conformity and control over responsibility. The research explores themes proposed in the MCEETYA (now MCEECDYA) 2008 *Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians* and contributes new knowledge about socio-cultural factors that enable and constrain primary school children's understandings and experiences of 'responsibility' and how this may impact on the achievement of national goals.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Responsibility is a term that makes a significant appearance in Australian education policy and practice. In a context increasingly shaped by neoliberal and neoconservative discourses emphasising productivity, accountability, standardisation and conformity, educators are expected to teach values like responsibility to the nation's school students, while students are expected to demonstrate 'responsibility' for themselves, others and the environment in accordance with socio-political definitions. For example, the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, Science & Training [DEST]<sup>1</sup>, 2005) implemented by the Howard Liberal Government, defines 'responsibility' as "'be[ing] accountable for one's own actions, resolv[ing] differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribut[ing] to society and to civic life, tak[ing] care of the environment' (p.4). The value of responsibility has been further supported by subsequent governments through the *Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA]<sup>2</sup>, 2008) which states that "[i]mproving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to our nation's social and economic prosperity and will position our young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives" (p.8). While these policies undergo analysis, they also inform the definition of responsibility applied in this thesis in order to acknowledge the potential influence of policy definitions on student understandings and experiences of responsibility in primary school settings.

Key educational studies reviewed in Chapter 2 are also drawn on to inform my definition of responsibility. Here, responsibility is understood as personal *and* collective/social/communal (Allan, 2006; Osler, 2000; Scales, Blyth, Berkas & Kielsmeier, 2000; Romi, Lewis & Katz, 2009) and facilitated through empowerment (Po-Ying, 2007), opportunities for participation in decision-making processes (Bacon, 1993; Lewis, 2001; Osler, 2000), service-learning (Scales et al., 2000) and scaffolding/support (Po-Ying, 2007; Rasku-Puttonen, Eteläpelto, Arvaja, & Häkkinen, 2003); rather than coercion (Bacon,

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the Department of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Currently the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA].

1993; Lewis, 2001; Po-Ying, 2007; Roache & Lewis, 2011; Romi, et al., 2009), punishment or reward (Kohn, 1993; Osler, 2000).

The philosophical insights of Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler further conceptualise responsibility as an ethical relation between self and other. The work of Foucault illuminates how responsible subjects are constructed through schooling processes and raises necessary questions about how discursive ‘truths’ about what responsibility is or ought to be are established, maintained, resisted and reconfigured. The work of Levinas offers insights on how the preontological ‘demand’ to take responsibility for the other may be ambivalently ignored or heeded by students. The recent work of Judith Butler brings Foucauldian questions of responsibility into productive dialogue with Levinasian questions of vulnerability, ambivalence and opacity. In such ways, these theorists (albeit differentially) subvert traditional understandings of norm-based ethics at the macro level in order to re-conceptualise responsibility as an ethical relation between self and other at the micro level.

Through engagement with such sources, a key definitional proposition of this thesis is that responsibility involves an unconditional response to the needs of self *and* other (including the environment). While this definition frames my research and interview questions, I also remain open to the definitions, understandings and experiences that participants bring with them. In light of the multiple ways in which responsibility is defined within discourses of education policy, education research and ethical theory, the over-arching research question for this study is:

***How do the discourses embedded in education policy and mediated through principal and teacher pedagogy work to shape upper-primary students’ understandings and experiences of responsibility for self and others?***

In order to fully investigate this question, and to develop a nuanced understanding of the social and political contexts within which the research is situated, the following sub-questions are also considered:

- ▶ How is student responsibility constructed in educational policy contexts and policy documents?
- ▶ How do teachers, principals and others within the school environment construct and communicate understandings of student responsibility?
- ▶ What pedagogic and relational factors shape student responses to discourses of responsibility within their school communities?

In order to address these research questions, this study employs a poststructuralist educational ethnography as detailed in Chapter 4. Such a methodological approach is particularly conducive to critically examining how the everyday, taken-for-granted, discursive practices of policy-makers, teachers and students work to construct notions of responsibility. Multiple methods of data collection/generation such as document archiving, participant observation, and semi-structured individual or focus group interviews are applied in order to contextualise and cross-reference the data. Government and school policies are archived in order to consider the ways in which student responsibility is represented in the broader socio-political context and local school contexts. Student understandings and experiences (past and/or present) of responsibility are documented through observation fieldnotes and focus group discussions. Principal and teacher constructions and communication of their understandings of student responsibility are explored through individual interviews. A multi-level approach to data analysis is also undertaken through the application of thematic discourse analysis from a number of theoretical perspectives including that of Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler.

Data is analysed in five separate but interrelated chapters in order to critically explore the discourses informing upper-primary students' understandings and experiences of responsibility for self and other. Chapter 5 draws on national, state and school-level education policy in order to consider how the current socio-political context shapes education policy and how education policy in turn shapes the definitions of responsibility applied in schooling contexts. Chapters 6-8 draw on observation fieldnotes and principal/teacher interviews in order to explore how such definitions are mediated through power relations (including those of gender) between students, peers and educators, and the pedagogies applied and justified by principals and teachers in ways that effect student *experiences* of responsibility. Chapter 6 particularly considers how

‘pedagogies of control’ can work to normalise obedient discourses of responsibility through surveillance, punishment and reward. Chapter 7 examines how ‘pedagogies of agency’ have the potential to facilitate ethical responsibility through negotiation/choice, encouragement and opportunity. Chapter 8 considers how ‘pedagogies of alterity’ can work to facilitate ethical responsibility through welcoming and learning from the other via emotional labour and open dialogue. Taking all of these socio-political and pedagogical influences into account, Chapter 9 draws on observation fieldnotes and student focus-group discussions to explore how students negotiate contradictory discourses of responsibility in order to *understand* and become ‘responsible’ subjects.

It is argued throughout that such negotiation is a complex and often ‘impossible’ (Youdell, 2006a) task as students are simultaneously expected to unquestionably conform to authority on the one hand and exercise their independence and ethical deliberation on the other. Furthermore, teachers and principals face institutional and societal pressures to: 1) keep their classes under control by maintaining some degree of hierarchical authority; and 2) ensure their students achieve in high-stakes standardised tests (i.e. NAPLAN) on standardised content (i.e. National Curriculum). Such pressures work to constrain the potential for educators to engage with students in ways that are more open and unconditional and therefore more likely to encourage student responsibility.

Such lines of analysis and argument are based on data collected from 3 primary schools in the same regional city of NSW. In the following sections, I hope to paint realistic if necessarily incomplete portraits of the city and schools in which I undertook my fieldwork. This is done in order to contextualise the data and the geographic and demographic factors which may shape student understandings and experiences of responsibility.

### **Greenvale City:**

Greenvale City is located in the Western Region countryside of NSW. Travelling east to west by car in order to reach this destination, it seems as if the long, winding highway rips through the natural landscape like a never-ending scar – a physical and metaphoric remnant of colonisation infamously connected to this area. While the journey is quite scenic, it can also be dangerous for humans and animals alike. This danger is evidenced by the crosses left in memory of loved ones lost to car accidents as well as the many

instances of animal 'road-kill' lying on or beside the road. Of course, it does not help that the long stretches of flat and relatively treeless farmland can become monotonous for some, or that many vehicles tend to speed along this stretch of road. I am frequently overtaken while driving on the speed-limit and my mechanic says that my speedometer is just fine. Perhaps the annual V8 car-racing event that occurs in the area has something to do with the 'lead foot' tendencies of some of the locals and visitors. As similarly noted by Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006), young men 'beyond the metropolis' particularly enjoy doing 'laps' (p.110) or 'mainies' down the main street of town. Perhaps such wry scepticism on my behalf is a result of the fact that I have lived, attended school and university and worked in Greenvale City and its surrounding area for around 20 years. As such, I have much contextual knowledge and experience to inform my study. However, I realise that there may be many things I take for granted as a local that a visitor may not and discussions with my supervisor (a visitor) have been helpful in this regard.

Having survived the journey to Greenvale City, you will find it lying peacefully on sweeping plains, pleasantly encircled by surrounding hills through which the 'fairy lights' of night-time twinkle invitingly. The laid-back nature of country living is further reflected in the wide streets which make for relatively stress-free driving and parking compared to major cities like Sydney. Even the 'busy-ness' of the main streets is mediated by the close proximity to beautiful and extensive parks. These parks are maintained to a high standard, assisted by access to a relatively steady water supply. However, this access has not led to complacency as (according to the Council website and personal experience) this city also supports a wide range of sustainable living and environmental programs – particularly water-wise, solar power and recycling initiatives. In such ways, Greenvale City reinforces 'wholesome' discourses about country towns. As noted by Kenway et al. (2006), "...places beyond the metropolis are nostalgically contrasted with city life and seen as uncomplicated, safe, community-minded, clean, green and grounded in nature" (p.2).

Although it is supposed to be one of Australia's oldest and fastest growing regional centres (according to the Council website); my experience of this city with its population of approximately 30 000 – 40 000 is that it is small enough to be welcoming and friendly – but also small enough for many people to know your business (whether you want them to or not). It is a common occurrence to bump into people whom you or your family know whilst shopping 'down town' or having your hair done at one of the

salons – and coincidentally, my hairdresser is married to the then-Mayor and now-Local MP. Therefore, it is easy to feel a part of the community but also under constant surveillance. While agriculture continues to be a key industry in the area, education is now the largest sector (according to the Council website) complete with a university, 5 secondary schools, around 20 primary schools and about 30 early child-hood/care centres. It is therefore not surprising that 40% of the population is aged 0-24 (in 2009 – see the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2010a, 2010b). About 52% of the total population has post-school qualifications, with professional and then technician/trade occupations being the most common forms of employment (Census, 2006 – cited in ABS, 2010a, 2010b). The average taxable income is around \$48 000 (in 2008 – ABS, 2010a, 2010b) and the unemployment rate is around 4.6% (in 2009 – ABS, 2010a, 2010b).

Something I have taken for granted but which my supervisor (as a visitor) has brought to my attention is the predominantly ‘white’ population so evident in Greenvale City. This observation is further reinforced by Census data (2006 – cited in ABS, 2010a, 2010b) on the city where there is apparently only about 8% born overseas and 3% speaking a language other than English at home. While a regional geographic position may have something to do with this minimal cultural diversity, it is surprising that only about 4% of the population are estimated to be Indigenous Australians (Census, 2006 – cited in ABS, 2010a, 2010b) – especially with such cultural and historical connections to the area. Yet, upon further reflection, I must acknowledge that a couple of suburbs in Mid-West City are often negatively associated with Indigenous Australians and higher-than-average levels of crime and I remember hearing somewhere that the Indigenous Australian population of Greenvale City were/are being encouraged to relocate to another larger regional city further west where there is a larger number of Indigenous Australians and Indigenous-specific facilities. In such ways, discourses of racial intolerance and marginalisation by “...backward, prejudiced and violent ‘rednecks’...” (Kenway et al., 2006, p.2) are reinforced. According to the Council website, cultural diversity (however minimal) is nevertheless supported via: being a Refugee Welcome Zone; providing support groups and committees for those belonging to diverse cultures (including migrants, refugees, and Indigenous Australians); and having a sister city relationship with a Japanese city which is celebrated through exchange programs and a Japanese Garden. Although the 20 or so formal places of worship are all churches of the differing Christian denominations – this religious influence may be one of the contributing factors for

around 25% of the population undertaking unpaid voluntary work for an organisation or group. While I recognise that there may also be other religious, spiritual or secular reasons for undertaking this work, I must also acknowledge that I particularly experienced an emphasis on charity and community-service during my time attending a Catholic all-girls' school in the area.

Having also attended Independent and State schools as a student, I wanted to undertake fieldwork in all three sectors, not for comparative purposes but rather to develop a broad picture of the diverse ways in which students learn about responsibility for self and other. Portraits of Riverside School (accessed Term 3, 2010), Fairview School (Term 1, 2011) and Northfield School (Term 2, 2011) will now be briefly sketched and framed through my experiences as a researcher.

### **Riverside School**

Riverside School is a co-educational Catholic primary school with a paradoxically strict and relaxed atmosphere. On the one hand, strictness is reflected in formal expectations to uphold the Catholic ethos through the maintenance of morality and self-discipline including personal neatness and participation in Scripture lessons, prayers, grace and Mass services. Reminders of this duty are symbolically represented in pictures or statues of the crucifix which are displayed around the school, including an 'Aboriginal Spiritual Cross' painted by a local artist. In contrast, the acceptance of non-Catholic student enrolments and my presence as a researcher, as well as the prevalence of 'humorous' banter between the principal and his staff (mostly female) and students suggests a more relaxed environment. The centring of this banter around rival NRL football teams in addition to mufti-day themes like 'Footy Colours' work to validate a masculinist culture. While the classrooms in this school are enclosed and easily observable spaces; the grassy, sprawling playground including an oval (dominated by older male students playing football or soccer), trees, vegetable garden, play equipment, cricket nets and tennis/basketball court, afford students some spaces to be less supervised by the teacher/s on duty. The new hall (under construction during fieldwork) is shared with a nearby primary school and this sense of sharing is also reflected in support for charities including a sponsor child. Students with specialist roles or leadership positions are generally trusted to fulfil their duties (sometimes during class time) without direct



supervision. Student leadership is formally structured through elected positions including School Captains, House Captains, Student Representative Council (SRC) members, Library Monitors (Yr 5 only) and Buddies (Yr 5). There are also student-initiated volunteer groups with an emphasis on environmental sustainability like The Garden Club (an all-boy group who look after the vegetable garden), The Garbologists (an all-boy group who monitor bin use including recycling and compost as well as pick up any garbage left on the playground at the end of lunch) and The Plastologists (an all-girl version of the Garbologists). Such an environmental emphasis is supported by the school's Reduce-Reuse-Recycle policy. For a stylised and de-identified topographic map of the school, please see Appendix 1.

### **Fairview School:**

Fairview School is a church-affiliated co-educational K-12 college. Having attended this school as a student in Yrs 6-8, it was a nostalgic experience visiting it again as a researcher. The enduring elite, conservative, pastoral-village atmosphere of the school is reflected in green manicured grounds, white picket-fencing and a quaint Chapel framed by rose-bushes and trees. The grounds are extensive enough for some paddocks to be allocated horses and cattle (especially for Senior School students undertaking Agriculture subjects) and space provided for a few vegetable gardens (primarily for use by Junior School students). The Junior School and main oval are surrounded by expensive metal white-picket fencing in order to delineate boundaries of safety or prestige. Thus, Junior School children are protected from the outside world and the main oval is highlighted as an arena for sporting prowess – particularly for the older Senior School males who play the exalted sport of rugby. Although there is also a dominant male presence on the Junior School oval, many mixed-gendered games of handball occur on the cement walkways surrounding the classrooms. Chapel services and Scripture classes occur on a weekly basis and attendance seems to be expected of all students, even though (according to the school website) students from a range of faiths and cultures are welcomed into the school. It is also expected that students bring a small donation for the offertory during Chapel services which is then used to sponsor charities. The Junior School and Senior School students share access to other specialist facilities including: the library; school gymnasium; pool; netball and tennis courts; the Independent Learning Centre (encompassing Gifted & Talented Education and Learning Support); and Japanese, music,

drama and computer rooms. As older students, Yr 5 and 6ers are informally given the freedom or privilege to walk between their home classroom and specialist PE, Japanese, music and drama lessons without any direct supervision – despite the Yr 6 students' preceding reputation for disruptiveness. Formal leadership opportunities exist for students through elected positions such as School Captains, House Captains, Student Representative Council (SRC) members, Peer Support and Buddies. For a stylised and de-identified topographic map of the school, please see Appendix 2.

### **Northfield School:**

Northfield School is a co-educational government school with an atmosphere of opportunity, diversity and efficiency. As a demonstration school to the local university, Northfield provides many undergraduate student-teachers with opportunities for practicum/internship experience. Encouragement and support of the diversity and leadership of all students is one of the reasons provided by staff and students for not having formal School/House Captain roles but a more informal Leadership Team instead. In terms of diversity, Northfield offers Korean language classes and provides a Support Unit with individual learning programs for students with special intellectual and behavioural needs, as well as opportunities for interaction with the rest of the student body. However, the fence surrounding the Support Unit continues to function as a boundary of separation between 'normal' and 'other' students. While weekly Scripture classes are available for participating students, the more secular Virtues and Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) programs are said to be implemented at the whole-school level. The school grounds are positioned on a small block close to the city centre. Due to limited space and large student numbers, efficiency is evident in many two-storey buildings and the division of the playground into age-group sections. For example, only Yrs 3-6 students are allowed to play on the oval during playtime while younger students are allowed to play on other grass areas or the undercover basketball/netball court and asphalt areas. Such compact space restrictions and lack of natural landscape seem more reminiscent of a metropolitan rather than country setting. Further, the occasional mention of Yr 5 & 6 boys fighting on the playground over things like honour and territory is reminiscent of the concrete-jungle gangs from *Westside Story* (minus the guns and knives). Although a new hall was built during fieldwork, resource allocation is still limited

with not all classes having access to interactive white-board technology. Yet despite space and resource limitations, the school engages in significant fundraising for a range of charities and supports creativity through music and dance in events like the Western Region Dance Festival. For a stylised and de-identified topographic map of the school, please see Appendix 3.

The proceeding literature review provides an overview of key school ethnographies in order to consider potential factors (i.e. peer interaction, the formal/‘hidden’ curriculum, and identity construction along normalised lines of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity/race) influencing student understandings and experiences of responsibility. Such considerations are followed by specific engagement with recent research on responsibility in schooling contexts in order to inform and situate this study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Even the brief sketches of participating schools presented in the Introduction contain evidence of contextual factors, processes and tensions that may work to shape 'responsible' student understandings, experiences and identities. Such insights require a presence 'in the field' in order to observe and confer with people in their everyday environments. Ethnographic research enables such opportunities and is therefore the main focus of my literature review on student responsibility. Firstly, I engage with key ethnographic studies in school settings. While these studies do not have a direct focus on responsibility, they offer important insights into potential factors influencing student understandings and experiences of 'responsibility.' A number of the studies reviewed here share a concern with the subjectivating practices of schooling, and students' negotiation of these. Secondly, having canvassed such issues potentially impacting on students, I engage more specifically with the recent research on responsibility in schooling contexts in order to inform and situate my own study.

### **2.1 Ethnographic studies in school settings**

There is an extensive body of literature reporting the findings of school ethnographies. A chronological review of major studies within this literature is undertaken here in order to consider issues of relevance to student responsibility such as peer interaction, the formal and 'hidden' curriculum, and identity construction along normalised lines of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity/race.

#### *2.1.1 Life in playgrounds and classrooms: Early educational ethnographies*

School has long been considered a site in which children learn social norms within the contexts of classroom and playground interactions. The early ethnographic work of Iona and Peter Opie (1959, 1969) highlights the significance of children's games, songs and rhymes to schooling as a site of cultural (re)production, where children exchange views and ideas, resist authority, and reproduce, subvert and contest accepted norms. In *The lore and language of schoolchildren* (1959), Opie & Opie present a collection of observations and examples of British schoolchildren's lore and rhymes occurring in the 1950s. Such traditions remain relatively identical across historic and geographic lines and circulate at an exceptionally fast pace across the country through a child-to-child

grapevine “not intended for adult ears” (Opie & Opie, 1959, p.1). Children’s culture is thus an effective means through which ideas about self and the social are formed and adult authority circumvented. When contextual variations or adaptations do occur due to regional slang and dialect, the new child is ultimately expected to assimilate into, rather than challenge “the ‘legislative’ language of his new playmates” (Opie & Opie, 1959, p.15). Further, wit, repartee, guile, parody, nicknames, jeers, superstitions, codes, rites and pranks are applied, not just for fun, but to establish and maintain social/moral hierarchies according to peer norms (which may mirror or resist broader societal norms). Such operations of power in everyday language and play pressure children to shape their identities and conduct in certain ways or risk suffering rejection, isolation or humiliation from their peers.

In the study of *Children’s games in street and playground* (1969) involving observations of more than 10 000 British children in the 1960s, Opie & Opie suggest that games organised or overseen by adults in a playground context tend to place more emphasis on individual performance and responsibility. Here, children’s play “...is markedly more aggressive than when they are in the street or in the wild places” (p.13). In fact, children are more inclined to exhibit “...thoughtfulness and respect...” (Opie & Opie, 1969, p.14) towards each other in unsupervised contexts. Nevertheless, games created/played by children without adult interference often entail rules and an element of competition. For example, games usually involve one player being singled out as ‘it’ (Opie & Opie, 1969, p.20) from which the others run or hide. Where random or chance selection such as ‘dipping’ (Opie & Opie, 1969, p.28) is not applied, bias or stigmatisation based on dominant discourses may be the deciding factor in who is designated this role. However, children also like games involving luck rather than ability and “...games which restart almost automatically, so that everybody is given a new chance” (Opie & Opie, 1969, p.2). Such games can provide opportunities where “...a child can exert himself without having to explain himself, he can be a good player without having to think whether he is a popular person, he can find himself being a useful partner to someone of whom he is ordinarily afraid...” (Opie & Opie, 1969, p.3). As such, games may offer a space in which children can overcome, even if temporarily, social hierarchies, categories and boundaries. Opie & Opie’s vivid descriptions of children’s games include an important consideration of: increased surveillance and pressure for individual performance and responsibility sometimes resulting in aggression and resistance to authority; the power

struggles and reinforcement of self/Other boundaries and hierarchies produced in children's play; and examples of how games create potential opportunities for children to challenge or overcome these social boundaries and hierarchies.

Just as children learn a great deal about self and other through playground activities which are not part of the formal school curriculum, a great deal of social learning also takes place through everyday classroom practices. Philip Jackson's (1968) study on *Life in classrooms* is considered to be "a notable landmark in that it [helps] to legitimate and popularize the hidden curriculum as an area of study" (Gordon, et al., 2001, p.189). According to Jackson (1968), the hidden curriculum is "...the crowds, the praise, and the power that combine to give a distinct flavour to classroom life...which each student (and teacher) must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school" (pp.33-34). Drawing on observations, student questionnaires and teacher interviews generated in primary school classrooms, as well as other empirical studies, Jackson investigates how such implicit, taken-for-granted and often subconscious assumptions and practices of teachers in everyday schooling are particularly powerful in shaping student dispositions, attitudes and behaviours according to social values, expectations (including perceived IQ and ability) and norms. Students therefore implicitly learn to control or deny their desires, avoid social distractions, maintain contradictory allegiances to teachers and peers, and conform to their place in unequal power relations between teachers and students. Jackson's work raises important questions about how students learn the unacknowledged and unarticulated expectations of schooling (such as the responsibilities of staff and students), and ways in which the social learning that takes place can tacitly undermine the expressed intentions of schooling.

### *2.1.2 Schooling and social class from Willis to Ball*

Paul Willis' ethnographic study entitled *Learning to Labour* (1977) follows English working-class males throughout the last two years of school and their initiation into the workforce in order to investigate how and why many "working class kids get working class jobs" (p.1). From case study, interview, group discussion and participant observation methods, it soon becomes evident that non-conformist 'lads' (as they call themselves) affirm their working-class heritage by resisting traditional middle-class school culture. These lads express caged resentment and opposition to authority; usually reject, target,

or feel superior to conformist, ethnic, and female students; regularly 'wag' school or class in order to challenge the school expectation of doing work; believe they have ownership of the ability to have a 'laff' (laugh) and make others 'laff'; use clothes, cigarettes and alcohol to demarcate themselves as too mature and worldly for school and therefore requiring money (via jobs or stealing) to pay for these items. This 'working-class counter-school culture' (Willis, 1977, p.11) is one of the main reasons attributed to the social reproduction of working-class students' negative attitudes towards and experiences of school. However, traditional middle-class school culture also contributes to student dissatisfaction by basing content and pedagogies on the assumption that "...all are trying to achieve broadly the same aims in life" (Willis, 1977, p.147). Willis' study is therefore an important contribution to knowledge about how broader culture and school culture discursively interact to reinforce class divisions and attitudinal or behavioural stereotypes, thereby limiting educational and vocational opportunities. In terms of educational opportunities, it could be posited that teachers may be reluctant to entrust students who express 'counter-school' attitudes with roles or tasks requiring responsibility. On the other hand, students may be reluctant to conform to school/teacher/middle-class definitions of responsibility in the first place.

Social divisions are also investigated by Peter Woods in *The Divided School* (1979). This case study of a secondary school with a majority of working-class students, explores the interpersonal relationships and processes in school, and how the appearance of unity and common purpose in a setting full of divisions (i.e. teachers/students, public/private, direction/choice) is created and maintained through devices such as laughter, rhetoric and standardisation. Woods notes that the multiple and context-dependent perspectives of teachers and students may be unified through the use of laughter. However, such a strategy is also divisively employed by students in order to boost morale, cure boredom, defeat enemies or rebel against the standardised and idealised subjectivities encouraged by the institution. This subversive use of laughter is similar to the 'laffing' of Willis' (1977) 'lads.' Although freedom of choice for all is a part of the school's unification rhetoric, this freedom is actually very limited in reality and compounded by processes of standardisation and streaming which favour students from middle-class backgrounds. Such standardisation or assumed unity is also evident in school rules (explicit and implicit) which involve "...a continuous process of *negotiation* and bargaining" (Woods, 1979, p.242). Such negotiation requires awareness and critique of authoritative and dominant

discourses inherent in the 'hidden curriculum' (see Jackson, 1968). Woods' study raises some significant questions with regard to multiple perspectives and their implications for student subjectivities; the different functions of laughter; the potential for disjuncture between rhetoric and practice of freedom of choice; and how divisions within school can be masked by the appearance of unity. He also highlights how this assumed unity – including school rules, which usually relate in some way to responsibility – can be challenged and negotiated by students.

Some of these same concerns are taken up by Stephen Ball in his case-study of *Beachside Comprehensive* (1981), an English co-educational secondary school. Through participant observation, interviews with pupils and teachers, small-scale questionnaires, and analysis of school records and registers, the school's claim of alliance to a 'fairer' comprehensive school system is rendered moot by its processes of selection, separation and ranking of pupils in ways similar to the selective school system. The ranking of students into 'bands' (otherwise known as 'streaming') means that each group experiences considerable differences in curriculum, syllabus content and coverage, pedagogical methods, and relational/moral perception by teachers. Band 1 students are perceived by teachers as having higher intellectual, social, behavioural and moral abilities or qualities and are therefore provided opportunities to engage with more syllabus content and discussion-based pedagogies than their band 2 and 3 counterparts. As "...classroom behaviour [is] shown often to be of greater importance than academic performance in the ranking of pupils" (Ball, 1981, p.285); then working-class students demonstrating what is perceived by teachers to be 'anti-school' (Ball, 1981, p.285) behaviour similar to that found in Willis' (1977) study, are more likely to be placed in lower bands. The institutionalisation of such classed separation and ranking of students is noted by Ball to inhibit social mixing, self-esteem and vocational opportunities, while continuing the social reproduction of educational inequalities along classed lines. Ball's study therefore offers an important insight into how social divisions and stereotypes based on class can be reinforced by schooling, especially in the ways that students are perceived, grouped, taught and treated. It also shows how student behaviour (which is often connected to responsibility) rather than academic aptitude impacts on the ranking of students and how rhetoric of inclusion rather than selection may not always be realised in practice.



### 2.1.3 Schooling and subjectivities from Davies to Nayak & Kehily

School-based ethnographies conducted from the late 1980s onward begin to show greater interest in the ways that student subjectivities are shaped through school experiences, with many studies conducted during this period turning to questions of gender and sexuality and their significance to shaping the self in relation to the social. In *Frogs and snails and feminist tales* (1989), Bronwyn Davies explores how and why preschool children become masculine or feminine and "...how the male-female duality is established and maintained" (p.25). Through observations and recorded readings of feminist stories such as *The Paper Bag Princess* with Australian pre-school children, it is found that children verbalise and physically embody a 'moral order' based on dominant discourses of gender which are assumed to be the result of physiological differences (Davies, 1989, pp.27-29, 114). Such discourses are said to emphasise masculine power and dominance over public space, femininity, and alternative versions of masculinity; alongside feminine acceptance of their passive place in the domestic sphere and the loss and suffering caused by males. As a female researcher, Davies (1989) even finds herself on the receiving end of "[t]he vehemence of male maintenance of their power position" during the 'Queen of the World' episode (p.94) when she challenges this gender hierarchy. In fact, any deviation from the moral order is met with 'category-maintenance work' (Davies, 1989, p.29), such as teasing or more serious forms of verbal/physical intimidation, in order to encourage conformity to gender norms. While some students, such as 'George' playing in the home corner and 'Joanne' playing within a predominantly male group on the playground, already seem to be challenging the male-female dualism; Davies argues that poststructuralist insights into the discursive practices of society can further assist both children and adults to recognise that there are multiple discourses and expressions of identity. Davies' work contributes significantly to understanding how gender is constructed and contested from the earliest stages of children's formal school experience.

In follow-up interviews with children from the preschool studied in *Frogs and snails and feminist tales* (1989) four years later, as well as study groups of fifth and sixth grade primary school children, Davies again draws on feminist stories and poststructuralist theory in *Shards of glass* (1993) to critically explore the processes of gender construction and contestation in the primary school context. The progression from pre-school to primary school is said to involve both continuity and change in

perceptions of gender. For instance, while most boys want to maintain dominance over females and do so in destructively sexualised and oppressive ways; not all male children can attain or in fact want this sort of dominance. And while “[a]ll the girls know the victim storyline and some are willing to play it out,” this acceptance is not necessarily equated with powerlessness as girls endeavour to express their agency and withstand sexism through strategies like “pulling rank or class...telling the boys they don’t know what they are talking about, celebrating femininity, achieving success in the things only boys are supposed to do and, finally, ignoring it” (Davies, 1993, p.87). However, Davies cautions that ignoring boys’ sexist behaviour may in fact reinforce it as a normal and excusable practice. She suggests that awareness of how such multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses impact on identity construction may work to challenge the limiting, stereotypical and hierarchical gender binary. Such multiplicity is acknowledged by Woods (1979) in terms of the context-dependent perspectives of students and teachers. This study by Davies offers some particularly important insights into the discursive practices involved in gender construction, maintenance and negotiation in primary school children and how these practices influence the children’s treatment of self and others.

Valerie Walkerdine draws on ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methods, psychoanalysis and poststructuralist insights, to explore the construction and negotiation of *Schoolgirl fictions* (1990) involving gender-class norms apparent in schools, homes and popular culture. With reference to Foucauldian notions of surveillance from *Discipline & Punish* (1977), Walkerdine argues that dichotomies of rational/irrational, masculine/feminine, normal/pathological work to produce self-regulating subjects in the school context. The teacher must therefore provide a ‘facilitating environment’ (Walkerdine, 1990, p.34) for the production of rational, self-regulating subjects who are “...responsible for their own actions...” (Walkerdine, 1990, p.8) and are free to make decisions in line with socially-constructed norms. This ‘illusion of choice’ (Walkerdine, 1990, p.49) is similarly noted by Woods (1979) in terms of school rhetoric, and is often inconsistent with the reality faced by students from marginalised backgrounds. These students must negotiate a ‘splitting’ (Walkerdine, 1990, p.47) between school and family expectations or become pathologised “targets of intervention” (Walkerdine, 1990, p.29) or exclusion. However, opportunities for agency and resistance do exist depending on the contexts, discourses and ‘nexus of subjectivities’ (Walkerdine, 1990, p.3) at play. For example, the graphic sexist comments made by two four-year-old boys to a female

student and female teacher are excused by the teacher as 'natural' and 'normal' behaviour for that age (Walkerdine, 1990, pp.4-6). The boys therefore utilise dominant discourses of masculinity to resist the teacher's institutional authority and assert their masculine difference and power by positioning her as a sexualised object of the male gaze. In another example, a secondary female student openly challenges the knowledge of her male mathematics teacher – who later describes her 'active' and risky engagement as a demonstration of 'brilliance' (Walkerdine, 1990, pp.50-51). This female student therefore appropriates dominant discourses of masculine assertiveness in order to gain status in the classroom. On the other hand, "[g]irls who gain power through becoming like the teacher cannot possibly challenge the rules for which they are responsible as guardian" (Walkerdine, 1990, p.52). Instead, they must suppress conflict and claims to brilliance by remaining passive, good, 'nice, kind and helpful' (Walkerdine, 1990, p.51). Thus, being constituted as 'responsible' may paradoxically involve status through personal sacrifice. Walkerdine therefore offers some useful insights into processes of normalisation and how these may be negotiated by students and teachers through a range of subjectivities and power relations.

Barrie Thorne's ethnographic study on *Gender play* (1993) investigates the social construction of gender in two UK elementary/primary schools. From observations in the classroom, playground, lunchroom and hallways, it is evident that there is "...extensive separation between girls and boys within contemporary coeducational schools" (Thorne, 1993, p.46). Although teachers may mix male and female students the majority of the time, this is contradicted by the frequent separation of students into 'boys' and 'girls' lines and sides of the room. This gender division is mirrored by students who predominantly choose to eat lunch in same-gender groups and play in different areas of the playground with males dominating most of the space. This male dominance over public space is also noted by Davies (1989, 1993). Competitions and chasing games, similar to some of those described by Opie and Opie (1969), usually involve girls versus boys, sometimes with the added pollution ritual of 'cooties' (Thorne, 1993, p.73). Early adolescence seems to further divide the genders, with a stronger focus on heterosexualities. Much 'borderwork' is undertaken by students to reinforce gender categories where individuals who attempt to 'cross the gender divide' are usually labelled and teased (Thorne, 1993, pp.53, 64, 114-119). This is similar to the 'category-maintenance work' evident in Davies' (1989, 1993) studies on gender. Elements required

for the successful crossing of the gender divide are said to include: wanting to participate, persistence, and skill. Depending on the context, students may invoke or suppress different and often contradictory aspects of their identities either to fit within or cross boundaries. Such malleable, multifaceted and contextual identities are similarly discussed by Woods (1979), Davies (1989, 1993) and Walkerdine (1990). Thorne's work is particularly useful in explaining how gender divisions impact on the use of space and student social relations/interaction – particularly the 'borderwork' which demands the embodied demonstration of dominant discourses.

Máirtín Mac An Ghaill takes up similar concerns in his ethnographic study on *The making of men* (1994) in the UK secondary school context. From observations, informal discussions and semi-structured interviews with Yr 11 male and female students, teachers and parents, it is apparent that school environments – in connection with family structure and relationships, peer networks, culture (including class, race and ethnicity), public policy, popular culture and students themselves – play a role in the construction, reinforcement or contestation of dominant gender and sexuality discourses. Despite the internal tensions inherent in peer groups, the social pressure or support they offer has a particularly strong influence on whether an individual conforms to or challenges gender and sexuality hierarchies – especially in informal sites like the playground which often serve as 'battlegrounds' for gaining or defending reputation (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p.127). Although there seems to have been a shift in education and local labour markets to allow/encourage new and diverse masculinities, this is contradicted by the institutionalised or normalised power and privilege ascribed to heterosexual males, including teacher assumptions that "...dominant forms of heterosexual masculinity are unproblematic" (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p.155). On the contrary, such dominant forms of heterosexual masculinity are noted by Mac An Ghaill to be problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is suggested that heterosexual masculinity is actually a very fragile, unstable, fractured and contextually ambivalent construction. Secondly, and similar to Davies' (1989) findings in the pre-school context, it is argued that heterosexual masculinity is often displayed and defined through misogyny and homophobia where students who are female, alternatively masculine, or gay are positioned as 'victims' and/or blamed as the 'problem' (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, pp.136, 153). An emancipatory curriculum is therefore advocated as a way to meaningfully explore the power relations and agency involved in sexuality and gender construction. Mac An Ghaill raises important

questions concerning the normalisation of dominant discourses on gender and sexuality, how they may be reinforced/challenged in the school setting under the influence of teachers and peers, and how they may impact on identity construction.

In *Racism, gender identities and young children* (1998), Paul Connolly explores the effects of racism on gender identity construction and negotiation by 5 and 6 year old children attending an English multi-ethnic, inner-city primary school. Through observation and interviews, it is evident that race, gender and sexuality discourses in broader society are reproduced in the primary school context in ways that often negatively impact on identity construction. The racialised discourse of Black people as volatile, aggressive and physical is reproduced in the school setting where Black students (especially boys) seem to be the focus of discipline “...even for things they have not done” (Connolly, 1998, p.13). Such unfair stigmatisation works to decrease educational performance and increase resistance of Black students who are also attacked (mostly among boys) or excluded (mostly among girls) by their peers. On the other hand, the racialised discourse of South Asian people as obedient, quiet, hard-working and culturally ‘Other’ is reproduced at school where boys are constituted as effeminate, girls are depicted as feminine but alien and inferior, and any status obtained through academic achievement is often outweighed by exclusion and abuse from peers. Despite such obstacles and depending on the context, some of these children carve out alternative identity spaces, challenge dominant constructions, or struggle to gain acceptance into discourses – processes that could be made easier through a whole-school approach to anti-racism and gender equality that considers broader socio-political influences as advocated by Connolly. This study therefore contributes significant understandings on the effects of race, gender and sexuality discourses on identity construction and treatment by peers and teachers – particularly the often unsubstantiated disciplining of Black students.

Martin Mills’ study on *Challenging violence in schools* (2001) problematises the normalisation of dominant forms of masculinity involving violence, misogyny and homophobia. Through interviews with boys, teachers and others involved in gender and violence programmes conducted in two Australian state high schools, it is evident that schools are sites where dominant masculinities are reproduced, reinforced and contested. Peer validation and fear of failure and subordination are suggested as major incentives for demonstrating hegemonic masculinity – particularly as the status it confers is fragile and requires constant signification. Those who fail to continuously prove this

masculinity through violent, misogynistic or homophobic means are likely to experience 'boundary policing' (Mills, 2001, p.4) similar to 'category-maintenance work' (Davies, 1989) or 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993) in order to pull them back into line. Such pressure applied by peers, parents, teachers and/or wider societal discourses mean that boys are not solely responsible for the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinities. In fact, Mills argues that men should be particularly responsible for challenging gender injustice and the legitimacy of the privilege they experience. In order to minimise the occurrence of violent displays of masculinity, schools are urged to engage with critical pedagogies founded on respect, expand the concept of masculinity to include and value non-violent alternatives, and provide a safe and supportive environment for students and teachers to engage with these alternatives. While special programmes developed and conducted by teachers or outside experts may be met with some resistance, peer-oriented programmes where older students are trained to organise and conduct sessions are found to be a more effective way of encouraging ownership and role-modelling of hegemonic critique. Mills' work highlights the need to be aware of broader contextual factors and to be open to alternative expressions of masculinity that do not involve demonstrations of power over females, but instead encourage positive relations between genders and sexualities. He also offers some insights into the potential of peer-lead programmes to encourage ownership and responsibility in addressing social justice issues.

In *Schooling the rustbelt kids* (2002), Pat Thompson explores the difficulties experienced by disadvantaged schools located in low-income areas of Adelaide, South Australia. The rust-belt of disadvantage is realised at the community level through a concentration of unemployment and a dilution of health, welfare and police services. As schools are "...indelibly coloured by particular neighbourhoods..." (Thompson, 2002, p.17), then this community disadvantage is reflected at the school level through a lack of learning resources (especially IT) and staff who genuinely want to teach in rustbelt schools. It is suggested that teacher reluctance may have something to do with the characterisation (particularly by the media) of disadvantaged schools as troubled. While media hype should be read with a critical eye and acknowledgment of contextual specificities, according to the rustbelt school principals interviewed by Thompson, many of these schools actually do spend a greater amount of time maintaining social order than more privileged schools. The disengagement of students from these schools is attributed to familial loss of faith in government and schools to offer solutions to disadvantage –

particularly as neoliberal policies of standardisation and meritocracy actually widen the divide between those who 'succeed' and those who 'fail.' In order to address these issues, Thompson suggests that there is a need for systemic change to better support those living and working in rustbelt communities. Thompson (2002) acknowledges that the main limitation of her work is a lack of engagement with the power relations involved in 'researching down' on disadvantaged communities (p.xiv). The utilisation of poststructuralist theory may help enable such considerations of power relations between researchers and participants. However, she does provide some useful insights into how disinterestedness in education in low-socio-economic areas can be reinforced due to lack of adequate/appropriate resources, services and support systems.

Mary Jane Kehily's study of *Sexuality, gender and schooling* (2002) investigates how students interpret and negotiate sexuality and gender in the UK secondary school context. She argues that this process of meaning-making "...produces individual and collective identities, that is to say, ways of developing a sense of self in relation to others" (Kehily, 2002, p.1). Such relations between self and other will be theorised in terms of ethical responsibility in the following chapter. From ethnographic fieldwork, focus group discussions and engagement with Foucauldian and Butlerian concepts, it is further explained that schools are discursive sites in which students actively produce and perform sex-gender identities within informal peer group cultures in ways that challenge dominant discourses of student innocence and reinforce dominant discourses of heterosexuality and gender. The significant influence of same-sex peer groups on identity construction is also particularly noted by Opie & Opie (1959), Mac An Ghail (1994) and Mills (2001). Thus, male students may feel obliged to enact a heterosexual masculinity that is clearly demarcated from femininity and homosexuality, in order to protect themselves from "potentially emasculating experiences" (Kehily, 2002, p.208) or the 'category-maintenance work' (Davies, 1989, 1993), 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993) and 'boundary-policing' (Mills, 2001) of their peers. Female students are found to be more concerned about their sexual reputation than males and more readily appropriate popular culture such as teenage magazines in order to collectively construct and perform gender displays. Kehily's work provides some important insights into how peer pressure and popular culture can discursively influence gender displays and student identities in the school context.

In *Being normal is the only way to be* (2005), Wayne Martino and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli explore how normalisation and surveillance impact on the identity construction and wellbeing of students in the Australian high school context. Drawing on Foucauldian theory and data obtained through an open-ended student questionnaire, it is argued that the majority of students reject what seems to be an inevitable push to conform to white middle-class norms in order to 'be normal.' Teachers' possession and application of hierarchical power to this end is also critiqued by students (especially boys) as a barrier to encouraging student responsibility and initiative. However, such normalising surveillance is conducted not only by staff, but also by peers. Peer surveillance or 'boundary policing' (see Mills, 2001) occurs through harassment or bullying of students who fail to measure up to sexuality and gender 'norms.' Boys are particularly engaged in rebellious acts and homophobic, sexualised and misogynistic humour and bullying in order to establish and maintain a 'cool', heterosexual, hierarchical status (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005, p.34). Such bullying is often ignored or excused as 'immature' thereby justifying it as 'normal' (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005, p.149 – see also Davies, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990). While girls are found to increasingly transgress teacher constructions of 'normal' femininity as passive, disciplined and compliant; they remain objects of the male gaze through the self-surveillance of physical appearance (on which popularity and feminine hierarchies are also based) and heterosexual reputation. This study raises some significant questions about how students conform to or resist teacher surveillance and normalisation of white, middle-class, heterosexual and traditional gender constructions which impact on student identities and social relations.

Deborah Youdell's study on *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities* (2006) examines how the everyday discursive practices of teachers and students work to constitute and include or exclude students by reinforcing identity categories (such as race, class, sexuality, gender, ability) and dichotomies (such as good/bad, ideal/impossible). Utilising poststructuralist theory (including that of Foucault and Butler) to analyse ethnographic data from a UK secondary school and an Australian high school, it is argued that "...the inclusion of some students and the exclusion of others are inseparable because it is the constant invocation of the 'Other' that constitutes, and renders invisible, the (privileged) 'Same'" (p.137). In other words, individuals and groups define themselves by distinguishing what they are (Same) from what they are not (Other); with those in positions of privilege having more power to determine the characteristics of



(un)intelligibility. The characteristics of unintelligibility apparent in this study seem to be: white-working-class-hetero-adult-masculinity; white-working-class-hetero-(un)femininity; black femininity – portrayed as tough and a challenge to authority; and disability or special educational needs. Students who embody these characteristics are therefore excluded as ‘Other,’ deficit, or impossible learners. However, such inclusion/exclusion is noted to be contextual and contestable. Dynamic contestations between inclusion and exclusion, possible and impossible bodies, are evident in students portraying middle class-white-queer-high ability-alternative youth-culture, Indian-femininity, Oriental un-masculinity, and un-femininity. However, this agency is somewhat constrained due to the ‘endurance’ of hegemonic discourses (Youdell, 2006a, p.180). This study by Youdell significantly explains how discursive dichotomies such as good/bad, included/excluded (even responsible/irresponsible), may influence identity construction and may be accepted or challenged by students.

In *Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and femininities* (2008), Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily explore the interplay between gender, youth and popular culture and how this impacts on young peoples’ identity construction. Drawing on queer theory (especially insights from Butler and Foucault) to analyse participant observation, interview and textual/visual data, it is posited that gender performativity is a tenuous global project mediated by cultural influences and individual experiences. Despite the diversity of gender and sexuality possibilities that are increasingly apparent in popular and everyday culture, it is noted that most young men and women continue to define themselves in opposition to each other and along heterosexual lines. Such male/female and heterosexual/homosexual dualisms are discussed in other studies reviewed previously (see Davies, 1989, 1993; Thorne, 1993; Mac An Ghail, 1994; Connolly, 1998; Mills, 2001; Kehily, 2002; Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Youdell, 2006a). In the school context, educational policy, curriculum resources and pedagogy “...are regulatory technologies for the production and incitement of sex and gender identities” (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p.125). For example, there is a notable absence of alternative sex and gender discourses from the official curriculum; while the informal curriculum involves male banter among some male staff and students as a means of establishing a hierarchy or rapport based on dominant discourses of masculinity. In response to these regulatory technologies, young people “...utilize multiple gender strategies that may be complicit, resistant or ironic of the prevailing gender order” (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p.197).

Consumption practices are argued to be a strategy through which gender and identity are increasingly shaped and expressed – often in contradictory ways. Nayak and Kehily raise the important consideration of policy, curriculum resources and teaching practices as technologies of power that contribute to the regulation of certain subjectivities over others.

## **2.2 Research interested in responsibility in school settings**

Responsibility is often equated with self-regulation in psychological literature (see Armor & Taylor, 2003; Briones, Tabernero, & Arenas, 2007; Chong, 2007; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Winsler, Diaz, Atencio, McCarthy, & Adams Chabay, 2000; Gomez & Baird, 2005; Gordijn, Hindriks, Koomen Ap Dijksterhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2004; Kurman, 2001; Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007; Marc & Crundwell, 2005; Ommundsen, 2006; Tyson, 2004; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schultz, & Carver, 2003). This literature mostly employs statistical methods to measure self-regulation as a meta-cognitive process requiring the training or intervention/correction of thoughts, emotions, behaviours and attitudes in order to overcome obstacles and attain personal goals. Although some authors note contextual or environmental variables (Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007; Ommundsen, 2006; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schultz, & Carver, 2003), cultural differences (Chong, 2007; Kurman, 2001) and personal factors such as disposition and beliefs (Briones, Tabernero, & Arenas, 2007); the onus is still placed on the individual to control the self. Yet, any sense of agency derived from self-reflection and mastery (Tyson, 2004) or any sense of self-determination involving intrinsic motivation and personal values and attitudes (Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007) must still be shaped according to socio-cultural norms or else individuals risk deficit categorisation and social exclusion. While the ideal of healthy, balanced, caring individuals is a noble pursuit that transcends paradigmatic boundaries; a socio-cultural perspective allows a deeper exploration and problematisation of socio-cultural influences (including socially constructed norms) on responsibility. Therefore, the remainder of this section will focus on educational research interested in such explorations of responsibility.

In her paper on 'Children's rights, responsibilities and understandings of school discipline' (2000), Audrey Osler argues that schools need to encourage pupil consultation

and participation according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to minimise discipline issues. From quantitative questionnaire data collected from 108 secondary students and 50 primary students in five (2 primary, 3 secondary) school settings, it is noted that “[a]lmost all the primary pupils in both schools said that there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils” (Osler, 2000, p.51) while pupil-pupil respect differed significantly from school to school. Scores in both areas are found to be lower for secondary students especially boys and ethnic minority students, echoing findings from other studies on working-class male resistance to school authority (Willis, 1977) and the marginalisation of ethnic minority students (Connolly, 1998). In terms of school discipline, the majority of students from all five schools “...were aware that their school had a code of conduct and knew what standards of behaviour were expected of them” (Osler, 2000, p.52) but questioned the effectiveness of Assertive Discipline methods involving punishment and reward. Good teacher-student relationships, student councils and Circle Time meetings were seen by students as more effective strategies that encouraged confidence, involvement, a sense of personal and collective responsibility, and improved relations with others. Osler’s study particularly highlights the impact of teacher pedagogies and discipline styles on student behaviour

Peter Scales, Dale Blyth, Thomas Berkas and James Kielsmeier’s exploration of ‘The effects of service-learning on middle-school students’ social responsibility and academic success’ (2000) lead them to argue that “...service-learning can positively affect students’ social responsibility and academic success” (p.332). Drawing on social learning and experiential theories to analyse quantitative survey data obtained from 1 153 Yr 6-8 students in three US middle-schools, it is evident that students involved in service-learning maintain a higher level of social responsibility or concern for the welfare of others than students who are not engaged in such programmes. Girls particularly feel a higher sense of duty and concern for the welfare of others reinforcing notions of a “nurtur[ing], caring, servicing” femininity (Walkerdine, 1990, p.56). Regular reflection on service-learning experiences is also noted to develop stronger evaluation skills and commitment to class-work. However, the limited extensiveness of the service learning programmes is said to decrease the potential for ‘significant effects’ in terms of quantitative analysis (Scales, et al., 2000, p.354). Scales et al. offer some useful insights into the connection between service-learning opportunities and the development of social responsibility and academic skills such as reflection and evaluation.

In 'Classroom discipline and student responsibility: The students' view' (2001), Ramon Lewis draws on quantitative questionnaire data collected from students attending 21 primary schools and 21 secondary schools in the Australian context in order to explore the effects of classroom discipline on student responsibility. While secondary students are found to have significantly lower levels of responsibility, most Yr 6 primary students "...see themselves as quite responsible" and "...likely to protect rights in the classroom but less likely to encourage others to do likewise" (Lewis, 2001, p.311). Such non-reciprocity as essential to unconditional responsibility for the other will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Students who value learning and/or are female are said to behave more responsibly in class. This gender difference is similarly noted by Scales et al. (2000) in terms of social responsibility. The discipline style of the teacher is also found to have an impact on student responsibility, similar to Osler's (2000) findings on student behaviour. While coercive discipline decreases student responsibility, relationship-based discipline encourages student responsibility through the involvement of students in decision-making processes and the teacher provision of "...more non-directive hints, recognition for good behaviour, and discussion with misbehaving students, to allow them to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to work out how to behave better" (Lewis, 2001, p.312). However, Lewis' suggestion that "[t]eachers should be trying to make less responsible students more responsible through increasing their use of rewards, hints, discussion and involvement in rule setting" (Lewis, 2001, p.317) is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is unclear what types of rewards should be increased, with extrinsic rewards especially critiqued by Kohn in his seminal work *Punished by Rewards* (1993). Secondly, controlling student behaviour via discipline techniques does not necessarily ensure student understandings of responsibility or a moral will to act responsibly. Nevertheless, Lewis draws an important link between teacher discipline styles and student responsibility.

Helena Rasku-Puttonen, Anneli Eteläpelto, Maarit Arvaja, & Päivi Häkkinen's paper 'Is successful scaffolding an illusion? Shifting patterns of responsibility and control in teacher-student interaction during a long-term learning project' (2003), explores the impact of teaching styles and interactions on student responsibility. From a longitudinal case study of a school, where mixed-method data was collected from observation, interview and questionnaire, it is clear that teaching styles emphasising guidance rather than control encourage more active student communication. However, it is evident that

appropriate scaffolding is required at the beginning of the learning process in order to increase student responsibility and control. So while direct-regulation by the Controller-Teacher is more frequent and student self-regulation less frequent at the beginning of the learning process in comparison to the Guide-Teacher classroom; the opposite dynamic occurs towards the end of the learning process because the Guide-Teacher's students have not received the initial clarification and scaffolding they need to complete the task independently. While the researchers offer some useful insights into the relation between teacher instruction styles and student responsibility, they recommend that future research "...should pay more attention to social and contextual factors in teaching and learning, examining collaborative activity and shifting relations of responsibility and control" (Rasku-Puttonen, et al., 2003, p.391). Examination of national, state and school policies on responsibility; teacher pedagogies that impede and/or facilitate responsibility; and peer influences on student responsibility, may be conducive to this end.

Janice Hartwick Dressel's paper on 'Personal response and social responsibility: Responses of middle-school students to multicultural literature' (2005) forwards the argument that "[u]nless we learn how people of different cultures see the world through their own eyes, we tend to turn cultural characteristics into stereotypes" (p.761). From the quantitative analysis of surveys and written work gathered from 123 eighth-graders in a predominantly white, middle-class US middle-school, it is apparent that the majority of students like and become personally involved in multicultural novels and can empathise with protagonists from non-dominant groups. However, after the unit is completed, a large number of students maintain cultural stereotypes through paternalistic (32%) or 'othering' (50%) attitudes – suggesting an inability or reluctance to transfer empathy for fictional characters into the realm of reality (Hartwick Dressel, 2005, pp.757-758). Instead of coming to "...a better understanding of their own cultural norms or values" (Hartwick Dressel, 2005, p.758), most students reject or reshape ideas expressed in the novel that are in conflict with their own views and experiences, often "...resulting in inconsistencies or illogical conclusions" (Hartwick Dressel, 2005, p.759). While the authors make some significant points about the difficulty in challenging cultural views and biases, the focus is not so much responsibility as the title of the paper suggests. Instead, the focus seems to be on the actual responses of students to multicultural literature, and students do not seem to be asked or given the opportunity to discuss their personal responsibility in the need to critique their own values and attitudes.

In Gary Allan's thesis entitled *Responsibility for learning: students' understandings and their self-reported learning attitudes and behaviours* (2006), it is argued that "...a lack of consensus in understanding between key stakeholders groups (i.e., researchers, educators and students) still exists" (Allan, 2006, p.v). From statistical analysis of quantitative data collected from 286 primary and secondary school students in Australia via one open-ended question and two questionnaires, it is evident that "...students' understandings of responsibility for learning generally supported a primarily behavioural perspective that emphasised a high degree of application to learning and relating sociably with others in the classroom" (Allan, 2006, p.v). The idea of 'relating sociably with others' suggests a responsibility for others beyond the self which will be theorised further in Chapter 3. The emphasis on behavioural aspects of responsibility is also apparent in the work of Osler (2000) and Lewis (2001). Despite concerns expressed in the literature (and I would also add broader society) on the lack of student responsibility, "...students rated themselves to be reasonably responsible learners" (Allan, 2006, p.131). Lastly, "...students [are] likely to view themselves as responsible learners in a way that reflects their understandings of the concept" (Allan, 2006, p.180). The 'vagueness' of open-ended survey responses is acknowledged by Allan (2006) as a limitation and he therefore suggests further investigation via interview methods (p.208).

The study by Chu Po-ying (2007) on 'How students react to the power and responsibility of being decision makers in their own learning' forwards the argument that "[l]earners need to be able to foster their language proficiency on their own because a teacher will not always be available to assist learners. It is necessary for learners to understand that they are the people who have the power to improve their own learning" (Po-ying, 2007, p.226). From data gathered from Po-Ying's own fifth-year junior college students over a five year period through students' journals, in-class tape-recordings, individual interviews, questionnaires, end of semester feedback, and in-class discussion it is apparent that "[o]nce students are given opportunities to investigate their own learning, and are given their teachers' support to overcome any initial doubts and lack of confidence, they welcome this responsibility, and they soon go on to decide what puzzles they want to explore" (Po-ying, 2007, p.239). The necessity of initial teacher support or scaffolding is also noted by Rasku-Puttonen, et al. (2003). The satisfaction derived from such empowered learning experiences based on personal choice rather than coercion, is found by Po-Ying to increase student confidence and motivation. Po-Yong's study seems

more descriptive than theoretically informed and researching one's own students has limitations such as emotional investment in educational programmes and student learning, whereby it may be difficult to avoid bias. However, it raises important considerations of the potential differing effects of personal choice and coercion of students.

Shlomo Romi, Ramon Lewis & Yaakov Katz examine 'Student responsibility and classroom discipline in Australia, China, and Israel' (2009). From statistical analysis of quantitative data collected via questionnaire from 5521 grade 7-12 students and their teachers, it is found that Chinese students generally report the highest levels of responsibility, followed by Israel students and Australian students respectively. In terms of the type of responsibility, students report quite high levels of Personal Responsibility and lower levels of Communal Responsibility. This reiterates the earlier findings by Lewis (2001) but in a cross-national context. In terms of age, students in Yrs 11 and 12 report higher levels of responsibility than those in Yr 9 and 10 and similar levels of responsibility to those in Yrs 7 and 8. In terms of gender, girls report higher levels of Personal Responsibility than boys, while differences in Communal Responsibility are not statistically significant. These student self-reports on responsibility are generally validated by teachers. The discipline techniques of these teachers seem to be closely linked to the responsibility of students, where, as opposed to Aggression, "[t]eachers who are more likely to discuss misbehavior with their students, involve students in decision-making, hint when students misbehave, and recognize appropriate behavior, have students who are more responsible" (Romi, et al., 2009, p.449). The link between disciplinary techniques of the teacher and responsibility of students is a particularly important point to consider. However, as researchers and research participants are likely to have different perspectives about events and the factors that shape them, this study by Romi et al. study may have benefited from the application of observational methods. Other limitations to the study are recognised by the authors themselves and include disproportionate samples from the different countries, with the Australian sample being much larger than that of China and Israel. Thus any "...cross-national comparisons will have to be treated with caution" (Romi, et al., 2009, p.442). Cultural and contextual specificity is also noted as potentially problematic as "...conceptions of responsibility and appropriate social behaviour are very likely to vary amongst social groups and cultures" (Romi, et al., 2009, p.442).

In 'Teachers' views on the impact of classroom management on student responsibility' (2011), Joel Roache and Ramon Lewis extend upon a previous study (Lewis, 2001) involving high-school students. The resulting comparisons between student and teacher views are argued to provide significant insights into effective classroom management strategies. Statistical analysis of questionnaires distributed to 145 primary and 363 secondary teachers in Australia reveal that teachers (predominantly secondary) are perceived by their students to aggressively or coercively punish misbehavior more frequently than they realise. Conversely, they are also perceived to discuss boundaries, encourage student involvement, and recognise/reward appropriate behaviour less frequently. Such punitive approaches to classroom management are argued to hinder rather than support student responsibility – as reported earlier by Lewis (2001). Roache & Lewis therefore raise some important concerns regarding potential disjunctures between student and teacher perceptions and experiences of classroom management and responsibility.

### **2.3 Research interested in responsibility in primary school settings**

In 'Student responsibility for learning' (1993), Charles Bacon draws on participant-observations and 52 interviews with Yr 6 and 7 students in a California middle-school to discuss student definitions of responsibility in comparison to their actual practice. Students define responsibility in terms of: doing the work (71%); obeying the rules (54%); paying attention (37%); learning or studying (27%); trying or making an effort (27%); and something that is given or taken (12%). However, such definitions often conflict with the observed reality. Students are seen and heard to resist doing what they perceive as 'boring' work through minimalist, 'good enough' or non-existent efforts. Students give the impression of paying attention or listening to their teachers but admit that they do not always do so because their teachers are 'boring.' Students are observed to mostly demonstrate responsibility (or rather tacit compliance) by obeying the rules in order to keep out of trouble. While six students depict responsibility as something to be actively 'taken,' this is contradicted by observations where the majority of students do not 'take responsibility' for their learning and are content to blame others for their failings. Only one student defines responsibility as something given to those who 'earn' it. Bacon concludes that students have limited opportunities to intrinsically 'be responsible' for



their learning in the school context. Rather, students are simply 'being held responsible' by those in positions of power and authority (i.e. teachers) resulting in boredom and frustration on behalf of students. This study highlights the importance of opportunity, ownership and control for the promotion of student responsibility; as well as potential contradictions between what is said and what is done by participants and the necessity for observation as well as interview methods.

Sonja Skelly & Jennifer Campbell Bradley's study entitled 'The Growing Phenomenon of School Gardens: Measuring Their Variation and Their Affect on Students' Sense of Responsibility and Attitudes Toward Science and the Environment' (2007) forwards the argument that "[t]eachers could use school gardens to foster students' sense of responsibility" (p.103). From quantitative analysis of surveys completed by 28 teachers and 427 third-grade students in Florida, USA, it is reported that over half (57.1%) of the teachers use gardens "...to help teach ethics including responsibility and nurturing" (Skelly & Campbell Bradley, 2007, p. 100) and that students' responsibility and environmental attitudes are very high. The authors acknowledge that "...until a comparative study of gardening students and non-gardening students is conducted, it is cautioned against inferring that the school garden is the reason for students' high sense of responsibility" (Skelly & Campbell Bradley, 2007, p. 100). Perhaps other factors like family background, peer-groups and cultural/political beliefs are more likely to contribute to the environmental awareness and responsibility of students. However, given the increasing popularity of gardening initiatives in schools – particularly vegetable gardens as noted in the Introduction – it is important to recognise the pedagogical opportunities they may offer in terms of cultivating responsibility in students.

## **2.4 Concluding comments**

This literature review aims to cover some of the key educational ethnographic studies and their main contributions to the field, as well as recent research involving an explicit focus on responsibility in school (especially primary school) settings. The key educational ethnographic studies offer important insights into schools as sites of: cultural (re)production (Opie & Opie, 2001 [1959]) and shaping of identity (Jackson, 1968); 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968) or normalised (Connolly, 1998) assumptions and rules including social divisions (Woods, 1979) or discursive dichotomies (Youdell, 2006a) and

gendered (Connolly, 1998; Davies, 1989, 1993; Kehily, 2002; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Thorne, 1993), sexualised (Connolly, 1998; Kehily, 2002; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001), classed (Ball, 1981; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Thompson, 2002; Willis, 1977) and racialised (Connolly, 1998; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005) stereotypes and power struggles; the discursive interplay between school culture and the broader social context (Mills, 2001; Willis, 1977); the potential disjuncture between rhetoric and practice (Ball, 1981; Woods, 1979); and the multi-perspective (Woods, 1979) and context-dependent (Connolly, 1998) nature of subjectivities. While these qualitative studies provide insights into factors that may impact on student understandings and experiences of 'responsibility,' they do not have a direct focus on responsibility.

The recent research that does involve a direct focus on responsibility provides some insights into: the perceived relationship between responsibility and discipline styles (Lewis, 2001; Osler, 2000; Romi, et al., 2009); the positive effects of service learning on social responsibility and academic success (Scales, et al., 2000); how responsibility can be increasingly allocated to students with appropriate scaffolding (Rasku-Puttonen, et al., 2003); the difficulty in challenging cultural views and biases via multicultural literature (Hartwick Dressel, 2005); conflicting understandings of responsibility between researchers, educators and students (Allan, 2006); the potential differing effects of personal choice and coercion of students (Po-ying, 2007); the difference between 'being responsible' and 'being held responsible' (Bacon, 1993); and the use of school gardens to potentially foster environmental responsibility (Skelly & Campbell Bradley, 2007). However, many of these studies are concerned with pedagogies or ways of teaching responsibility in what appears to be a list of 'dos' and 'don'ts.' Critical consideration of the tensions between these pedagogies and student understandings and experiences of responsibility is largely absent. Additionally, most of these studies (Allan, 2006; Hartwick Dressel, 2005; Lewis, 2001; Osler, 2000; Rasku-Puttonen, et al., 2003; Romi, et al., 2009; Skelly & Campbell Bradley, 2007) involve 'measuring' responsibility via quantitative tools. The limitations of a quantitative approach to such a subjective topic is that it does not allow for a more detailed exploration of 'how' and 'why' questions. Surveys involving Likert scales and short written responses rarely provide opportunities for participants to clarify or elaborate on their understandings and experiences (as acknowledged by Allan, 2006). Further, lack of observation means that researchers cannot cross-reference what

participants say with what they do and must therefore 'take their word for it.' On the other hand, a qualitative, ethnographic approach can enable rich and nuanced insights into the contextual and complex meaning-making processes and practices of participants. Therefore, I hope to address the qualitative, ethnographic gap in the research literature on responsibility by employing such theory and methods in my own study. These are outlined in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Defining responsibility**

Traditional definitions of responsibility based on the ancient discourses of Plato and Socrates and theological scriptures of the 'will of God' place an emphasis on metaphysical, transcendental, essentialised ethics and a deontological moral duty to uphold these ethics by obeying rules, laws and codes of conduct (Raffoul, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003). The Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century rejected such dependence on externally-imposed ethics through Kantian and Cartesian notions of transcendently free, autonomous, rational, knowing subjects who are accountable for themselves (Biesta, 2008; Raffoul, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003; Youdell, 2006a). Combined with a modern or liberal humanist emphasis on scientific neutrality (Youdell, 2006b) and societal progress through instrumentalism (Todd, 2003) or utilitarianism (Slattery & Rapp, 2003), responsibility continues to be defined along essential, deontological and rationalistic lines.

As a complex concept, responsibility is currently understood and applied differentially across a wide range of fields including law, politics, health, religion and education. Legal definitions depict responsibility as obeying (inter)national and state laws, justifying actions based on evidence, and facing just consequences for 'unlawful' behaviours perceived to have caused harm (Hamilton, 1978 – as cited in Allan, 2006; Gailey & Falk, 2008; Gergen, 2011; Hill (Jr.), 2010; Kallen, 1942; Shoemaker, 2011). Such an emphasis on causality becomes problematic when considerations of context, coercion, self-defence, intention/accident, negligent complicity, unpredictability, self-deception, ignorance, imprudence, incapacity and non-rationality, make the attribution of blame more difficult and complex (Atfield, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2008; Gailey & Falk, 2008; Gergen, 2011; Hill (Jr.), 2010; Lazar, 2009; Locke, 1990; Shoemaker, 2011; Stemplowska, 2009). Further, conceptions of responsibility that rely on individual causality, intent and blameworthiness and fail to critique systemic factors and norms impacting on subject constitution may make it more difficult for subjects to "take responsibility for making social change rather than to look for other agents to blame instead of themselves" (Applebaum, 2012, p.620). Political definitions of responsibility similarly expect conformity (to policy guidelines) but place an emphasis on citizenship, mutual or

collective responsibility and 'giving back' to society or the 'common good' (Miller & Rose, 2008; Narveson, 2002). This 'giving back' involves the occupation of roles in the workforce and/or home that require ownership and self-regulation of specific tasks (Goodnow & Warton, 1992; Warton & Goodnow, 1991 – as cited in Allan, 2006). Such self-regulation is also apparent in the field of health (especially psychology) where responsibility is defined as autonomy over physical, mental, emotional and ethical wellbeing (Appel, 1962; Briones, Tabernero, & Arenas, 2007; Chong, 2007; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Eppert, 2010; Gailey & Falk, 2008; Gomez & Baird, 2005; Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007; Marc & Crundwell, 2005; Ommundsen, 2006; Tyson, 2004; Usher & Pajares, 2008) according to 'measurable' norms (Miller & Rose, 2008). Religious definitions of responsibility focus on faith in a transcendental being (i.e. God or gods) or state of being (i.e. nirvana/enlightenment); involving conscience, contemplation, purity of mind-body-soul as well as paradoxical freedom and disciplined adherence to doctrinal principles/duties/rituals; in order to attain or maintain spiritual wellbeing, progress and harmony (Appel, 1962; Bareau, 1955; Eppert, 2010; Foucault, 1993; Gergen, 2011; Gupta, 2002; Kallen, 1942). Such definitions of responsibility based on "[s]ocial conventions, community scrutiny, legal norms, familial obligations and religious injunctions have exercised an intense power over the human soul in past times and other cultures" (Rose, 1999, p.1).

In Western cultures, such discourses continue to govern populations, but do so in increasingly neoliberal and neoconservative ways (Apple, 2005; Miller & Rose, 2008). The neoliberal emphasis on efficiency through (re)privatisation, marketisation and individualism (Apple, 2005) has meant that "[t]he political subject is now less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is to be manifested through the free exercise of personal choice among a variety of marketed options" (Rose, 1999a, p.230). Yet this freedom of choice is actually a constrained 'contract for freedom' (Rose, 1999a, p.261) as the onus is shifted from the state onto individuals who are expected to take responsibility for themselves by making choices that align with social goals and values – particularly those of the multiple communities to which they belong (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). The 'privatization of responsibility' (Ilcan, 2009) or 'responsibilization' (Butler, 2009, p.35) therefore requires the new 'individualized and autonomized' actor to be "...both self-responsible and subject to certain emotional bonds of affinity to a circumscribed

‘network’ of other individuals unified by family ties, by locality, by moral commitment to environmental protection or animal welfare...individually sought and chosen allegiances in a cosmopolitan moral universe” (Miller & Rose, 2008, p.91). Those who cannot or do not engage in self-management according to social norms are positioned in ‘marginalised’ or ‘savage’ spaces as undesirable subjects who must be given the skills, capacities and means to actively “...take responsibility, [] show themselves capable of calculated action and choice, [and] shape their lives according to a moral code of individual responsibility and community obligation” (Miller & Rose, 2008, p.105). Although such communities are increasingly being urged to take responsibility for the welfare of their members as a result of the ‘new anti-politics of welfare’ (Rose, 1999b, p.265); this is not necessarily based on altruism but rather an obligation or ‘civic duty’ imposed by the state, where individuals and communities are expected to work together as concentric cogs in the machine of economic growth.

The neoconservative emphasis on an imagined and idealised past (Apple, 2005, 2009) is evident in recent concerns voiced by politicians, parents, educators and the general public about the moral decay of society and ‘problem youth’ (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Carlson, 2005 – as cited by Comber & Nixon, 2009). Such concerns have reinforced citizenship education and virtue program initiatives directed at young people who are considered to be developing as citizens and therefore more receptive and/or in need of greater surveillance and regulation (Besley, 2007; Biesta et al, 2009; Carlson, 2005 – as cited by Comber & Nixon, 2009). The standardisation of norms, values, curriculum and assessment means that individuals are not only economically responsible for themselves and the prosperity of their nation; they are also held morally responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with social norms for the benefit of ‘the common good.’

The increasing influence of neoliberal and neoconservative discourses on contemporary society is evident in educational policy documents that emphasise civic duties of productivity, management, accountability, and adherence to social norms and expectations. Here, responsibility is largely individualised under the condition that such individual responsibility is used to further national interests. For example, the *MCEETYA Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians* (2008) states that “Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to our nation’s social and economic prosperity and will position our young people to live fulfilling, productive

and responsible lives” (p.8) including the “...manag[ement] [of] their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing” (p.9). Young Australians are therefore expected to manage themselves in ways that ensure enterprising, productive and responsible citizenship and participation in the future workforce. Such expectations are also apparent in the *National framework for values education in Australian schools* (DEST, 2005), where responsibility – one of the standardised (and therefore neoconservative) values – is defined as ‘be[ing] accountable for one’s own actions, resolv[ing] differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribut[ing] to society and to civic life, tak[ing] care of the environment’ (p. 4).

Growing concerns about climate change and sustaining life on earth means that “[e]nvironmental concern is now a rubric through which other policies are increasingly viewed...” (Smith & Pangsapa, 2008, p.4). However, due to the neoliberal prioritisation of markets and profit, such environmental concern and responsibility are exported onto individuals (Hursh & Henderson, 2011), as are the costs. So, although the ‘Carbon Tax’ recently implemented by the Gillard Labor Government (and currently in the process of repeal by the Abbott Liberal Government) targets ‘big business/polluters’ in an effort to decrease carbon pollution in Australia; the flow-on effect of this legislation is an overall increase in the cost of living for individuals. Yet, shifting environmental responsibility onto the individual does not necessarily guarantee that they will accept it – particularly as many Australians who live in ‘the lucky country’ have a complacent ‘she’ll be right’ mentality (Salter, Venville & Longnecker, 2011, p.149). Further, the neoliberal focus on individualism contradicts any real consideration of how our actions may affect others and the environment. Instead, it is argued that changes need to be made ‘at all levels of society’ (Smith & Pangsapa, 2008, p.4) where responsibility for the environment is ‘shared’ (Salter, Venville & Longnecker, 2011, p.149) with an emphasis on interconnectedness and interdependence between all human and non-human, living and non-living things (Butler, 2009; Calarco, 2010; Lewis, Mansfield & Baudains, 2008; Llewelyn, 2010; Reid, 2007; Sallis, 2010; Salter, Venville & Longnecker, 2011; Taylor, Pacinini-Ketchabaw & Blaise, 2012). Reid (2007) particularly advocates a ‘pedagogy of responsibility’ whereby teachers are committed to “...engaging with questions of diversity, democracy and sustainability in ways that are designed to bring about change in the way that human beings live in, interact with and use the environment of the planet” (p.124).

This simultaneous expectation of accountability or responsibility for self *and* other – including the environment – is also evident in the *Values in NSW public schools* (NSW DET<sup>3</sup>, 2004b) where responsibility is defined as “being accountable for your individual and community’s actions towards yourself, others and the environment” (p.3). Although these definitions are analysed in greater detail in Chapter 5, they also inform the definition of responsibility applied in this thesis. Such contextualisation is required in order to acknowledge and facilitate dialogue on the potential influence of policy definitions on student understandings and experiences of responsibility in primary school settings. The educational research (outlined previously in my literature review) is also drawn on to inform my definition of responsibility. Here, responsibility is personal *and* collective/social/communal (Allan, 2006; Osler, 2000; Scales, Blyth, Berkas & Kielsmeier, 2000; Romi, Lewis & Katz, 2009) and facilitated through empowerment (Po-Ying, 2007), opportunities for participation in decision-making processes (Bacon, 1993; Lewis, 2001; Osler, 2000), service-learning (Scales et al., 2000) and scaffolding/support (Po-Ying, 2007; Rasku-Puttonen, Eteläpelto, Arvaja, & Häkkinen, 2003); rather than coercion (Bacon, 1993; Lewis, 2001; Po-Ying, 2007; Roache & Lewis, 2011; Romi, et al., 2009), punishment or reward (Kohn, 1993; Osler, 2000).

A key definitional proposition of this thesis is that responsibility involves recognition of and response to the needs of self *and* other. This understanding is based on our plural and universal, local and global, present and future, relational and interdependent connections to one another (Bina & Vaz, 2011; Butler, 2009; Clark Miller, 2011; Eppert, 2010; Gergen, 2011; Reid, 2007). While this definition frames my research and interview questions, I also remain open to the definitions, understandings and experiences that participants bring with them. However, in order to recognise definitional nuances, a distinction must be made between agency, ethics, morality and responsibility. Agency involves the ability or freedom to voluntarily make decisions and take action (Lazar, 2009). Ethics, derived from the word *ethos*, is a social concept involving the “...practices, beliefs, rituals, laws, and customs of a community in and through which a community tries to achieve whatever ends and purposes it has” (Gupta, 2002, p.5). This may include the entire human community beyond national or cultural boundaries (Atfield, 2009) or borderless, complexly differentiated ‘thin communities’ where

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<sup>3</sup> Now the NSW Department of Education and Communities [DEC].



“...difference and unity are balanced” (Olssen, 2007, pp.208-209). Morality, on the other hand, “...concerns the inner life of the individual...[including] attitude, motives, and intentions” (Gupta, 2002, p.5), requires self-awareness (Locke, 1990), and can be the basis for individualised blame or praise (Lazar, 2009; Locke, 1990; Stemplowska, 2009). Both ethics and morality are required for the existence of each other (Bina & Vaz, 2011; Gergen, 2011; Gupta, 2002; Hill (Jr.), 2010; Narveson, 2002) in that social ethics work to shape and guide personal morality while personal morality is required to maintain, challenge or revise social ethics.

Individuals cannot ‘take’ responsibility or respond to these personal and social demands without the agency or opportunity to do so (Chinnery & Bai, 2008; Gupta, 2002; Johansen, 2011; Lazar, 2009). This agency means that individuals may choose how they respond to such demands; although these choices are mediated by others, shaped by contextual factors, and may not necessarily be socially ethical or personally moral (Stemplowska, 2009). However, according to the literature, if individuals intentionally (Gailey & Falk, 2008; Locke, 1990) consider and base their choices on foreseeable, cumulative and avoidable risks or impacts (Atfield, 2009; Lazar, 2009) and on virtuously ‘doing the right thing’ (Aristotle – as cited by Bina & Vaz, 2011, p.174) for themselves, their community and the environment, they are said to be engaging with ethical and moral responsibility. Any difficulties that arise in taking ethical or moral responsibility for self and other/s are often referred to as ethical or moral dilemmas. In such situations, choices may be limited and unable to completely satisfy the needs of self and other (Clark Miller, 2011).

Recognition of the complexity of such ethical or moral situations, coupled with scepticism towards normative universalisms (i.e. neoconservatism) and egological/individualistic orientations (i.e. neoliberalism), is evident in what could be termed ‘postmodern,’ ‘existentialist’ and ‘poststructuralist’ notions of ethics and responsibility (Davies, 2006; Hofmeyr, 2005; Popke, 2003; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Raffoul, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003). These perspectives work to problematise the ‘ethicality of ethics’ in order to generate notions of responsibility that are more: tangibly and contextually based on responding to a call or event beyond the self (Raffoul, 2010); inclusive of difference (Popke, 2003; Slattery & Rapp, 2003); and concerned with social justice (Applebaum, 2012; Todd, 2003; Youdell, 2006b). Theorists including Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler (albeit differentially) subvert traditional

understandings of norm-based ethics at the macro level in order to redefine responsibility as an ethical relation between self and other at the micro level. Responsibility will now be conceptualised through engagement with such theories on the social construction of self and other.

### **3.2 Responsibility and theories of self and other**

This thesis is informed by the philosophical insights of Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler. The focus of my research, with its interest in children's development of social understandings about responsibility for self and other, requires consideration of key questions concerning how subjectivities are shaped within schooling contexts. Therefore, my analysis of data draws on the work of Michel Foucault in order to illuminate the construction of responsible subjects through schooling processes and raise necessary questions about how discursive 'truths' about what responsibility is or ought to be are established, maintained, resisted and reconfigured. This study is also concerned with questions of ethical relations, and how responses to others within a given scene of encounter are to be understood. Here I utilise the work of Emmanuel Levinas in order to explore the 'demand' to take responsibility for the other which may be ambivalently ignored or heeded by the subject. The recent work of Judith Butler brings Foucauldian questions of responsibility into productive dialogue with Levinasian questions of vulnerability, ambivalence and opacity. Extending on both perspectives, Butler especially considers how 'regimes of truth' (Foucault) through 'performatives' (Butler) impact on the recognisability or intelligibility of 'the Face of the other' (Levinas). As gender norms and stereotypes significantly shape student constructions and experiences of responsibility, it is also necessary to engage with gender theory and research as a frame of reference for data analysis. Here I particularly draw on the conceptual work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.

#### *3.2.1 Subjectivity*

The term 'subjectivity' is often applied interchangeably (and mistakenly) with the term 'identity' (Bell, 2002). However, an important ideological distinction exists between the two. As outlined previously, the modernist centering of autonomous, rational individuals capable of making their own decisions is premised on the notion of 'identity' as coherent,

singular, fixed, natural or biological, and “psychologically unique” (Bell, 2002, p.210). Many fields continue to draw on this concept of identity, particularly the field of psychology – although environmental factors are increasingly being taken into account (Bell, 2002). However, the coherence and autonomy of the modern individual has nevertheless depended on maintaining dualisms between identity/difference and self/other through “...repeated attempts to define, categorize and classify a range of deviant ‘others’” (Popke, 2003, p.302) in de-humanising ways (Biesta, 2008). Social justice issues (i.e. slavery, Holocaust, war) arising from such dichotomies have called for new and critical ways to conceptualise the individual in relation to the other. Postmodern notions of ‘subjectivity’ acknowledge that individuals are ‘subjected’ or constituted through the mediation and negotiation of external influences including context, social norms and others (Bell, 2002; Popke, 2003). Subjectivity is therefore relational rather than rational, historically and discursively produced rather than biologically-determined, fluid rather than fixed, plural rather than singular, and ambiguous rather than coherent (Bell, 2002; Popke, 2003; Slattery & Rapp, 2003).

In the field of education, students and teachers continue to be depicted in modernist or liberal humanist terms as “autonomous individuals with varying degrees of freedom to choose what kind of person to be” (Davies, 2006, p.425). In order to critique this notion, a range of approaches under the umbrella term of ‘postmodernism’ (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p.11) work to deconstruct ‘taken-for-granted’ (Fendler, 1998, p.48; Gannon & Davies, 2012, p.65) assumptions impacting on subjectivities. Thus, ‘schooling subjectivities’ are actually constructed when “...particular social and cultural practices and identity [group] markers come to be entangled with being a good student (or not)” (Youdell, 2006b, p.34). Such constitution of im/possible (Youdell, 2006a) or ir/responsible subjects is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, identity-group markers like gender, class and race may be used to stereotype and prejudge which ‘types’ of students are inherently ir/responsible or capable of ir/responsibility. Secondly, although teachers may construct a student as ‘responsible’ when they conform to school rules and social norms, this does not necessarily encourage the agency required for responsibility understood as responding to the needs of self *and* other. For example, the ‘teacher’s pet’ may become dependent on teacher direction and validation; while the student who is more independent may be labelled ‘irresponsible’ simply because they do not conform to certain expectations (which may or may not be reasonable or just). Therefore,

“[s]ubjecthood – and studenthood – comes with costs” (Youdell, 2006b, p.3). The costs of ‘responsible’ studenthood may include adherence to social norms, work on the self, and relations with others – each of which will now be discussed in relation to Foucauldian, Levinasian and Butlerian theory.

The discursive production of subjectivities, according to Foucault (2002), involves ‘regimes of power’ and ‘regimes of truth’ where those in positions of dominance or authority determine “...what counts as true” (p.132). The power behind such ‘truth claims’ works to ‘normalise’ them as standards to which the self must accordingly be subjected, constituted and measured (Foucault, 1977, 2002). Butler (2005) further suggests that these social ‘norms’:

...condition[] what will and will not be a recognizable account, exemplified in the fact that I am used by the norm precisely to the degree that I use it. And there can be no account of myself that does not, to some extent, conform to norms that govern the humanely recognizable, or that negotiate these terms in some ways, with various risks following from that negotiation (p.36).

In other words, social norms condition the ‘intelligibility’ (Butler, 2004, p.45) of the subject. The ritualistic repetition of norms through speech terms and utterances ‘performatively’ (Butler, 1997) reinforces certain subjectivities and stereotypes by enacting what it names (Youdell, 2006c). Silence and bodily practices may also performatively constitute the student as unacceptable and unworthy of, for example, the teacher’s address or interception of bullying (Youdell, 2006b). Butler’s notion of the performative therefore “...has massive implications for education because it insists that nobody is necessarily anything and so what it means to be a teacher, a student, a learner might be opened up to radical rethinking” (Youdell, 2006b, p.36). Thus, what constitutes ‘responsible’ studenthood is not pre-determined but rather defined, reinscribed and contested in overt and covert ways.

In schooling contexts, the formal and ‘hidden curriculum’ evident in the everyday assumptions and practices of teachers work to shape student dispositions, attitudes and behaviours according to social values, expectations and norms (Jackson, 1968). Such norms usually involve the maintenance of boundaries (Davies, 1989; Mills, 2001; Thorne, 1993), divisions (Woods, 1979) or discursive dichotomies (Youdell, 2006a). In terms of responsibility, the gendered dichotomy of male/female is reinforced through the

normative perception that female students are more responsible for self and other than their male student counterparts (Lewis, 2001; Romi, Lewis & Katz, 2009; Scales, et al., 2000). The repetition of phrases like 'girls are more responsible than boys' and 'boys like to be silly' may work to performatively reinforce gender stereotypes as students may feel obliged to fulfil such stereotypes in order to be recognised as 'normal' (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005).

The neoliberal emphasis on individualism means that subjects are not only expected to construct their subjectivities according to social norms (and stereotypes); they are also constituted as having a civic duty to continuously 'work' on themselves by taking more responsibility for their own attitudes, behaviour, learning and wellbeing. This means that students are increasingly being called upon to ensure that their 'techniques of self' are aligned to neoliberal discourse in order to render themselves intelligible to self and other in neoliberal times. As Foucault (2000) elaborates, 'techniques of self' are:

...the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilisation, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge. In short, it is a matter of placing the imperative to 'know oneself' – which to us appears so characteristic of our civilisation – back in the much broader interrogation that serves as its explicit or implicit context: What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one 'govern oneself' by performing actions in which one is oneself the objective of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts? (p.87)

Individuals therefore have the agency to govern themselves, but only in relation to others "...such as one finds in pedagogy, behaviour counseling, spiritual direction, the prescription of a model for living, and so on" (Foucault, 2000, p.88).

Our relation to others therefore plays a pivotal role in the construction of subjectivity. While education ministers, bureaucracies and policy-makers are institutional others involved in the regulation of what counts as a 'responsible' subjectivity; those who may provide a more direct, face-to-face, personal encounter with otherness at school include peers, teachers and principals. Such personal relations with others may involve confession such as telling a secret to a 'best friend' or trusted adult. In Foucault's (1993) later work, he describes confession-to-the-other as a form of 'sacrificing' (pp.220-221) or substituting the particular/inward self through movement into the social/outer sphere.

The motivation for such an outward movement is said to be the 'testing' of one's own recognisability in relation to social norms (Foucault, 2001, p.101; Butler, 2005, p.131). Such 'testing' is evident when students 'push boundaries' to see what conduct will be recognised as ir/responsible by teachers and the school community.

For Levinas (2006a) too, human subjectivity is an active and continual process which is dependent on the encounter with the other. In fact, "the very nexus of human subjectivity" is said to involve "attention to the suffering of the other" (Levinas, 2006a, p.81). From a Levinasian (2006a, 2006b) perspective, the subject is formed through the encounter with the face of the other and the inevitable demand/accusation/election of responsibility for the other. The subject's openness, exposure and vulnerability to the 'astonishing alterity' (Levinas, 2006a, p.87) or 'infinite...unassimilable otherness' (Levinas, 2006a, p.50) of the other, and to such demands involving "suffering for the suffering of the other" (Levinas, 2006b, p.63), work to overwhelm and interrupt the self-centeredness of the subject to the point of substitution for the other (Levinas, 2006a, 2006b). As "I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me" (Levinas, 1985, p.101); then the 'interhuman' or 'intersubjective' relation to and responsibility for the other is 'asymmetrical' and 'nonreciprocal' (Levinas, 2006a, pp.74, 87).

Similarly to Levinas, Butler emphasises the constitution of subjectivity as dependent on being addressed by others (Thiem, 2008). Both Levinas and Butler talk of the address by the face of the other as an overwhelming experience (Thiem, 2008). However, rather than describing this overwhelming address as an inevitable accusation, as does Levinas; Butler (2005) describes it as a disorientation and dispossession through "a physical vulnerability from which we cannot slip away" (p.101). This physical or 'mortal' (Levinas, 2006a, p.31) vulnerability of both the self and other, and the openness to being addressed is emphasised by both Levinas and Butler. Drawing on Althusser's (1971) concept of 'interpellation,' Butler (1997) further explains how individuals are "dependent on the address of the Other in order to be" (p.26) and therefore freely turn to the performative hail of authority regardless of guilt or consequence in order to be 'recognizable' subjects (original emphasis – p.5; see also Youdell, 2006c, p.518). However, Butler (2005) also draws on Foucauldian insights to argue that "...the very being of the self is dependent, not just on the existence of the other in its singularity (as Levinas would have it), but also on the social dimension of normativity that governs the scene of recognition" (p.23).

Foucault, Levinas and Butler offer conceptual tools to problematise the modern notion of pre-determined and autonomous 'identities' by positing that 'subjectivities' are subjected and constituted through social norms, work on the self and relations with others. In schooling contexts, a combination of education policies, formal and implicit curriculum, rules, and pedagogies particularly shape which students are recognised as ir/responsible. As Fendler (1998) notes "[i]t is only when research makes the constitution of the subject theoretically problematic that power, in its current forms of governmentality, can be critically analysed" (p.60). Such critical engagement can assist in the deconstruction or 'dislodging' (Youdell, 2006b, p.40) of de-humanising stereotypes and exclusion faced by students who are 'othered' as irresponsible; and the reconstruction of schooling as more inclusive and 'open' (Todd, 2008, p.176) to the 'unique' (Biesta, 2008, p.206) differences of each and every student subjectivity.

### *3.2.2 Power/governmentality*

From traditionalism to modernism, the attribution of power has shifted from God and monarch to rational individuals capable of governing themselves (Biesta, 2008; Deacon, 2002; Fendler, 1998; Raffoul, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003; Youdell, 2006a). By critiquing such autocratic and rationalistic notions of power, a poststructural perspective reconceptualises power as productive and embedded in the very capillaries of the body and society. This productive power, otherwise known as governmentality, delimits (rather than determines) the subject's actions and choices. In today's neoliberal context, the subject is increasingly designated power of choice, particularly in terms of market consumption (Rose, 1999). In fact, individuals are "...obliged to construe a life in terms of its choices, its powers, and its values" (Rose, 1999, p.231). However, not everyone can afford such choices in a competitive consumerist market and therefore, power of choice remains for many, a mere illusion. Power of choice is also frequently an illusion in the normative classroom where unequal power relations between student and teacher coercively shape the choices students make. As explained by Green (1998):

The normal situation is one in which teachers speak and students listen; alternatively, students read and write, essentially in silence. This is also a relation between activity and passivity, with the teacher's active, directive role in the classroom economy to be contrasted with the student's role, which is characteristically passive and reactive. Further, it

is also a relation between a relatively powerful minority and a relatively powerless majority, which arguably has a certain symbolic value not simply as a microcosm of social relations more generally but also as a mode for such relations (p.177).

It is therefore necessary to consider how such power relations may shape ir/responsible student subjectivities through disciplinary technologies of control, the tension between compliance to universalisms and freedom of the unique individual, and pastoral power through confession.

The school, as a disciplinary institution, “...compares, differentiates, hierarchicizes, excludes...*normalizes*” (Foucault, 1977, p.183). Student movement, learning, behaviour, attitudes and values are therefore monitored, controlled and shaped within school walls and according to normative discourses. This aim of educational institutions to “...manag[e] others and teach[] them to manage themselves” (Foucault, 1984a, p.370) is more or less achieved through a combination of internal ‘techniques of self’ (discussed previously) and external ‘technologies of control’ which “structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 2002, p.341). In line with Foucault, Butler (1997) applies the term ‘performative’ to describe how utterances/speech/terms ritualistically *act* on subjects; or in other words, how they have “social power not only to regulate bodies, but to form them as well” (pp.158-159). Such forms of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 2000, p.81) may look like the following in schooling contexts:

...a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differential marks of the ‘value’ of each person and the levels of knowledge) and...a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy) (Foucault, 2002, pp.338-339)

Three key technologies of control evident here of particular relevance to this study are panopticism, bio-power and examination. A panoptic space is an “enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point” (Foucault, 1977, p.197). As “[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself” (Foucault, 1977, p.202); then the threat of constant surveillance is enough to “...act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (Foucault, 1977, p.172). In other words, panopticism is often enough to



encourage students to conduct themselves 'responsibly.' In fact, "[a] relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency" (Foucault, 1977, p.176).

This emphasis on efficiency is also apparent in 'bio-power' or "methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern" (Foucault, 1978, p.141). Here, the optimisation of forces may involve extracting 'time and labour' (Deacon, 2002, p.447) from student bodies as 'human capital' (Apple, 2005, p.273); or alternatively, the 'bodily removal' (Gore, 1998, p.239) or exclusion of students who are considered to be 'disruptive' to the learning process. Bio-power functions in 'capillary form' by "...reach[ing] into the very grain of individuals, touch[ing] their bodies and invert[ing] itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980, p.39). Individuals are therefore required to regulate their bodies in productive, normative and 'responsible' ways. As Foucault (1977) further explains:

Disciplinary control does not consist simply in teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures; it imposes the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body, which is its condition of efficiency and speed. In the correct use of the body, which makes possible a correct use of time, nothing must remain idle or useless: everything must be called upon to form the support of the act required (p.152)

In schools, the 'drill' has become an increasingly subtle and accepted form of pedagogic control for the purposes of prevention and correction (Pongratz, 2007, pp.32-34). In neoliberal societies with an emphasis on meritocracy and competition (Apple, 2005), more pressures than ever before are placed on the student to efficiently achieve educational outcomes in terms of normalised or 'standardised' content and skills (Gore, 1998, p.237; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p.23) and adapt their body and will to this end. The subjection of students to the ritual of 'examination' works to test this efficiency and 'objectify' or 'rank' students according to 'normalizing judgment[s]' (Foucault, 1977, pp.146-148, 184, 189). The examination therefore reinforces the differentiation and often stereotypical classification of students (Gore, 1998, pp.239-240) along lines of ability and ir/responsible effort. The shaping of students in this way through the counter-movement

of subjection and freedom “...often turn[s] pedagogic praxis into a tightrope walk...” (Pongratz, 2007, p.40).

Power relations therefore involve a struggle between compliance to universalisms and freedom of the unique individual. Foucault (2002) describes this struggle as a ‘permanent limit’, ‘permanent provocation’ or ‘agonism’ between dominance and freedom (Foucault, 2002, pp.329-347). Power relations, embedded “...deep in the social nexus, not a supplementary structure over and above ‘society’” (Foucault, 2002, p.343), involve those empowered to “act upon the action of others” (Foucault, 2002, p.341) and those who are acted upon. Those in positions of power control what counts as truth and knowledge and therefore govern intelligibility (Foucault, 2002). The governance of intelligibility, according to Butler (1997), involves the regulation, deprivation/censorship and performative use of speech to make “...certain kinds of citizens [] possible and others impossible” (p.132). Policy-makers, principals and teachers are usually those with the ‘authority’ (Youdell, 2006c, p.522) in schooling contexts to shape what counts as ‘responsibility’ and who counts as ‘responsible.’ Those who are acted upon (namely students) do have the freedom to act but only within a constrained ‘field of possibilities’ (Foucault, 2002, p.341). Performatives can be appropriated through ‘discursive agency’ (Butler, 1997, p.127) as a means of “ongoing political contestation and reformulation of the subject” (Butler, 1997, p.160). This freedom to act (while constrained) means that power is productive in that it “doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 2002, p.120). In fact, Foucault (1993) later critiques the emphasis of his earlier work on ‘techniques of domination’ in order to argue that power or governmentality involves more of a ‘versatile equilibrium’ between or “...subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies” (p.204).

The tension between universal laws and unique freedom is also explored by Levinas (2006a). He proposes the existence and unlimited power of the ‘infinite’ or ‘divine’ (i.e. God) and ‘Universal Law’ or ‘commandment’ (pp.63, 149, 198). Alternatively, Butler (1997) suggests that the act of naming can mime divine power “where to utter is to create the effect uttered” when such an utterance is “backed by state power” (p.32). Levinas (2006a) suggests that such Universal Law, or social laws that “[govern] the other’s winks and smiles” (p.20) are drawn on by institutions “empowered to judge” (p.198). Levinas therefore acknowledges, similarly to Foucault and Butler, that those with power

apply laws that govern or act on the actions and speech of others. Levinas (2006a) also suggests that power lies with the subject/other in that the “[p]owers of the unique” resources of each person mean that they are “responsible for the entire universe!” (p.177). While the subject has obligated responsibility for the other/s, she also has infinite free will (Levinas, 1999) in how to respond to such demands. In effect, this means that while the other has power over the subject, the subject has power over the other – evident in the other’s vulnerability, which the subject may choose to heed or ignore, help or hinder (Levinas, 2006a). Even the act of trying to understand a being by naming them is a “partial negation which in violence denies the independence of beings” (Levinas, 2006a, p.8). Similarly, Butler (1997) argues that the performative use of language from ‘hate speech’ (p.19) to censorship has the power to injure others. According to Levinas (2006a), the subject also has the power to judge and forgive the other for such injuries.

Not only are students expected to discipline their intellect and behaviour, educational goals and pedagogies are increasingly directed at affect and disposition through ‘character’ education initiatives (Fendler, 1998, p.55; Gore, 1998, p.242). The increasing governmental push for ‘pastoral care’ in schools involves a form of power that seeks to “...shape personality through the child’s emulation of the teacher, through the use of pastoral techniques to encourage self-knowledge and enhance the feelings of sympathetic identification, through establishing the links between virtue, honesty, and self-denial and a purified pleasure” (Rose, 1999, p.227). According to Foucault (2002), pastoral power (originating in Christian institutions) is both an ‘individualizing and totalizing’ (p.332) form of power as it “looks after not just the whole community but each individual in particular” (p.333). As the individual ‘educated subject’ is “...positioned as a member – as a body part – of the social matrix...desir[ing] what is best in terms of social wellbeing” (Fendler, 1998, p.58); then they “...can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality [is] [] shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns” (Foucault, 2002, p.334).

In other words, neoliberal individualism must be shaped in ways that further the interests of the class, school and national community. This shaping of individuality requires detailed knowledge of each individual’s body, mind and soul and “implies knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault, 2002, p.333). The individual subject therefore has a ‘law of truth’ imposed on her whereby she must engage in ‘acts of truth’ by telling the truth about herself in order to reveal what she is (Foucault,

2000, 2002). In other words, she is obliged to 'confess' (Foucault, 1990, 2002). Whether this confession is given to a principal, teacher or school counsellor, the student is encouraged to 'be honest' or 'tell the truth' about and take responsibility for their actions, thoughts and feelings.

Foucault, Levinas and Butler provide critical insights into how power and governmentality shape ir/responsible student subjectivities through disciplinary technologies of control (i.e. panopticism, bio-power, examination and performatives), the tension between compliance to universalisms and freedom of the unique individual, and pastoral power through confession. This involves an awareness of the discursive power relations and values often hidden or embedded within education policies, programmes and pedagogies and resource materials (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Jackson, 1968; Slattery & Rapp, 2003). As "education may not be an innocent purveyor of knowledge, but caught up in the very practices of violence it seeks to remedy" (Todd, 2003, p.8) then we need to consider an ethical approach with an emphasis on "*moments of relationality that resist codification*" (original emphasis - Todd, 2003, p.9). Such relationality is required for ethical responsibility and will be explored in the following section.

### 3.2.3 Ethical Responsibility

As noted previously, responsibility does not necessarily entail ethics or morality. For example, a modernist obligation to uphold laws and civic duties is a responsibility based on obedience and conformity rather than ethical deliberation. In educational contexts, this type of responsibility involves following school and classroom rules without questioning the ethicality of such rules. On the other hand, ethical or moral responsibility arises in a response to the needs of self, other and the environment in ways that aim to avoid or minimise harm – in other words, "[a]n ethics that avoids dominati[on]..." (Wain, 2007, p.178). From a postmodernist perspective, this may require the negotiation, deconstruction or critique of "coercive normative regulation" (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, p.58) in order to take into account a diverse and complex interplay of contextual factors. Such complexity means that the 'right' decision is not always clear or achievable; but rather, ambiguous and opaque. Taking such opacity of self and other into account can facilitate the humility and generosity required for ethically responsible subjectivity. What follows is a discussion of ethical responsibility conceptualised in nuanced ways by

Foucault, Levinas and Butler as a relation between self and other involving confession, critique, parrhesia, ambiguity, opacity, humility, and generosity.

Ethical responsibility seems to involve a relation between self and other in which priority is given to one or the other. According to Hofmeyr (2005), a 'functional analogy' can be drawn between Levinas' early work and Foucault's later work in that they both describe "care of the self understood as an aesthetics (Foucault) or 'economics' (Levinas) of existence [which] is indispensable to ethics" (p.9). Pedagogically, care for self can be supported through "... 'writing' and 'reading' the self alongside conversational or dialogical forms, and 'talking' or confessing the self" in the form of journal writing, autobiography, poetry and role-play etc. (Besley, 2007, p.67). Care of the self is said to be necessary as "[o]nly the one who has become completely self-sufficient is able to take up his/her responsibility towards others" (Hofmeyr, 2005, p.124). While Levinas later distances himself from the idea of an economic reciprocity, Foucault (1984b) maintains that:

Care for self...implies complex relations with others, in the measure where this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others...*Ethos* implies also a relation with others to the extent that care for self renders one competent to occupy a place in the city, in the community or in interindividual relations which are proper...the one who cared for himself correctly found himself, by the very fact, in a measure to behave correctly in relationship to others and for others (p.7)

In other words, care for self involves consideration of how one ought to act and "[h]ow one ought to act is by extension a matter of how one ought to act *towards others*" (original emphasis – Hofmeyr, 2005, p.13). The care for self through continual self-mastery may therefore prevent the abuse of one's power or freedom at the expense of the other (Coelen, 2007; Wain, 2007). However, this is not at all guaranteed. Poverty and violence occur even in democratic 'first-world' countries where 'freedom of choice' and 'equal opportunity' rhetorically exist but actually remain an empty promise for many. Therefore, teachers "...can no longer rest content with educating students to pursue self-interest to the extent that they do not interfere with the rights of others to pursue their own interests" (Chinnery & Bai, 2008, p.238). In other words, care for self may not necessarily extend to care for others. As Besley (2007) notes, "Foucault seems to display a remarkable *naïveté* about the goodness of human beings in accepting this inclusive

definition whereby care of the self involve[s] a considerable generosity of spirit and benevolent relations..." (original emphasis – p.61).

Further, by maintaining that "[t]he care for self takes moral precedence in the measure that the relationship to self takes precedence" (Foucault, 1984b, p.7), the priority of the self over the other is reinforced. While care of the self or 'self-sufficiency' (Hofmeyr, 2005, p.124) may be required in order to have the capacity to care for others; self-prioritisation can become problematic in situations of ethical dilemma where a choice must be made between self and other. It is interesting to note that those who are considered 'heroes' are usually those who risk or sacrifice their lives in order to save or protect others – that is, they give priority to the other over themselves. Although self-sacrifice in schooling contexts is perhaps less dramatic, it may entail, for example, losing a running-race in order to help someone who has fallen over; or risking a reprimand for not paying attention in order to help another student. However, Butler (2009) suggests that "[m]aybe the 'act' in its singularity and heroism is overrated: it loses sight of the iterable process in which a critical intervention is needed, and it can become the very means by which the 'subject' is produced at the expense of a relational social ontology" (p.184). In other words, the process of becoming responsible subjects is more dependent on a relation between self and other rather than singular isolated acts of heroism. So while "[t]he ethical relation, precisely because it is a relation between two parties, is dependent upon the egocentric I's opening itself up" (Hofmeyr, 2005, p.133); the other is the catalyst required for such an opening to occur.

Foucault's (1993) later work on the 'hermeneutics of the subject' goes on to acknowledge this ethical dependence of the self on the other who 'incites' (Butler, 2005, pp.125, 127-129) self-examination, confession and critique. Reversing his earlier notion of confession as violent self-scrutiny and forcible obligation to a regulatory power (Butler, 2005); Foucault (1993) posits that confession is actually a method of self-constitution where people 'produce' the self through examination of conscience (in relation to social norms) and 'publish' what they perceive to be the truth about themselves through an 'exposé of one's soul' to others (pp.204, 208). While in Christianity, the other to whom one confesses is likely to be a spiritual brother/father/guide who in being 'the image of God' requires 'complete obedience' (Foucault, 1993, pp.220-221); the other may also include 'somebody' (Foucault, 1993, p.220) or anybody to whom a confession is addressed. The increasing emphasis on 'pastoral care' in education (Rose, 1999)

encourages students to confide in a pastoral figure; though confession may also be addressed to principals, teachers, counsellors and peers in terms of ir/responsible conduct. In any case, the 'manifestation' (Foucault, 1993, pp.212-213, 219-222) or 'showing of oneself' (Foucault, 1993, p.214; Butler, 2005, p.131) to an other through confession involves a 'sacrifice' and 'renouncement' (Foucault, 1993, pp.220-221) or 'substitution' and 'dispossession' (Butler, 2005, p.115) of the particular/inward self through movement into the social/outer sphere. Such an outward movement allows the self to 'test' the accuracy and understandability of their account in dialogue with the other and social norms (Foucault, 2001, p.101; Butler, 2005, p.131) including what counts as ir/responsibility.

The possibility to test, resist or 'transgress' (Foucault, 1984a, p.45) the limits of self and normalising discourse can enable a non-indifferent and non-reductive encounter with otherness – including marginalised otherness often brought about through binaries and categories (Hofmeyr, 2005). Both Foucault and Levinas insist on maintaining alterity or otherness 'as other' without reducing it to the sameness of the self (Levinas, 2006a, p.150; Hofmeyr, 2005, p.247). However, the origin and purpose of this alterity is conceptualised differently. For Foucault, the other is immanent or 'other in the same' and a 'necessary side-effect' of repetitive practices of self (Hofmeyr, 2005, pp.247, 252) where "...in concentrating on this boundless monotony, we find the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself..." (Foucault, 1980[1970], p.189). From this perspective, otherness originates in the self, through mundane practices of the self, for the purposes of expanding, recrafting or transforming the self. For Levinas (2006a) alterity or otherness originates outside the self in order to enable the 'subjection' (p.154) of the self to the demand of the other. From either perspective, the self must remain open to alterity or otherness in order for ethicality and 'non-violence' to be possible (Todd, 2003, p.3). As Butler (2005) notes, "[b]y not pursuing satisfaction and by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it" (p.43). At this point, we may ask, as Youdell (2012) does, what 'letting the other live' might look like pedagogically. Foucault (1985) suggests that ethical pedagogy should "...avoid effects of dominance...[that] would make a small boy subservient to the pointless and arbitrary authority of a primary school teacher, or make a student dependent on professor who abuses his position" (p.26 – cited by Coelen, 2007, p.44). Instead, students could be

provided with opportunities to express themselves freely but non-violently – so that they too ‘let others live.’ Critique and parrhesia are helpful in this regard.

According to Foucault (2002), we need to be able to critique in order to “keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality” (p.328) and “carefully defined institutions” (p.342); particularly as advances in technology have progressively made power and relations of power more economic, individualised and globalised than ever before (Foucault, 2000, 2002). This critique can be voiced through ‘parrhesia’ (Foucault, 2001) or the moral duty to speak the truth, regardless of personal risk, in order to “...convince someone that he must take care of himself and of others; and this means that he must *change his life*” (p.106). In schooling contexts, for example, students may risk punishment by critiquing or speaking the truth (from their own perspective) about social norms in order to encourage change. The ‘desubjugation’ of the subject through critique of social norms is a ‘virtue’ (Foucault, 1997, pp.25, 32, 192). Butler (2005) in line with Foucault, suggests that this is because critique “...call[s] into question the truth of myself and indeed, to question my ability to tell the truth about myself, to give an account of myself” (pp.22-23). The risk of unrecognisability as a result of questioning these norms becomes an ethical matter involving ‘a critical opening’ and a “call for the institution of new norms” (Butler, 2005, p.24) which are more inclusive (Butler, 1997). However, Butler (2005) extends Foucault’s emphasis on self by stating that: “[w]hat he does not say is that sometimes calling into question the regime of truth by which my own truth is established is motivated by the desire to recognize another or be recognized by one” (pp.24-25). It is this recognition or prioritised responsibility *for* the other which is emphasised by Levinas in his conceptualisation of ethics.

By proposing that ethical responsibility for the other is ‘first philosophy’ (Levinas, 1969, p.304), Levinas seeks to move beyond a traditional metaphysical emphasis on ontology or ‘being-ness’ of the self as the origin of ethics. According to Levinas (1999, 2006a, 2006b), this ethical responsibility for the other begins with the covenant, commandment or word of God to ‘love your neighbour’ – which is heard the moment the subject encounters the Face or openness/vulnerability of the other. As “in the other, there is a real presence of God” (Levinas, 2006a, p.94) then the encounter with God is social in origin. The “attention to the suffering of the other” is therefore an “inescapable obligation [that] brings us close to God in a more difficult, but also a more spiritual, way than does confidence in any kind of theodicy” (Levinas, 2006a, p. 81). Ethical



responsibility for the other can thus be understood from a secular perspective if we consider, as Levinas (2006a) does, that “[l]ove is originary” (p.92) and a requirement for “giving the other priority over oneself” (p.93). In a similar vein, Butler (2005) notes that “...love, from the outset, is without judgment...” (p.77). This unconditional love does not involve “normative injunctions and rules for moral conduct” (Thiem, 2008, pp.99-100) or any expectation of reciprocity which may detract from pure altruism (Levinas, 2006a). Instead, the ideal of non-indifference to the preontological and inevitable demand of responsibility for the other and for the world (including the environment) embodies the subject’s humanity and ethical capacity in “[a]n intelligibility of kindness” (Levinas, 2006a, p.197). This kindness is evident in the ‘hospitality’ (Popke, 2003, p.313; Todd, 2008, p.178) given by the self in ‘welcoming’ and ‘learning *from*’ the other as other (original emphasis – Todd, 2008, p.171). According to Levinas (2004), “[t]he relation with the Other, or Conversation, is a non-allergic reaction, an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching [*enseignement*]. Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain” (p.51). Pedagogically, this may involve encouraging opportunities to meaningfully learn from the other and the unique perspectives and experiences they can bring to the conversation (Biesta, 2008; Todd, 2003, 2008). In many ways, this means approaching ‘pedagogy with empty hands’ (Biesta, 2008) in order to “welcome the unexpected and unknown” (Chinnery & Bai, 2008, p.239).

While it is through a ‘dyadic’ (Thiem, 2008, p.130) relationship that the demand of responsibility for the Other takes place; the entrance of another other, ‘third party’ or ‘human plurality’ which the subject is also responsible for, requires justice (Levinas, 2006a, pp.88-89, 144, 167, 174). This justice involves ‘judgement’ and ‘comparison’ between incomparably unique beings without “taking account of possible wrongs I may have suffered at the hands of one or the other” (Levinas, 2006a, pp.167-168, 174). This comparison and judgement establishes a common ground (Levinas, 1991[1974]) based on the ideal of equality or equity through reciprocal respect (Levinas, 2006a). Butler (2009) similarly notes that “...non-violence is derived from the apprehension of equality in the midst of precariousness” (p.181). Justice must be mediated/monitored by love, mercy and charity and is “always to be perfected against its own harshness” (Levinas, 2006a, pp.198-199). This is particularly true in relation to the state and politics (Levinas, 2006a). So while Foucault depicts the self as connected to others through a political network of

power/knowledge; for Levinas (2006a) such politics do not constitute ethics but instead require constant mediation by an ethical law of the transcendent other. Here, Levinas proposes a consideration of spirituality as a point of connection beyond that of the socio-political.

Although Butler (2005) ‘quarrels’ with Levinas’ notion of preontological persecution by the Other (p.135); she does agree that ethical responsibility requires the other in order to counter self-preoccupation, narcissism and ethical violence because “[i]f I achieve that self-sufficiency, my relation to the other is lost” (p.68). Butler (2005) posits that “[i]t seems right to fault Foucault for not making more room explicitly for the other in his consideration of ethics,” but suggests that “[p]erhaps this is because the dyadic scene of self and other cannot describe adequately the social workings of normativity that condition both subject formation and intersubjective exchange” (p.23). She therefore draws on Foucault to argue that the dyadic encounter between self and other is an idealised one because it also involves the negotiation of social norms (Butler, 2005; Thiem, 2008).

An ambiguity therefore exists in how one is to respond to the ‘demand’ of the singular other, compare a plurality of others, and/or negotiate social norms. According to Hofmeyr (2005), it is the Foucauldian rather than Levinasian subject who can actively initiate and participate in the ethical encounter by taking “responsibility for their own ethical self-constitution instead of *passively* and *uncritically* awaiting and accepting guidance from external sources, which can very easily amount to nothing more than an ethics of irresponsibility” (original emphasis – p.23). However, what seems to be overlooked in Hofmeyr’s account here is that the Levinasian subject does have agency to *choose* how to respond to the demand of the Other (Levinas, 2006a) and the Foucauldian subject is not completely free in that discourses shape and constrain subjectivity (Foucault, 2002). Similar to the Foucauldian (2002) subject’s struggle against ‘subjection’ and ‘imposition’ by others and social norms (pp.331, 336); the Levinasian (2006a) subject may struggle between taking responsibility for the other or refusing this responsibility – the “suffering of compassion” (p. 92) and any anxiety arising from it – in favour of ‘self-preservation’ or ‘self-defense’ (Butler, 2005, pp.92, 95). Like Levinas, Butler depicts this relation to the other as an ethical ambivalence or struggle between heeding and ignoring the call of the other (Butler, 2004; Thiem, 2008). In relation to schooling, this ambivalence is escalated through the neoliberal pressures of competition and meritocracy (Apple,

2005) and evident in studies where students report higher levels of personal rather than social/communal responsibility (Lewis, 2001; Romi, Lewis & Katz, 2009).

This ambiguity of response is further complicated through opacity of the self or “...that in me and of me for which I can give no account” (Butler, 2005, p.40) including idiosyncrasies, actions, unconscious associations, attachments and desires which are never entirely in our control (Butler, 2005; Thiem, 2008; Todd, 2008). Such a “predicament of the human community” (Butler, 2005, p.83) requires humility and generosity as “...I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are also constituted in partial opacity to themselves” (Butler, 2005, p.42). This ignorance and humility is also required to pedagogically learn from the other “who is absolutely different to myself” (Todd, 2003, p.15) and who therefore cannot be completely empathised with (Todd, 2003). The suspension of judgment, condemnation and retaliation/revenge is required to recognise the other in productive rather than destructive/violent ways (Butler, 2005). However, this opacity and forgiveness of self and of other does not mean that the subject is free “...to do what it wants or to ignore its obligations to others” (Butler, 2005, pp.19-20). Butler argues, as does Levinas, that the suffering of the other cannot be justified (Thiem, 2008). In fact, the susceptibility of the self to the other’s suffering involves a ‘strangely innocent’ (Butler, 1997b, p.108) guilt as the self is already ‘late’ and ‘wanting’ (Levinas, 1991, pp.87, 91) in its response to the other. The guilt and emotional struggle that students and teachers may face in learning from another’s pain and across differences requires emotional labour, open dialogue and listening “beyond language, meaning, and comprehension” (Todd, 2003, p.130). As Levinas (1996) explains “[o]ur relation with the other (*autrui*) certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him, but this relation overflows comprehension...” (p.6). According to Butler’s (2005) reading of Levinas, the ‘other’ “...not only refers to the human other but acts as a place-holder for an infinite ethical relation” (p.x) and may therefore include that which is divine, non-human or environmental. Responsibility for human *and* non-human life is a concern of the ‘deep ecology’ movement (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, pp.209-210) and echoed in Butler’s (2004) call for “... a politics that seeks to diminish suffering universally, that seeks to recognize the sanctity of life, of all lives” (p.104) including “...the environment and to non-human forms of life, broadly considered” (Butler, 2009, p.19). This universal, “trans-national ethics based on non-violence” (Butler, 2008) and ‘shared precariousness’ (Butler, 2009, p.43)

also needs to be “responsive to cultural particularity” (Butler, 2005, p.6). In other words, there needs to be a balance between unity and diversity.

### 3.2.4 Gender

The struggle for gender equity in education has a long and unresolved history in global and national contexts. It was not until the feminist movements of the late nineteenth century that quality education (usually reserved for men) began to be offered to women (Watts, 2013). However, such empowerment was constrained by societal pressures for women to use such an education to become better housewives and mothers rather than over-educated, ‘de-sexed’ radicals (Watts, 2013, p.23). The resulting gendered curriculum continued well into the twentieth century despite developments in psychological testing that disproved the idea of intellectual differences between the sexes (Watts, 2013).

In Australia, the Women’s Liberation and ‘second-wave’ feminism of the 1960s and 1970s saw feminist scholars challenge the over-emphasis of social-science research on the male gender (Curthoys, 2000). Such a movement was supported by the newly elected Australian Labor Party, who under the slogan ‘It’s Time,’ committed to equality for women and sponsored government reports, projects and conferences on gender (Johnson, 2002; Yates, 2008, p.475). One such report was *Girls, Schools and Society* (1975) which highlighted the issue of sexism in Australian education policy and practice (Johnson, 2002).

From the 1970s through to the 1990s when gender was widely acknowledged as a prominent issue, many academically trained feminists or ‘femocrats’ took up positions of influence within education and the state in terms of research and policy agendas (Curthoys, 2000, p.20; Vickers, 2005, p.48; Watts, 2013). Such agendas aimed to address a perceived male dominance in education by encouraging a more inclusive curriculum for girls. For example, *Girls and tomorrow* (Commonwealth Schools Commission [CSC], 1984) was the first national policy statement to explicitly advocate a gender inclusive curriculum (Johnson, 2002). This was followed by a *National policy for the education of girls in Australian schools* (CSC, 1987) which was endorsed by all school sectors (Johnson, 2002). The push for gender inclusive education was supported by additional policy materials such as *Listening to Girls* (AEC, 1992) (Johnson, 2002) and projects including *It’s all because we’re girls: An exploration of classroom practices and girls’ learning with a focus*

*on discipline* (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1992). The *National action plan for the education of girls 1993–1997* (Curriculum Corporation, 1993) further reinforced gender inclusive curriculum reform as a national priority (Johnson, 2002). Despite acknowledging the necessity of a gender inclusive curriculum, such national policies offer little practical guidance on how gender exclusion can be actively critiqued and addressed and “this makes gender inclusiveness vulnerable to conservative appropriation in such a way that reduces its transformative potential” (Johnson, 2002, p.396).

Such mainstreaming of gender equity as an issue has led to a ‘boys’ backlash’ (Johnson, 2002, p.394) whereby the fairness of gender inclusive policy has come under question as it is assumed that ‘girls’ problems have been solved’ (Yates, 2008, p.473) and that boys are now the victims of an institution and curriculum that favours girls (Gill & Tranter, 2012; Mills & Lingard, 1997; Vickers, 2005). Such assumptions are often based on the misleading and exaggerated use of educational performance data (Vickers, 2005) and fail to acknowledge the continued normalisation of male power and privilege over others (Mills, 2001; Mills & Lingard, 1997). This ideology culminated in the Australian government of the time implementing a national policy on *Gender equity: A framework for Australian schools* (MCEETYA) in 1997 and committing \$19.4 million in grants for schools under a new *Success for boys: Helping boys achieve* (DEST) programme in 2005 (Vickers, 2005). Over the last few decades, government commitment to gender equity has been replaced with an emphasis on economic rationality to the extent that Australia has moved from an international ranking of tenth (in 2005) to twentieth (in 2009) in terms of closing the ‘gender gap’ (Barnes & Preston, 2010).

It seems that gender-specific policies reinforcing divisions between male and female students have not really achieved lasting results in terms of gender equity. In fact, feminism itself has been critiqued for a tendency to essentialise and reproduce “...the binary structures of male versus female which it had set out to oppose...” (Curthoys, 2000, p.22). To address this issue, feminism has more recently drawn on poststructural theory for insights into the complex construction of gender and other identity categories through social discourse and power relations (Curthoys, 2000; Gill & Tranter, 2012; Yates, 2008). More specifically, poststructural theory is useful for critiquing the normalisation of dominant gender discourses at the expense of others (Vickers, 2005). The conceptualisations of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler are particularly useful for

understanding gender along such lines. Foucault (1990) argues that the male/female binary of reproductive sex(uality) is socially constructed and biopolitically regulated through discursive practices that reinforce it as a norm. Butler (1997, 1999[1990]) adopts this premise in order to further explore how the ritualistic repetition of social norms, speech acts and bodily practices ‘performatively’ reconstruct sexed and gendered subjectivities and stereotypes. Such concepts have readily been taken up in many of the ethnographic studies reviewed previously (i.e. Connolly, 1998; Davies, 1989, 1993; Kehily, 2002; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990; Youdell, 2006) and other educational research (i.e. Allard, 2004; Dalley-Trim, 2006, 2007; Robinson, 2000, 2005) involving questions of gender and sexuality and their significance to shaping the self in relation to the social.

### **3.3 Concluding comments**

In discussing how the theoretical insights of Foucault, Levinas and Butler may relate to schooling, it is necessary to “...be cautious not to look for easy solutions or precepts to be ‘applied’” (Eg a-Kuehne, 2008, p.1) in practice. A systematic educational program on responsibility risks becoming another technology of power or coercion which fails to consider the specific and diverse instances of relationality between self and other required for responsibility (Biesta, 2008; Kohn, 2006[1996]; Todd, 2003, 2008). Instead, educators need to consider how power and governmentality work to shape subjectivity and opportunities for ethical responsibility; and “[r]esponsibility needs to be rethought in terms of the pull teachers and students experience between their institutional duties and the personal, inter-human dimension of classroom relationships” (Todd, 2003, p.142).

By drawing on theorists who engage with the social construction of subjectivity, power/governmentality, ethical responsibility and gender, it is possible to deconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions and practices of ‘responsibility’ in upper-primary school contexts. However, in order for such critique to constructively support and encourage change, it is necessary to humbly offer (but not prescribe) some potential alternatives for consideration. As Todd (2003) suggests, “...the very project of education, particularly social justice education, needs to offer an alternative to what it renders unjust, inequitable, and harmful” (p.8). I have therefore taken such recommendations into

account in the methodological design of my project as a poststructural ethnography with elements of both deconstruction and reconstruction – to be outlined in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

This study aims to address the research question: *‘How do the discourses embedded in education policy and mediated through principal and teacher pedagogy work to shape upper-primary students’ understandings and experiences of responsibility for self and others?’* In order to address the overarching aims, 3 ethnographic case studies were conducted in Year 5/6 primary school classrooms in the Australian state of NSW. Schools in the study included one Catholic school, one State school and one Independent school. Observational field notes were recorded on approximately 20 days over a 10 week period in each participating school. Focus group interviews were conducted with students in the classes observed, and individual interviews were conducted with the classroom teachers and school principals. Field-notes and interviews were transcribed and anonymised, and data was analysed drawing on thematic discourse analysis techniques and the theoretical framework described previously.

### **4.1 Participant recruitment**

Schools were chosen via ‘combination or mixed purposeful’ (Hatch, 2002, p.99) sampling based on geographic position and school system. By collecting data from a State school, an Independent school and a Catholic school in a regional setting, this study aims to develop a broad picture of the diverse ways in which primary school students learn about responsibility for self and other. The study does not seek to make comparisons between educational sectors, but recognises instead that the diversity of schooling options in Australia provides an opportunity to consider multiple ways in which different school communities support students in developing understandings of responsibility.

Ethics clearance was obtained firstly through the university, and then through the relevant Catholic, Independent and State systems (see Appendix 4). Obtaining approval from the Catholic sector involved emailing the relevant Catholic Education Office (CEO) personnel the university ethics approval form, information letters and consent forms for my study. After being granted CEO ethics approval I was asked to nominate a school which would then be advised by the CEO of their preliminary approval. I was then permitted to contact the principal who was entitled to make the final decision. The Independent sector required proof of university ethics approval and permission by the principal/Head of School. The State or NSW DET sector involved completing and



submitting an extensive State Education Research Approvals Process (SERAP) form for approval with the condition that *all* students (and their parents) consented to my presence in their classroom and consequent observation. All sectors requested that I fulfilled Working with Children screening requirements as I would be observing and interacting with children.

Upon ethics clearance, principals were contacted via an information letter inviting their school to participate. A follow-up phone call was then made to ascertain principals' willingness to participate. As "...research sites rarely issue invitations, teachers are just too busy for such distractions, and education is now a highly sensitive and politicised arena" (Smith, 2007, p.162), I received some disinclinations before finding principals willing to grant me access to their schools. The Catholic school principal, who was undertaking a Masters degree at the time, empathised with the difficulty in gaining access to research sites and granted me access straight away. Having attended the Independent school as a student and having met the Head of College before, I had some personal connections which may have influenced gaining access. Although the Head of College had completed a PhD and was interested in my study, the final decision to grant me access was that of the Head of the Junior School whom I had never met before. The principal of the State school said to call back if I could not find another school to research. When I did so, she was on leave but I spoke with the acting principal (also the Stage 3 or upper-primary coordinator) who asked me to bring in the information and discuss it with her. On-site meetings such as this were arranged with each of the principals interested in participation.

During the on-site meetings, principals were given the opportunity to discuss and negotiate the requirements of the study in more depth. The main issue that was raised seemed to be how the school would be represented and I reiterated the need to take a balanced approach in my data analysis and ensure confidentiality as much as possible through the use of pseudonyms. Once these concerns were abated and approval was officially granted, I arranged to meet with the relevant/interested classroom teachers before the research commenced in order to talk about the aims and focus of the study and to provide an opportunity for them to seek additional information or clarification. Funnily enough, it turned out that I already knew two of these teachers. One had taught me as a primary student and the other I had met once before at the local university doing tutorial teaching. This helped in establishing rapport from the beginning but also had

ethical implications which I consider at a later point in this chapter. While most classes were arranged prior to the commencement of fieldwork, the participation of an extra class at the Independent school was approved by the teacher and Head of Junior School a week or so into fieldwork.

Principals and teachers were invited to participate in individual interviews while students were invited to participate in focus-group discussions with peers. Information letters and consent forms were distributed to principals, teachers and students; and as students were also minors, parents/guardians also received information letters and consent forms (see Appendix 5). This documentation explained the aims and requirements of the study, the voluntary and confidential nature of the research, and the entitlement of participants to withdraw from the research at any time without incurring negative consequence. The NSW DET requirement of unanimous consent for observation meant that consent forms sent to State school parents and students included this option (see Appendix 6). Consent forms were signed and collected before the commencement of interviews (in the Catholic and Independent schools) or fieldwork (in the State school).

## **4.2 Data collection/generation**

In aiming for deep insights into students' understandings and experiences of responsibility, I employed a poststructuralist ethnographic methodology with qualitative methods of data collection/generation (participant observation, interview, document archiving) and analysis (to be discussed later). The benefits and limitations of ethnography are outlined below, as well as the specificities of educational ethnography and poststructural educational ethnography. The multiple methods of participant observation, individual/focus-group interview and document archiving are also critically and reflexively considered in light of the literature and how they were experienced during fieldwork.

### ***4.2.1 Ethnography***

Ethnography is a methodological approach of sociological and anthropological origin and association (Freebody, 2003; Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2007). Given the constraints of PhD research, most notably time and resources, it was not viable to conduct a longitudinal ethnographic study characteristic of most anthropological research where

researchers 'live with' (Hammersley, 2006, p.4) the people they study (see Biehl, 2005 for a potent example). My relatively part-time and short-term interaction with participants in specific primary school contexts during school hours was more sociologically bound (Hammersley, 2006). While debate surrounds the meaning of the term 'ethnography' and its epistemological position as qualitative or quantitative research (Hammersley, 2006; Youdell, 2006a – drawing on Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, 1995), it "...essentially refers to the writing (*graphie*) of others (*ethne*)" (Van Loon, 2001, p.280). Although quantitative surveys are accorded a place in ethnography, the 'writing of others' via qualitative methods of case-study, semi-structured interview and observation is more frequently accepted and applied in ethnographic studies (Hammersley, 2006; Youdell, 2006a – drawing on Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, 1995). In fact, 'fieldwork,' often noted as "...the heart of the ethnographic research design" (Fetterman, 2009, p.544), is said to involve spending enough time in the field of study to observe, interview, and gather documents in order to describe, analyse and understand the commonly shared and everyday values, beliefs, practices, languages, meanings and features of particular cultures, communities and social groups in particular contexts (Creswell, 2008; Fetterman, 2009; Freebody, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Gregory, 2005; Hatch, 2002; McLeod & Thomson, 2009). The detail of such occurrences are traditionally captured in 'thick description' (Fetterman, 2009, p.543; McLeod & Thomson, 2009, pp.82-83), where the ethnographer is required to 'bracket' their own cultural knowledge, values, and presuppositions in order to focus on the phenomenon under study (Freebody, 2003, p.79; Hatch, 2002, p.86). Issues with such 'bracketing' will be discussed in the section on poststructural educational ethnography.

The benefits of an ethnographic approach include its applicability and flexibility in dynamic social environments (Conteh, 2005a; Creswell, 2008; Freebody, 2003). To experience the dynamics of such environments, the ethnographer needs to be present 'in the field' for significant amounts of time. This situatedness supports rich and nuanced contextualisations of settings and the multilayered practices, processes and meaning-making that occur within them (Gordon et al., 2007; Lillis, 2008; Van Loon, 2007; Youdell, 2006a). Face-to-face interactions personalise the ethnographer to participants and vice versa, and facilitate the reading or double-checking of tone, non-verbal cues and intended meanings. Engaging in observation and dialogue with participants may also allow the ethnographer to recognise "...a contrast between what people say and what they actually

do” (Hammersley, 2006, p.10). Participants may themselves be unaware of such disjunctures brought about by contextual factors. The empirical nature of ethnographic data means that it can be used to practically ground, support or contest abstract theories about everyday life experiences. Such data is therefore more durable than theoretical fads (Atkinson et al., 2007) as it may be perceived and interpreted in multiple ways (Fetterman, 2009; Conteh, 2005a). The exploration of different or alternative perspectives in the field may offer a deeper understanding of the issue at hand in order to work towards social justice in a more informed way (Conteh, 2005a; Hammersley, 2006; Popoviciu, Haywood & Mac An Ghail, 2006).

However, an ethnographic approach also has limitations. For instance, the predominant focus on the identification of commonalities does not acknowledge the existence of “...gaps, fragmentations and contradictions within cultures” (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, pp.82-83). Therefore, an ongoing tension exists between focusing on part or whole, local or global, diversity or universality (McLeod & Thomson, 2009) though some ethnographers attempt to address both in their research (Gall et al., 2007). Here, local data may be contextualised more broadly in order to further understand larger issues, relations or cultures (Creswell, 2008; Fetterman, 2009; Gall, et al., 2007; McLeod & Thomson, 2009). Another key issue is how cultural knowledge is attained, particularly as “...ethnography tends to lend to the view of knowledge as preconstituted through social or cultural background rather than dynamically recreated between individuals” (Gregory, 2005, p.xxii). Thus, “...the task of ethnography and other qualitative research traditions is to determine how cultural factors and human agency interact with each other to co-determine social life” (Gall et al., 2007, p.503). One of the main limitations of ethnography is that whatever the ethnographer writes about/for others – it is always only a representation and therefore inevitably partial, constructed and non-neutral (Freebody, 2003; Gall et al., 2007; Gregory, 2005; Hammersley, 2006; Lillis, 2008; McLeod & Thomson, 2009; Van Loon, 2001). Thus, the ethnographer must be reflexive and self-conscious about their role and impact as researcher and be upfront about possible biases, prejudices and political or practical commitments (Fetterman, 2009; Hammersley, 2006; McLeod & Thomson, 2009). Such considerations mean that ethnographic studies are often labour intensive, emotionally exhausting and full of surprises and puzzlement (Lillis, 2008; Smith, 2007). The concept of time is also problematic as the ethnographer “...is in the awkward position of trying to write about a present or a setting that no longer exists,

or is in the process of inexorably changing” (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p.101). Additionally, being in the field for relatively short periods of time (as is the case for much contemporary ethnography) can often lead to shallow representation and generalisation that risks “...failing to recognize both cyclical variability and fundamental patterns of change” (Hammersley, 2006, p.6). Although I attempted to conduct fieldwork on different days of the school week in order to address cyclical variability, this was shaped by teacher preferences and sometimes ‘re-negotiated’ (Smith, 2007, p.165) on a weekly basis.

#### *4.2.2 Educational ethnography*

In the educational arena, ethnographers seek to make the familiar strange as they have previously experienced the school environment as a student (Gordon et al., 2001). This was particularly relevant for me, having attended the Independent school under study – which meant that I already had familiar knowledge about the overall ethos, layout and activities of the school and therefore had to be especially conscious of making the familiar strange. In making the familiar strange, it is important to remember that “...schools themselves are not naturalistic settings” (Gregory, 2005, p.xxi). So while the highly-structured, supervisory aspects of schools may seem familiar to us as past students, they are not ‘naturally’ occurring and rarely encourage ‘natural’ behaviour. This point is evidenced in the study by Opie and Opie (1969), where it is found that children are more relaxed and respectful to each other in more natural street settings rather than highly structured and supervised playground contexts.

Ethnographers may need to take on a non-judgemental ‘helper’ role in order to put the teacher of the classroom under observation at ease (Conteh, 2005a, p.103). On the other hand, ethnographers usually aim to “...establish a slightly less teacherly relationship with [the children] in the hope that this might lead to more open responses on their part” (Conteh, 2005a, p.104). This was one of the main sites of tension and negotiation that I experienced as an educational ethnographer. I tried to make my position clear from the outset by explaining to teachers that my role as ‘participant-observer’ did not involve teaching and disciplining students and that I would only intervene if it was a Duty of Care issue where students were at risk of hurting themselves or others and no teachers were present. Although teachers generally accepted this, there were times when I was still asked to supervise the class as an adult/teacher for a few

minutes while the teacher was briefly absent, thereby "...placing me in management situations that raised obvious tensions with my aims as a researcher" (Smith, 2007, p.168). During such times, while I refrained as much as possible from directing students to 'quieten down' etc., occasionally I felt it necessary to take on a more 'teacherly' or authoritative role in order to warn students about potential safety issues. In supervised and unsupervised contexts, students sometimes approached me of their own accord to ask for my help with class-work or peer-related issues. While I was happy to help students where I could, any disciplinary issues brought to my attention were re-directed to their teachers through the phrase "You'll need to talk to your teacher about that." The predominance of this 'less teacherly' approach meant that many (though not all) students allowed me to witness and/or hear things as a 'pseudo-friend' (Youdell, 2006a, p.66) that they may not have done had I been in a 'teacher' role.

As my study particularly focuses on upper-primary children from a sociological rather than psychological perspective, it is encouraging to note that:

...*social* study of childhood...has only been made possible through the use of ethnographic approaches, for what ethnography permits is a view of children as competent interpreters of the social world...a changed perspective which has steered researchers towards doing work 'with' rather than 'on' children (original emphasis – James, 2001, p.246 – drawing on the work of Alderson, 1995).

This recognition of children as agentic 'social actors' (James, 2001, p.250) is an important first step in sociology-based research. Educational ethnographers also need to take into account that children and programmes/policies "...are embedded in a dynamic social context of relationships, systems and cultural values" (Woodhead, 1996, p.10 – as cited in James, 2001, p.249). Therefore, a focus on *how* – not just *what* – children learn or are taught is imperative (James, 2001). A focus on *how* therefore requires a focus on interactions including "...*rules for membership* in interactions" (Gregory, 2005, pp.xviii-xix) and the "...enhancement and spread of certain kinds of interactions" (Freebody, 2003, p.90) such as 'responsible' interactions. Thus:

...what is normal, proper and appropriate in this educational setting, here and now – are made available to teachers and learners in talk, and in the varieties of other communicational forms they use. Students learn not only about curricular content, and not only about the

communication patterns that characterize acceptable educational practice around that content, but also about the structure of society, the place and function of schooling, their place as students, and the nature, significance and consequences of their learning (Freebody, 2003, p.91).

In other words, students learn how to become 'responsible students' and 'responsible citizens' through the formal and informal interactions they have at school. Such explicit and implicit or 'hidden' curriculum is noted by Jackson (1968) in terms of shaping students' understandings and experiences of school.

#### *4.2.3 Poststructuralist educational ethnography*

A traditional or realist ethnography usually presents "...an objective account of the situation, typically written in the third-person point of view, reporting objectively on the information learned from participants at the field site" (Creswell, 2008, p.475). Such 'bracketing' is problematic because it fails to recognise that the researcher shapes the research context, data and analysis, and further, that broader socio-cultural discourses shape the researcher and the researched (Youdell, 2006a). I hope to address these concerns through the employment of a poststructuralist educational ethnography with deconstructionist and reconstructionist components. The deconstructionist component enables the 'undoing' (Butler, 2005, p.136) of 'responsible' subjectivities constructed through power relations, discourses and stereotypes that work to normalise and marginalise; while the reconstructionist component offers potential alternatives or solutions in order to envisage a way forward.

Patti Lather (2001), drawing on the work of Butler (1995), Foucault (1998) and de Certeau (1984), depicts ethnography as a 'ruin,' 'productive site of doubt' and/or 'an art of being in between' (pp.477-478, 481). Poststructuralist ethnography therefore involves an acknowledgement of limitations and the problematisation or 'troubling' of claims to essentialised representation and categorisation (Lather, 2001, pp.481-482; Lather & Smithies, 1997, p.xvii; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.2). In other words, researchers are not neutral, participants are not homogenous, data is generated rather than collected, and interpretations are always partial and contextual (Popoviciu et al., 2006; Lillis, 2008; Youdell, 2006a). Poststructuralist ethnography is therefore open to heterogeneity and 'the play of difference' (Lather, 2001, p.478). This openness to difference involves

'working' borders or boundaries (Lather, 2001, p.481; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.6) particularly of "...normative, hegemonic, and exclusionary ideologies and practices..." (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.3). Such ideologies and practices may also influence researcher perceptions and experiences and therefore require self-reflexivity (Blaise, 2005).

A potent example of poststructuralist educational ethnography is that of Deborah Youdell's *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities* (2006). As discussed in the literature review, her study on students in the high-school context employs poststructuralist theory in order to critically examine how the everyday, taken-for-granted discursive practices of teachers and students work to constitute and include/exclude students in stereotypical and dichotomous ways. Methodologically, Youdell (2006) argues that reflexivity must move beyond listing identity categories and their potential effects on perception and experience in order to more critically consider how and why such categories have been constructed in the first place. Therefore, in poststructuralist ethnographies "...it is not so much a question of *who* the researcher and researched are but *how* they are produced in these terms" (Youdell, 2006a, p.63). So while I may identify or be identified as a White, middle-class, heterosexual, female in her 20s, who, depending on the context, is likely to experience advantage through some categories (i.e. White, middle-class, heterosexual) more than others (i.e. female compared to male); from a poststructuralist perspective, such identity categories and the advantages or disadvantages they afford are not naturally existing but are perpetually constituted and reinforced through broader societal discourses. However, the researcher and researched have agency to dynamically, (un)intentionally and often contradictorily engage with, negotiate or challenge these discourses within discursive constraints (Youdell, 2006a). While such deconstruction necessarily unravels the power relations at play in the discursive construction of 'responsible' subjectivities; it seems a hopeless, even negligent endeavour not to draw on this knowledge to rework the threads in transformative and perhaps more inclusive ways.

Our constructed subjectivities are continuously being 'undone' by others in order to facilitate ethics, as elaborated by Butler (2005):

Perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human.



To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient 'I' as a kind of possession. If we speak and try to give an account from this place, we will not be irresponsible, or, if we are, we will surely be forgiven (p.136)

Catalysts for this 'undoing' such as the tension between domination and freedom (Foucault, 2002) and whether or not to heed the call/demand/accusation/election of responsibility for the other (Levinas, 2006a, 2006b) may result in thinking, feeling, saying and/or acting towards the other in ways that call into question the characteristics of 'kindness,' 'fairness' or 'responsibility' that one may ordinarily espouse. Such fracturing moments or 'site[s] of rupture' (Butler, 2005, p.24) can provide us with 'critical openings' (Butler, 2005, p.24) or ethical opportunities to 'monitor, test, improve and transform' (Foucault, 1985, p.28), 'reconstitute' (Foucault, 2002[1976], p.116), 'resignify' (Butler, 1997a, p.69) and 'reinscribe' (Youdell, 2004, p.481) ourselves. Reconstruction of this kind occurs not only at the individual level but on a broader social scale. Social reconstructionism or transformativism "...does not advocate a particular portrait of a reconstructed society" (Bondy & McKenzie, 1999, p.132). However, it does advocate the reformation of society in ways that better support: diversity, pluralism, equality, human rights, social justice, social critique and empowerment for social action and change (Bondy & McKenzie, 1999; Licona, 2005; Mertens, 2010; Parks, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2003; Weltman, 2003); interconnectedness and interdependence of the 'human family' (Ukpokodu, 2003), natural environment (Bonnett, 2009) and spirituality (hooks, 2003; Shahjahan, 2005); and "...the values of empathy and caring, and the responsibility needed to sustain these" (Ukpokodu, 2003, p.75). Such individual and social regeneration is therefore a necessary process of ethics and social justice.

#### **4.3 Multiple methods approach**

Multiple data collection methods are often recommended for ethnographic studies (Gall, et al., 2007; Gregory, 2005; Hammersley, 2006) in order to paint a more detailed, holistic picture of understandings and experiences (Lillis, 2008) and "...ensure the integrity of the data" (Fetterman, 2009, p.552). For Jackson (1968), whose study involved observations, student responses to a questionnaire, and interviews with 50 teachers, understanding life

in school classrooms required a range of methods and careful consideration of the multiple perspectives at play:

[c]lassroom life...is too complex an affair to be viewed or talked about from any single perspective. Accordingly, as we try to grasp the meaning of what school is like for students and teachers we must not hesitate to use all the ways of knowing at our disposal. This means we must read, and look, and count things, and talk to people, and even muse introspectively over the memories of our own childhood (pp.vii-viii).

Jackson's approach, using multiple methods and perspectives, established an important precedent for subsequent educational ethnographies (Hansen, Driscoll, Archilla, & Jackson, 2007). I therefore applied a range of methods and perspectives for data generation and analysis. In terms of data generation I employed the qualitative ethnographic methods of participant observation, semi-structured individual and/or focus group interviews, and document archiving (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Freebody, 2003; Hammersley, 2006; Hatch, 2002; McLeod & Thomson, 2009). In terms of analysis, I engaged with thematic discourse analysis drawing on the work of Foucault, Butler and Levinas as outlined in my theoretical framework. As noted by Nayak & Kehily (2008), the creative tensions or contradictions arising from such different perspectives "...can be utilized in the search for a more complex, but ultimately more meaningful understanding of young lives" (p.18). The methods utilised for data generation and analysis are outlined in the following sections.

#### *4.3.1 Participant observation*

Characteristic of most ethnographies and an imperative element of fieldwork is participant observation (Fetterman, 2009). While definitions may vary, participant observation usually involves 'immersion' (Fetterman, 2009, p.554) in a 'natural setting' (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001, p.352) in order to investigate, experience, understand and represent the social phenomenon under study from the participants' points of view (Emerson et al., 2001; Hatch, 2002). The role of 'participant observer' ambiguously involves a tension between subjective 'insider' participation and objective 'outsider' distance (Hammersley, 2006, pp.4, 11; Fetterman, 2009, p.553; Gregory, 2005, p.xxi;

McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p.83) as participant observers are “...never either non-participant or fully participant” (Youdell, 2006a, p.68). In my interactions with staff and students, I therefore aimed to be an approachable, respectful and empathetic but professional ‘social chameleon’ (Youdell, 2006a, p.66). This meant that while I was able to smile or laugh along with participants during fieldwork, I also tried to avoid making judgemental comments to participants about the practices and interactions I was observing. In doing so, I hoped to ‘fit in’ with participants so that they felt more at ease with my presence.

Yet I never seemed to completely fade into the background and therefore recognise that my presence would have somehow impacted on participants resulting in ‘reactiv[ely]’ (Hammerlsey, 2006, p.5) ‘distort[ing]’ (Blaise, 2005, p.91) data and even “chang[ing] the community itself” (Dennis, 2009, p.131). While I mostly observed rather than participated in classroom activities in order to record detail, minimise disruption, and avoid taking on a ‘teacherly’ role (as described previously); teachers and students still involved me in lessons through conversational asides, questions, or even naming one of the characters in a collaboratively-written story after me (as was the case at Northfield School). Maintaining rapport with both teachers and pupils who competed for my attention and loyalty therefore involved ‘boundary spanning’ (LeCompte et al., 1999 – cited by Smith, 2007, p.168). Teachers often directed ‘knowing’ adult-to-adult looks or smiles at me in moments of hilarity or exasperation at something that students had said or done. Students frequently looked my way and some smiled, made faces, called out, ‘showed off,’ asked me to sit next to them or came over for a brief chat on their way around the room. I responded as naturally and good-humouredly as possible, though sometimes (especially when the teacher was talking) I felt obliged to respond to student attention quietly, non-verbally or not at all, so that they (and I) were less likely to ‘get in trouble.’ At such times, it was difficult not to feel like ‘one of the kids’ all over again. This was further reinforced by my relatively young age of 24 (at the time of data collection) which meant that I could readily relate to much of the popular culture and experiences of students. On the other hand, my recent graduation from a primary education degree meant that I could empathise with many of the challenges primary teachers face on a day-to-day basis. It also meant that the older, more experienced teachers felt comfortable sharing their expertise with someone who could empathise and ‘learn from’

them – although there were also times when some asked for my opinion or advice as a researcher and I attempted to reply in a balanced and non-judgemental way.

Beyond the classroom, the playground offered more opportunities for informal participation or ‘hanging out’ with students, though these opportunities were usually ‘invitation-only’ (Youdell, 2006a, p.67). During formal assemblies, church services and sporting events I felt obliged yet comfortable enough to actively participate (through clapping, praying and cheering where appropriate) and refrained from taking fieldnotes until after these events had concluded.

One of the most prominent data collection techniques for ethnographic studies in general and participant observation in particular is the writing of fieldnotes (Hatch, 2002). How fieldnotes are written varies from ethnographer to ethnographer, however it is important to make sure that they are intelligible for future readings and analysis (Emerson, et al., 2001). Fieldnotes are usually “...written more or less *contemporaneously* with the events, experiences and interactions they describe and recount” (Emerson, et al., 2001, p.353). However, when it is inappropriate or dangerous to record notes in the immediate setting “...most ethnographers use their trained recall to record the information immediately after the event when necessary, typically using paper and pen” (Fetterman, 2009, p.565). As mentioned previously, assemblies, church services and other whole-school gatherings seemed inappropriate settings for the immediate writing of fieldnotes because parents, students, teachers, and clergy may have found it too confronting or disrespectful. Similarly, ‘chatting’ with students or participating in games of handball or chess during playtime was more readily achieved without pen and paper in hand. However, the recall of such events is generally less reliable than immediate records (Fetterman, 2009) as it involves “...working against the passage of time...” (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, pp.84-85). With this in mind, I made a conscious effort to record as much detail as possible in my raw fieldnotes in order to minimise over-dependence on memory for ‘filling in’ (Hatch, 2002, p.77) the blanks at a later point. Therefore, most of my fieldnotes remain in their original form without any drastic ‘transformations’ (Emerson et al., 2001, p.362), although further contextual information is offered in my analysis where necessary (and where I could remember!).

As it is impossible to record everything, fieldnotes are therefore partial, incomplete and selective representations (Emerson, et al., 2001; Hatch, 2002; McLeod & Thompson, 2009; Youdell, 2006a). Operating “...more as a filter than a mirror reflecting

the ‘reality’ of events” (Emerson, et al., 2001, p.358), fieldnotes are mediated by the theoretical and discursive frames of the observer (Emerson et al., 2001; Youdell, 2006a). Therefore, my subjectivity, interest in ‘responsibility,’ and the theoretical insights into power relations and tensions between ‘self and other’ I have drawn on (as outlined in my theoretical framework) provide a lens through which I perceive, record, and analyse data. If another ethnographer were to generate and analyse fieldnotes from the same sites at the same time – even with the same topic and theoretical framework – they may still end up with different results. In recognition that ethnographic fieldnotes may be interpreted in multiple ways (Atkinson et al., 2001; Fetterman, 2009), I have written them in first person rather than third person in order to avoid slipping into “...an *omniscient point of view*...” (original emphasis – Emerson, et al., 2001, p.360).

Sites and ‘moments’ of observation are also driven by “...hunches, opportunism, students’ suggestions and entreaties as well as the demands, and perhaps more significantly limitations, of field relationships” (Youdell, 2006a, p.68). The most notable example of opportunistic selectivity I experienced during fieldwork was requesting to observe (and interview) an extra (Yr 6) class of students, some of whom were informally described by their teacher as ‘strange characters.’ The main limitation I encountered was not being able to be in two places at the same time. Recess therefore became a time to build rapport with staff, which meant that playground observations occurred mostly at lunchtime.

#### *4.3.2 Individual and focus group interviews*

Interviews are a particularly useful means of collecting “...rich, detailed data directly from participants...” (Sherman Heyl, 2001, p.369). This data may provide insights into “...the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds...often hidden from direct observation and taken for granted by participants...” (Hatch, 2002, p.91). In this way, interviews assist the ethnographer to better contextualise their observations (Fetterman, 2009). Interview types include informal (on the spot) or formal (structured, semi-structured, focus-group). I employed both informal and formal semi-structured and focus-group interview techniques during fieldwork.

Informal interviews are more casual than formal interviews and offer insights into participant reactions to or reflections of observed events in the immediate context (Hatch, 2002). In terms of my own fieldwork, informal interviews occurred: in the staffroom at recess with teachers; in the playground at lunchtime with the teacher on duty and/or students; and during, between and after lessons with either teachers or students. For effective informal interviewing, researchers require good listening skills and the ability to “...create pertinent questions on the spot” (Hatch, 2002, p.93). As informal interviews occur in close proximity to observable action or events “...they are usually not the place for taking out a tape-recorder or trying to write verbatim notes” (Hatch, 2002, p.93). This is particularly relevant for making participants feel at ease, as “[i]nformal interviews are also useful for establishing and maintaining healthy rapport” (Fetterman, 2009, p.554). To avoid ‘scaring off’ participants with a barrage of questions, my informal interactions were more conversational, reciprocal and initiated by participants who came over to ‘chat’ about their own and others’ (including my own) practices, experiences, interests, views and feelings. While most students were happy to say hello or give me their opinion about this or that, only a handful were ‘key informants’ (Fetterman, 2009) who provided further contextual and interpersonal information on a regular basis.

Semi-structured interviews involve a set of key issues that are flexibly explored by pursuing areas, ideas or examples that participants raise as relevant (Freebody, 2003; Hatch, 2002). More specifically in the educational arena, this freedom of exploration is empowering as it “...provides a ballast for children against demands set by the adult world...” (James, 2001, p.255). I therefore conducted semi-structured focus group interviews/discussions with students and semi-structured individual interviews with principals and teachers. In these interviews, questions were open-ended and participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002)<sup>4</sup>. However, I learnt much from my first focus-group interview where I nervously followed the guiding questions too strictly and interactions became more structured and stilted. Therefore, the questions pursued became more dependent on the interests of each group and some fictional ethical dilemmas (suggested by myself) were included to prompt further discussion when time permitted. The remainder of the focus-group interviews were therefore conducted in a more relaxed and conversational manner and yielded

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 7 for the list of questions guiding the semi-structured interviews conducted in my study.

more open and extensive responses. There were times when I was asked questions or shared stories in more of a 'two-way process' advocated by Sara Delamont (in an interview by Walford, 2007, p.151). However, the majority of the time I limited self-disclosure in order to minimise unduly influencing student responses (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002). Further, as I asked most of the questions and participants did most of the talking, "...the socially accepted rules of conversation and reciprocity between people [remained] suspended" (Walford, 2007, p.147) during interviews.

Particularly important to ethnographic interviewing is the establishment and maintenance of trust, respect, and rapport between interviewer and interviewee (Sherman Heyl, 2001). The provision of a comfortable interview setting is a good place to start (Hatch, 2002). In order to maximise audio-recording capabilities and comfort (i.e. chairs and air-conditioning/heating), interviews were conducted inside school buildings. Principals chose to be interviewed in their offices and teachers mostly chose to be interviewed in their classrooms. While Fairview School and Northfield School had spare 'tutorial' rooms that could be booked for interview purposes, Riverside School offered the staffroom or computer-room as options. Most students chose to be interviewed in the staffroom despite staff (including the principal and class teacher) walking in and out on occasion and commenting on the discussion. Although students from this school may have felt more 'under surveillance,' this did not seem to prevent many from sharing personal opinions or examples that may have been met with disapproval by staff members.

To maintain rapport during interviews, I tried to be as natural and well-mannered as possible while actively listening to what participants had to say (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002). Active listening included being sensitive to short or guarded responses and closed body language (e.g. crossed arms, looking away) signalling discomfort or embarrassment. Although these moments were rare (especially after my first interview), they required respectful, supportive and empowering prompts, a tactful change of topic (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002) or comic relief through humour. At no time were participants forced to contribute. Walford (2007) notes that "...while the interviewer generally has greater power to classify and frame the situation, the interviewee has the ultimate sanction of withholding information" (p.150). This was carried to the extreme by one usually vocal student who declined to comment on any of the questions even though she was frequently invited to. According to Butler (2005), "[s]ilence in these instances

either calls into question the legitimacy of the authority invoked by the question and the questioner or attempts to circumscribe a domain of autonomy that cannot or should not be intruded upon by the questioner” (p.12). As this student was of Indigenous heritage, there may have been cultural reasons for not wanting to have her voice recorded – though I did not question her about this. Instead, she seemed content to listen and ‘hang out’ with her friends. Although the other students in this group initiated a brief discussion on the potential unfairness of this and whether she should be sent back to class, I respected her rights as participant not to comment and allowed her to stay. At the end of interviews, participants were given the opportunity to offer final comments and thanked for their time and valuable insights in order to ensure a sense of respectful closure (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002).

One of the main critiques of interviewing as a data collection method is that interviewers “...make questionable inferences from what is said in particular interview contexts to events, attitudes and/or behaviour beyond these contexts” (Hammersley, 2006, p.9). In other words, the interviewer cannot grasp the full meaning of what is said by the interviewee without the same contextual knowledge and experience. From a poststructuralist ethnographic perspective, it is argued that participant and interviewer meanings are co-constructed, negotiated and discursively shaped by context and discourse (Hammersley, 2006; Sherman Heyl, 2001; Tanggaard, 2009; Walford, 2007). Personal narratives and representations are therefore “...closely intertwined with those of others...” (Tanggaard, 2009, p.1504) and may be ‘polyphonically’ (Tanggaard, 2009, p.1499) voiced through multiple and potentially conflicting discourses. As “[s]ome things can only be said at certain moments, under certain conditions” (Blommaert, 2005, p.65 – cited by Lillis, 2008, p.366) then “[i]nterviewees will select their words with care, and will moderate what they have to say to the particular circumstances” (Walford, 2007, p.147). The formal interview context with its focus on ‘responsibility’ and (adult) interviewer presence may have led to restricted participant responses. Principals and teachers may have felt obliged to portray their schools/classes in a favourable light – though one teacher was particularly honest about staff politics ‘on the record.’ Although students limited, ‘beeped out’ or apologised for swearing, most shared very personal insights, opinions and experiences – even disclosing times when they had not been responsible. Such responses went well beyond what participants may have perceived to be the expected answers.



My decision to conduct focus-group rather than individual interviews with students was based on ethical, methodological and logistical considerations. Firstly, I believed that students would feel more comfortable and empowered to speak with the support of their peers where 'power in numbers' was more likely to disrupt hierarchies of adult-child, researcher-participant. Secondly, groups of about 6-12 participants can generate discussion and insights into group dynamics and negotiation of meaning (Hatch, 2002) including "...the contradictions and the tensions and the dilemmas and the problems and so on" (Bob Jeffrey – in an interview with Walford, 2007, p.153). Thirdly, with the majority of students interested in participation, interviewing students in groups rather than on an individual basis limited the number of times students and myself were absent from class.

However, there were also limitations to this approach as symbolised by one student asking about the possibility of an individual interview instead. While students were placed in a group with at least one (sometimes all) of their top 5 peers (usually friends) nominated by secret (or not-so-secret) ballot; inevitably, some students (especially less popular peers) ended up in groups with someone they had nominated who may not have reciprocated and therefore resented their presence. To address this, I informed students of their groups as soon they had been arranged in order to allow them time to accept this information, explained that everyone had at least one of the peers they nominated in their group, and quietly allowed swaps when they were requested (only two or so in total). Another issue with focus-groups is that they can work to inhibit rather than encourage the sharing of personal opinions or experiences for fear that such information will be repeated or misused by peers. Before interviews commenced, I reminded students of their rights to confidentiality in terms of my research (unless they were in danger) but warned them to avoid sharing anything that they did not want repeated by their peers. Another potential inhibiting factor is that some students (want to) provide examples involving other people in the group. In one case, this led to an awkward discussion about 'the person who sits next to me and copies my work' who was actually one of the people in the room. In such moments, my strategy was to focus on the issue at hand (i.e. copying work) rather than the person and tactfully change the subject. Occasionally I also needed to remind students of the expectation that they respect each other's opinions and avoid personal attacks. In making sure that everyone had the opportunity to contribute, focus group discussions went for longer than the anticipated

0.5-1 hour at an average of 1-1.5 hours. While most students were happy to chat (or stay out of class) for as long as possible, stretch/drink/toilet breaks became even more essential.

Smaller principal and teacher numbers meant that individual interviews were more achievable. In these interviews, principals and teachers were given the opportunity to talk about their conceptualisations of responsibility, and how they think students should and do demonstrate it. Two teachers requested to look over the questions right before the interview began and another held onto the question sheet and read out the questions herself. I could empathise with their apparent nervousness and need for some sort of grip on the situation so was happy to oblige. As interviews progressed and stories were shared and laughed over, any nervousness from both sides gradually subsided. However, I found the interviews with principals to be the most challenging given their position of authority as gatekeepers. When interviewing the two male principals (whose interviews were the shortest), I especially found that I spoke more softly than usual – perhaps to maximise a version of ‘vulnerable, passive, voiceless and fragile’ (Gonick, 2006, p.1) femininity in order to minimise my position of authority as researcher which they may have found too confronting.

All individual and focus group interviews were recorded with a digital-audio recorder, which enabled me to maintain the flow of conversation and capture verbatim data which was revisited as often as necessary (Fetterman, 2009; Freebody, 2003). Brief introductions acted as an ‘ice-breaker’ (Fetterman, 2009, p.556) and allowed participants to familiarise themselves with the recording equipment and interview context and establish important demographic information, as well as assisted in the identification of voices when transcribing (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002). Instead of depending entirely on student introductions to identify who said what, I asked students to ‘take it in turns’ to speak and made a conscious effort to invite or thank participants by name for their contributions. This was more difficult when students spoke at the same time – often to confirm, contest or add more detail to the examples being discussed. Students were eager to listen to their voices after the focus-group discussions so we listened to our introductions with much cringing and laughter before going back to class. I transcribed these audio-recordings myself in order to maintain confidentiality and respectfully ‘listen to’ (Sherman Heyl, 2001, pp.375-376) participant voices. Instead of showing transcripts to participants, I reminded them at the beginning of the interview that they could withdraw

comments they regretted saying during the interview process by saying ‘take that out please’ or ‘don’t tell anyone this’ etc. Only a few did so in relation to swearing, bantering, and hyper-personal examples – however none were serious enough for Duty of Care intervention.

#### *4.3.3 Documents and artefacts*

A range of ‘unobtrusive data’ (Hatch, 2002, p.117) or textual material was available in the form of policies, codes of conduct, brochures, photographs, prospectuses, songs, pledges, mission statements, annual reports and newsletters – most of which was publicly accessible on school websites. As such texts are “...powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions” (Hatch, 2002, p.117), they allowed further insights into the explicit and implicit ways that responsibility is (re)constructed and disseminated in the school community and beyond. This information helped to contextualise schools and offer comparative insights between stated aims and actual practices where apparent.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

Analysis, particularly of an ethnographic kind, is often a ‘messy’ (Gregory, 2005, p.xxiii) process, requiring a substantial level of planning and organisation in order to “...mak[e] sense of the mountains of data collected in the field” (Fetterman, 2009, p.544). However, such sense-making does not require exhaustive coding of data, but rather “...the detailed unpicking of the minutiae of discursive practices” (Youdell, 2006a, p.70) evident in examples that are of particular interest. The examples of particular interest for this study involved the discursive construction of responsibility in general and moments of contradiction and disjunction in particular. From the plethora of examples available, I eventually selected a small number of vignettes that typify the issues raised among students and educators across the three schools. As discussed previously, I acknowledge that such decisions about data to be included for analysis are always partial and reflect the researcher’s own interests and positionality. As data generation and analysis occurred simultaneously and inseparably (Fetterman, 2009; Youdell, 2006a), informal analysis involved the recording of data I perceived as relevant to my study (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002). Formal analysis involved a ‘multilevel approach’ (Gregory, 2005, p.xxii) which enabled “[i]ntersecting analyses...beyond foci of single perspectives” (Gordon, et

al., 2001, p.199). Data was therefore analysed from a number of theoretical perspectives including that of Foucault, Butler and Levinas as outlined in my theoretical framework. Inductive and deductive thematic discourse analysis (involving the identification of themes including dominant and marginalised discourses) was also applied as described in the following sections.

#### *4.4.1 Thematic discourse analysis*

Thematic analysis involves a search for patterns or similarities within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2008; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Fetterman, 2009) that signal shared understandings or experiences. Thematic analysis can be flexibly applied within a range of theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While usually associated with phenomenology, searching for patterns in data is actually a key concern of any theoretical tradition (including poststructuralism). This is because deductive thematic analysis involves the application of theory-driven concepts and themes that: a) assume the existence of certain patterns of human experience; and b) require a significant pattern of examples from the data in order to validate theoretical claims (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). On the other hand, inductive analysis involves data-driven themes based on patterns discovered in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These themes are usually based on the language/terms used by participants, rather than theoretical concepts employed by the researcher. For my study, I utilised both inductive and deductive thematic analysis in a 'hybrid' approach similar to Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006).

The researcher plays an active role in identifying or constructing patterns or themes that are of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They are responsible for actively engaging with and analysing the data, and should avoid simply stringing a collection of extracts together, using the questions asked as themes, or ignoring "...the tensions and inconsistencies within and across data items" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89). Attention to such tensions, inconsistencies, disjunctures and particularities is of importance from a poststructuralist ethnographic perspective, and is further supported through the discourse aspect of thematic discourse analysis.

The discourse aspect of thematic discourse analysis involves the identification of discourses as themes. Basically the same as standard discourse analysis, it is a type of

analysis “where broader assumptions, structures and/or meanings are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.85). While an essentialist or phenomenological perspective focuses on meaning and experience as inherently and intrinsically personal; a constructionist perspective argues that meanings are socially (re)produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006), usually through dominant discourses. As discussed in the theoretical framework, I argue that meaning involves the personal and the social.

Discourses are “...practices for producing meaning, forming subjects and regulating conduct within particular societies and institutions, at particular historical times” by establishing what “...will count as truth, knowledge, moral values, normal behaviour and intelligible speech” (McLure, 2003, Appendix 1). Dominant discourses are evident when “...power becomes concentrated in the hands of certain groups at the expense of others, according to social class, gender, ethnicity” (McLure, 2003, Appendix 1). Discourse analysis therefore involves “...render[ing] even Discourses with which we are familiar ‘strange’...” (Gee, 2005, p.102) in order to explore how language and text are implicated in the social construction of subjectivities and social relations (Fairclough, 1992, p.137) and the ways power operates to shape the self and the social. In relation to the educational context, “...any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry” (Foucault, 1984c - cited in Fairclough, 1992, p.51). Educational texts, in particular, govern educational understanding and practice (Freebody, 2003), such as school mission statements that emphasise certain values, principles and limits (Schostak, 2002). Understanding such political processes is required in order to catalyse social change on a larger scale through the ‘democratisation’ of discourse or “...the removal of inequalities and asymmetries in the discursive and linguistic rights, obligations and prestige of groups of people” (Fairclough, 1992, p.201). Thus, my study aims to contribute to the movement of democratisation of discourse by developing insights into the discourses influencing student understandings and experiences of responsibility.

In the application of thematic discourse analysis, I have taken more of a sociological, rather than linguistic approach. This means that analysis of written texts focus on “...the kinds of ideological and cultural work done by a text, without necessarily offering any detailed taxonomic analysis of textual materials...” (Freebody, 2003, pp.180-181). However, I am still interested in significant examples of: grammar, word meaning,

wording, metaphor, intertextuality, coherence and conditions of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). A focus on grammar involves: process types and participants favoured; the presence of active/passive voice; nominalisation of processes; agency; causality; the presence and frequency of themes; and most importantly for this study – attribution of responsibility (Fairclough, 1992). The word meaning/s and meaning potential of ‘key words’ can assist the identification of hegemony (dominance) and any consequent struggle or resistance to this (Fairclough, 1992, p.236). Identification of metaphors and their juxtaposition with other metaphors used for similar meaning elsewhere can assist in understanding what factors have determined the choice of metaphor, and the resulting effects of this on thinking and practice (Fairclough, 1992). Intertextuality involves references to other texts or events, with a particular focus on discourse representation (context, style, ideology, demarcation, voice, contextualisation) and presupposition (sincere/manipulative or polemical links to prior texts, and instances of metadiscourse or irony) (Fairclough, 1992). Coherence involves a consideration of any ambivalence and consequent inferential work required (and resulting construction of subjects); as well as any resistant interpretations by particular sorts of interpreters (Fairclough, 1992). Conditions of discourse practice specify “the social practices of text production and consumption associated with the type of discourse the sample represents” (Fairclough, 1992, p.233), taking into account contextual factors. Such contextual factors could include the social structuring and social relations of groups “...that help regulate behaviour” (Fetterman, 2009, p.549), and rituals undertaken by groups (Creswell, 2008; Fetterman, 2009) as “...repeated patterns of symbolic behaviour...a form of cultural shorthand” (Fetterman, 2009, p. 550).

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations**

According to Hammersley (2006) “...we can probably all agree that being an ethnographer today is neither an unproblematic nor a very comfortable role” (p.11). Instead, it is a role that requires many ethical considerations. While “[b]ehaving ethically in the field is a complex, dynamic endeavour...” involving “continual deliberation” (Dennis, 2010, pp.123, 124), principles to guide research practice typically include:

*Non-maleficence*: that researchers should avoid harming participants.

*Beneficence*: that research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake.

*Autonomy or self-determination*: that the values and decisions of research participants should be respected.

*Justice*: that people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally (Beauchamp et al., 1982, pp.18-19 - as cited by Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 339).

Overall, I aimed to respect participants through: honesty; consent/permission; respecting rights to refuse/withdraw consent or remain silent; maintaining confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and coded data; nonjudgmental orientation and sensitivity to cultural norms; empathy; and reciprocity (Fetterman, 2009; Hatch, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Maso, 2001; Sherman Heyl, 2001).

Ethnographic research involves the establishment of relationships involving trust and in some cases attachment. The establishment of this trust takes time and may never be fully achieved. I became acutely aware of initial 'distrust' in me as a researcher by one of the school chaplains from Fairview School who semi-seriously asked "Are we under the microscope again today?" and checked whether I had a Christian background before the commencement of a Chapel service in order to confirm "So you get what we're doing here?" I assured him that I understood and accepted Christianity and this seemed to ease his concerns.

Once trust is (to some extent) established, this places the ethnographer at risk of 'partisanship' (Barbour, 2010, p.165) and participants "...at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer" (Stacy, 1988, p.23 – as cited by Gordon, et al., 2001, p.195). For me, the risk of partisanship was increased by my acquaintance with two teachers (from Fairview School and Northfield School) and one principal (from Fairview School), as well as previous attendance at one school (Fairview School). This meant that I had to be especially vigilant in generating and analysing data from these sources in an unbiased way and required critically engaging with instances that were questionable in terms of social justice. In doing so, I was torn between betraying participant trust and a 'moral obligation' (Barbour, 2010, p.167) to those on the receiving end of injustice,

particularly as “[s]ometimes, doing nothing is the most violent thing to do” (Zizek, 2008, p.183 – cited by Barbour, 2010, p.169).

The researcher is often the one in a more powerful or authoritative position in their relationship with participants. Teachers are particularly vulnerable because of their low occupational status and perception of subordination to educational researchers (Hatch, 2002). Therefore “...full disclosure of research intentions and the clear message that participation is voluntary are essential elements of genuine informed consent” (Hatch, 2002, p.67). Research intentions and participant rights were therefore presented in the information letters and consent forms and personally discussed during on-site meetings with principals and teachers. Children are more vulnerable than adults, and the power relationships between adult and child require “...an additional burden of responsibility” (James, 2001, p.253), particularly in regard to obtaining informed research consent (James, 2001). Here, “[a] genuine effort should be made to help children comprehend exactly what their participation will mean, and a thoughtful attempt to assess their degree of agreement should be a part of the research design” (Hatch, 2002, p.67). In order to make sure students were aware of what participation in my research entailed, we read through their information letters together in class and I answered any questions that arose. My legal obligation to report Duty of Care issues was also discussed and stated in the consent forms (Hatch, 2002). However, there was one instance when consent was brought up for renegotiation or ‘re-validation’ (Smith, 2007, p.170):

Brett comes over to check if I’m writing about him and Kimberly points out where I have on the page. He says “Stop writing about me!” and I’m not sure if he’s serious or joking. Then he says “Just write about me” and smiles. Kimberly retorts “You love yourself Brett” and he poses then sits down... Eventually, Brett comes over and sits on top of Kimberly’s desk to have a chat. He asks if I can read out something I’ve written about him so I quietly read out the ‘Don’t write about me’ section and he confirms that he was just joking (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 28 June 2011)

Given the opportunity to read some of my fieldnotes pertaining to him, Brett eventually confirms that he does not mind. In fact, he seems content for me to ‘just write about’ him.

In any case, the telling of another’s story is full of ethical dilemmas. Firstly, our telling can only ever be an interpretation and representation (Cortazzi, 2001; Kincheloe, 2004b), particularly from a poststructural perspective (Popoviciu et al., 2006; Lather,



2001; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Lillis, 2008; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Youdell, 2006a). Therefore, in analysing and presenting others' stories, including ethical or moral 'tales' (Plummer, 2001, pp.403-404), it was imperative that I reflected very carefully on them (Cortazzi, 2001) and "...stay[ed] as close to their intended meanings as possible" (Kearney, 2005, p.119). Secondly, the use of pseudonyms makes giving credit for participant insights problematic (Cortazzi, 2001). One teacher (Mr. Simmons of Fairview School) even stated that he wasn't "bothered about" confidentiality or anonymity in his interview because "[t]here wasn't anything I said there that I would regret." Many students wanted to keep their own names rather than be allocated a pseudonym. However, the effects of telling another's story are difficult to predict and participants "...may disagree with it after the words have been said; they may find it hovers over their life and has some impact upon them" and thus "...there is always the potential risk of harm and damage through the intrusion into someone else's life" (Plummer, 2001, p.403). Therefore, the use of pseudonyms was maintained for all participants in order to minimise potential regret or ramifications that could arise from direct identification. In doing so, I realise that I have privileged my authority as researcher by deciding "what is 'best' for them" (Smith, 2007, p.170).

While I did my best to treat all participants equally and as equals, there were times when this became problematic or was not (able to be) reciprocated. My age, femininity and heterosexuality seemed to be the main characteristics that affected my interactions with staff and students in all three schools. As mentioned previously, my 'youth' (including physical, verbal and idiosyncratic aspects) worked to ease hierarchical power relations of adult-child and researcher-participant while establishing trust with participants. Students mostly treated me as an older sibling or peer rather than an adult/teacher/researcher. One of the Yr 5 boys (Brett) from Northfield School frequently held out his hand for a 'high-five' and said I was 'cool;' while another (Jared) shared a host of 'Chuck Norris' jokes (most of which I thought were quite funny even though I was initially unsure who Chuck Norris actually was). A couple of Yr 6 girls from the same class called me their 'friend' and at one point, asked me to 'hang out' with them on the oval during lunchtime. They even felt comfortable enough to bring up the topic of sex and having babies (in general and not based on personal experience) in my presence and included me in the discussion by asking whether I had 'done it' and whether I was planning on having babies. This line of questioning not only brought about a moment of

embarrassed shock but also an ethical dilemma for me in terms of disclosure/non-disclosure. I believed that sharing such personal information was inappropriate (and would have been similarly perceived by teachers and parents) but also recognised that not doing so could damage rapport and trust because I would not be “...fully reciprocate[ing] in the unfolding social process that underpins [our] mutual acquaintance” (Smith, 2007, p.169). Feeling protective of these girls in a time of increasingly prevalent under-age sex and pregnancy, I was wary of saying anything that might encourage such events. Therefore, I avoided answering the first question as tactfully as possible by laughing it off and saying “I don’t think we need to discuss that” and vaguely responded to the second question by saying “Maybe in the future...no need to rush into that.” My almost ‘peer status’ amongst students, accompanied by my participation in their games and intentional avoidance of ‘telling on’ or disciplining them meant that some teachers may have questioned my competence as an adult/teacher. As one teacher (Mrs. Jenkins of Fairview School) rather pointedly stated in her interview in terms of teaching “It’s also your responsibility to also um, be an adult and um, respond to them appropriately...” There were many times when this teacher seemed exasperated at my passive or non-disciplinary stance to some of her students’ aggressive behaviour and felt the need to intervene on my behalf to remind them that “Natasha is a teacher like me and I’m sure she wouldn’t appreciate that.”

Any aggressive behaviour towards my presence was mostly displayed by some (though not all) male students in gendered and heterosexualised ways. Hyper-personal remarks about my physical appearance, intrusion into my personal space, and suggestive questions/comments were often used to subvert my authority as adult/teacher/researcher and ‘put me in my place’ as a female object of the male gaze (Robinson, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). In terms of my physical appearance, I adhered to a modest, smart-casual dress code to avoid unwanted attention (expressed by one of my undergraduate lecturers through the phrase “If you can look up it, down it, in it or through it – don’t wear it”). While I did not wear skirts or dresses at any time during research, some of my clothes could still be described as ‘feminine’ in terms of colour, material, and detail. My long, dyed-blond hair (which I prefer to wear out) and moderate amount of make-up may have also worked to reinforce dominant discourses of feminine heterosexuality. However, I felt more comfortable and presentable being dressed in this way. In any case, my physical appearance was critiqued in overt and covert ways. After

being told that I had missed out on the 'goodbye' party and food for one of the students earlier that day, one Yr 6 male student from Fairview School (Toby) remarked "That's good because it looks like you don't need to eat too much" although my relatively slim build would suggest otherwise. On another occasion, Toby commented "Hey – didn't you wear the same clothes yesterday? Isn't that old?" although I was wearing completely different clothes to the day before. While comments such as these may have been said in jest (and either responded to in kind or ignored), they nevertheless seemed to be aimed at undermining my confidence. Additionally, one male teacher (Mr. Williams from Northfield School) praised my physical appearance in front of the class by saying something like "Can I just say that you look lovely today?" to which I just laughed and said "Thanks" in self-conscious embarrassment. Such comments by male staff worked to legitimate the comments made by male students about my position as an object of the male gaze.

Masculine dominance was also physically asserted through (dis)possession of personal items and intrusion into my personal space. While my electronic Livescribe pen received admiring/curious comments from girls and boys alike, it seemed that male students were more likely to take possession of it. One Yr 6 boy (Scott) from Fairview School asked to briefly 'borrow' my electronic Livescribe pen (which I allowed), a Yr 5 boy (Blake) from Fairview School threatened to take away my ability to use it by suspending my 'pen license' for messy writing, and another Yr 5 boy (Brett) from Northfield School snatched it away from me (although he eventually gave it back). The phallic shape of the pen could symbolically represent (masculine) power, whereby my possession of such power (as a female) is challenged and reasserted as masculine in order to maintain gender norms. Two Yr 5 boys (Jared and Brett) from Northfield School also 'claimed' my chair as their own on separate occasions. In terms of intrusion, two Yr 6 boys (Curtis, Hayden) from Fairview School regularly tapped or touched the chairs in my vicinity every time they walked past. One of these boys (Hayden) flicked a pen-lid in my direction and narrowly missed. Another boy from the same class (Scott) was a regular 'intruder.' Although it was difficult not to laugh at his outlandish comments and antics (such as jumping out from behind something to 'scare' me or mock-threatening to 'decorate' my hair with a handful of grass), there were times when his conduct became inappropriate. For example, he sat down right next to me on a couple of occasions to the point where I felt the need to protest, swiftly remind him of the need for 'personal space' and/or move

away when reminders proved ineffective. He did apologise on several occasions (mostly of his own accord but sometimes on the advice of peers or the warning of teachers) in what seemed to be genuine contrition for “...not really being mean – just annoying.” This encroachment into my personal space not only occurred at an individual level, but on a larger scale during an illustration workshop held in the school library (with Roland Harvey):

I sit on the other side of the library on one of the window benches because last time I sat on the other side and couldn't see Roland drawing. Scott comes over and sits right next to me and leans into my shoulder. I laugh it off and start to get up but Mrs. Fraser tells him to sit on the floor and he does so. She also provides me with a plastic chair which I sit on instead. For some reason, the majority of the Yr 6 boys sit right in front of my chair and I have to keep on moving back my chair in order to make sure that there is an appropriate degree of distance. The Yr 6 boys keep saying my name and when they draw their own caricatures, Rory decides to draw me “with a melanoma in the middle of your forehead.” Toby also draws a very unflattering picture of me holding a dagger and Boyd does something similar. Some of the Yr 6 girls close-by, particularly Paige and Tanya tell the boys to “Stop it and leave Natasha alone.” But the boys seem to think that what they're doing is funny and I just laugh it off. Hayden brings over his picture of me and it kind of looks like Kindy-age stick figures and I'm not sure whether he's being silly or not. I ask him if that's his best work and he replies “I know I'm not a good drawer” and one of the boys adds “That's a 5/10 effort for him.” Hayden brings back his picture of me “with a friend” (another female) and I joke “Yeah – my imaginary friend” and he looks at me in shock and asks “Don't you have any friends?” and I laugh and say “Yeah! I was just joking!” I humourously threaten to draw unflattering caricatures of them but don't end up doing so. Eventually the unwanted attention results in Paige saying “Natasha – they're in love with you. They love you” and some of the other girls join in. This, in addition to the noise and unflattering drawings lead me to get up and move to the other side of the room next to some other Yr 6 (mostly female) students. Paige makes a love-heart with her hands and mouths “They love you” across the room. The boys continue to call out/then whisper (once I've made a ‘shoosh’ signal) my name and I smile and shake my head for the last time and then completely ignore them. Boyd and Hayden eventually come over to show me their work and I offer them some positive feedback (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 5 April 2011)

Perhaps my approach of ‘laughing things off’ and ‘shaking my head’ rather than directly challenging the behaviour of these Yr 6 boys may have escalated the situation. However, I believe that moving away from and ignoring these students during such times was still an appropriate and effective way to demonstrate my disapproval. I could have asserted my disapproval more vocally or strongly like Mrs. Fraser, Paige or Tanya by ordering them to

'stop' but this could have compromised the rapport/trust I had developed with students as a 'pseudo-friend.' Like Davies (1989) in the 'Queen of the World' episode in which she is verbally and physically attacked by a group of (predominantly male) pre-school students, "I decided not to pull adult rank in order to stop them" (p.94) unless things got really out of hand.

There were only a few instances involving the explicit threat and occurrence of physical violence. One Yr 5 boy (Brett) from Northfield School and one Yr 6 boy (Scott) from Fairview School whom other students said 'had a crush' on me, both pretended to 'shoot me' with their pens/pencils. This attention-seeking strategy could also be read as a reassertion of masculine power over my perceived feminine 'vulnerability' (Gonick, 2006) in accordance with gender and heterosexual norms. However, I refused this positioning through a "metaphorical construction of power" (Davies, 1989, p.107) whereby I blocked their 'shots' with an imaginary 'force-field' indicated by a sweeping wave of my hands and the retort "Sorry – force-field – can't get through." Yet both boys did not or could not accept this. Scott continued to pretend 'shooting' at me until the teacher told him to "Get on with your work and stop being silly." Brett semi-seriously crossed his arms in what seemed to be defeat or disapproval and then came over to stab his pen into my vicinity – close enough for it to be a real threat, even though he appeared to be 'joking around.' At that stage I responded by looking at him in a mixture of shock/humour/disapproval/warning. However, this threat of violence eventually became an occurrence on a couple of occasions towards the end of fieldwork when Brett poked me in the leg – an example of which is presented here:

Brett comes over to show me the short narrative he's written about cops and robbers. He sits at my feet next to my chair as I read it. Although there are many basic spelling mistakes, I offer positive feedback by saying "Cool" and Brett high-fives me. Gavin comes over to show me his story about a vicious dog called Pinky who ends up being killed. I comment "Aw – that's a sad story because the dog dies" while holding my hand to my heart (as I often idiosyncratically do). Brett mockingly impersonates my dramatic gesture and adds "It just breaks your heart." He then jokes "Don't cry Natasha. Aw – Natasha's gonna cry" and pats my knee. I feel uncomfortable about this physical contact but choose to ignore it. I remember that quite a few of the girls come over to give me a quick hug (e.g. Jennifer) and I don't tell them to go away because I don't want to hurt their feelings. Instead, I usually give them a quick pat on the back and then move away to get on with what I'm doing. Gavin, Brett and I laugh at our theatrics and Gavin sits down next to my chair as well. People volunteer to read their narratives (including Gavin) and I warn

Brett and Gavin to be quiet when people are talking by putting my finger to my lips, 'shoosh'ing and focusing on the person speaking. Brett starts poking my leg with his pen and I try to block him with my hand but he keeps going so I get up and move away to stand behind the teacher's desk as Brett claims my chair (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 28 June 2011).

My dramatic expression of empathy for the dog in Gavin's story seemed to remind Brett of my 'emotional' femininity whereby I was at risk of 'crying' and in need of comfort (i.e. patting my knee). However, when I tried to 'control' their talking in a way that challenged the normalised gender hierarchy, I was prodded into retreat where I felt the need to physically align myself with the authority of the teacher by standing behind the teacher's desk (although he was sitting elsewhere at the time).

Another important ethical consideration is 'giving back' to participants for their time and input. While my project did not focus on directly bringing about emancipatory change as in the 'critical participatory action ethnography' conducted by Dennis and colleagues (2009); I did provide participants with the opportunity to discuss their understandings and experiences of responsibility and many expressed 'I feel so important!' during the interview process. However, this may not have been enough for some. As "[a] population under study deserves something tangible in return" (Levinson, 2010, p.201), I also provided them with a 'thank you' card upon completion of my fieldwork and an executive summary of results upon the award of my thesis.

#### **4.6 Limitations and constraints**

As discussed throughout this chapter, the "...complexity of everyday life and the difficulty of understanding it..." (Kincheloe, 2004b, p.31), means that research will only ever be a partial (Berry, 2004, p.105; Creswell, 2008, p.474; Van Loon, 2001, p.280) interpretation and representation "...influenced by a plethora of social, cultural, political, economic, psychological, discursive and pedagogical dynamics" (Kincheloe, 2004b, p.34). Therefore, researchers should be humble in their claims by "...understanding that the knowledge they produce should not be viewed as a transhistorical body of truth" (Kincheloe, 2004b, pp.32-33) and should be open "...to public debate, interpretations, challenges, and judgements" (Schostak, 2002, p.64) on their work.

In applying a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological tools in the aim for some level of interdisciplinarity, one of the limitations of my study could be

superficiality which “...results when scholars, researchers, and students fail to devote sufficient time to understanding the disciplinary fields and knowledge bases from which particular modes of research emanate” (Kincheloe, 2004a, p.50). This is a particular issue for doctoral students who do not have a long timespan (Kincheloe, 2004a). However, “...the process can be named and the dimensions of a lifetime scholarly pursuit can be in part delineated” (Kincheloe, 2004a, p.51).

## **CHAPTER 5: RESPONSIBILITY IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION POLICY**

### **5.1 Responsibility in the policy context**

Stephen Ball's (1993) seminal work on policy as text, policy as discourse, policy as a process, and policy as situated in particular contexts acknowledges that policies are complex, contested and dynamic representations of meaning which can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. As policy documents are texts that attribute and are attributed meaning, they can therefore "be analysed in their own right" (Shaw, 2010, pp.205-206). However, such texts "do not exist in a vacuum" (Liasidou, 2008, p.485) because "they are always components of discourse and of social practices as well" (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p.68). As such, they "**enter**[]" rather than simply change[] power relations" (original emphasis – Ball, 1993, p.13). Policies therefore contain multiple discourses which are created, perpetuated, negotiated and/or contested by various social actors and interest groups (Audre, Mosen-Lowe, Vidovich & Chapman 2009; Ball, 1993, 2009; Nudzor, 2009; Shaw, 2010) and may contain internal tensions and contradictions to be scrutinised and resisted (Audre et al., 2009; Larsen, 2010; Nudzor, 2009). Engagement with such complexity requires critical qualitative policy analysis (Lather, 2006) in order to develop a nuanced understanding of the social and political contexts within which educational discourses of student responsibility are produced and to facilitate a consideration of how these discourses may in turn impact on students' understandings and experiences of responsibility. Such policies will now be contextualised in terms of the social practices, power relations and discourses working to shape them.

From the 1990s onwards, the creation and dissemination of education policy in Westernised countries such as Australia, the US and the UK has occurred in a climate of global reform agendas heavily influenced by neoliberalism and neoconservatism (Apple, 2005; 2009; Audre et al., 2009; Mawhinney, 2010). The neoliberal emphasis on efficiency, privatisation, marketisation and individualism has reconfigured education into a marketplace (Apple, 2005; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Ozga, 2009; Pykett, 2009; Youdell, 2004). Students are consequently redefined as: a) 'human capital' or future workers who require specific skills and attitudes in order to contribute effectively to the national economy (Apple, 2005; Brennan, 2011; Comber & Nixon, 2009); and b) 'consumers' who have the freedom and individual responsibility to choose which school to attend – although this choice is constrained by social factors and norms (Apple, 2005; Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose,



1999a; Suspitsyna, 2010; Wilkins, 2010). Paradoxically, this decentralisation and deregulation of education is coupled with accountability via standardised curriculum, standardised high-stakes testing, and the publication of results in league tables or similar technologies allowing comparison between schools (Brennan, 2011; Koyama, 2011; Ozga, 2009; Suspitsyna, 2010) in the competition for student enrolments. In such a competitive education market-place, school funding has become increasingly tied to performance (Comber & Nixon, 2009; Furtado, 2009) with many schools turning to for-profit services and products to help them 'improve' their scores (Apple, 2005; Ball, 2009; Koyama, 2011). Further, for nations to compete in the global economy – recently shaken by the Global Financial Crisis – students are urged to achieve national standards for international comparison via the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Brennan, 2011) and the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Overall, the neoliberal emphasis on individual choice and success has resulted in "...a disquiet that traditional community values and cohesion [a]re breaking down" (Macintyre et al., 2009, p.123).

In order to address such concerns held by politicians, parents, educators and the general public about a perceived moral decay of society and 'problem youth' or youth at risk (Arthur, 2005; Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Carlson, 2005 – as cited by Comber & Nixon, 2009; Savelsburg, 2010); a neoconservative emphasis has been placed on standard knowledge and traditional values (Apple, 2005; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Grossman, 2009; Ozga, 2009) at the expense of cultural plurality, diversity, and localised perspectives (Holmes & Crossley, 2004; Ishimine, Tayler & Thorpe, 2009; Mawhinney, 2010). The development and practice of 'responsibility' for self and other is therefore increasingly appearing as a standard educational goal or value in national policy agendas across the globe and has become more aligned to the 'political spectacle' (Winton, 2010, p.350) of democratic citizenship (Ailwood, Brownlee, Johansson, Cobb-Moore, Walker & Boulton-Lewis, 2011; Hughes, Print & Sears, 2010) and character (Davies, 2003; Winton, 2010) education initiatives. These initiatives aim to develop 'good' character for 'good' citizenship (Althorf & Berkowitz, 2006; Arthur, 2005; Davies, Gorard & McGuinn, 2005) but often mask, exacerbate or do little to improve social justice issues such as racism (Biesta et al., 2009; Garrett, 2011; Gillborn, 2006), triage (Youdell, 2004), inequality (Gillies, 2008; Suspitsyna, 2010), and unproblematised conceptions of knowledge (Jones & Thompson, 2008).

In the US, the *No Child Left Behind* [NCLB] Act implemented by the Bush administration in 2001 states that “...parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement...” (Section 1118, subsection d). This policy expects all students to reach often unachievably high benchmarks in high-stakes standardised tests or else schools are withheld federal funding (Koyama, 2011) and labelled as ‘failing’. This has resulted in many good and passionate teachers being fired, under-resourced schools being shut down, and the same children (largely from minority groups) being left behind (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007; Leonardo, 2007; Suspitsyna, 2010). Public outcry has seen the Obama administration promise reforms to the NCLB policy so that schools are supported rather than punished. In *A Blueprint For Reform* (2010), it is pledged that “responsibility for improving student outcomes no longer falls solely at the door of schools” (US Department of Education, 2010, p.5) and that communities, districts, states and the federal government have a responsibility to support schools in improving student outcomes. While schools and students now have extra support, the expectation still remains that students will achieve the goals of the NCLB policy. Apart from an emphasis on improving English literacy outcomes, other focus areas of NCLB include: ‘civic education’ (Section 2341-2346) to “foster civic competence and responsibility” (Section 2342, subsection 2); ‘partnerships in character education’ (Section 5431) with example elements including: caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness and giving (subsection c-2); ‘community service and service-learning projects’ to “rebuild safe and healthy neighborhoods and increase students’ sense of individual responsibility” (Section 4121, subsection a-2-B); and ‘mentoring programs’ with the aim to “promote personal and social responsibility” (Section 4130, subsection b-B-ii). These initiatives are said to enhance ‘teacher quality,’ ‘improve education,’ and/or promote ‘safe and drug-free schools and communities’ for the advancement of ‘21<sup>st</sup> century schools’ (NCLB, 2001).

In the UK, the *Education Reform Act* of 1988 saw the implementation of national curriculum and assessment. Although revisions were made in 1996 and 2002 (Halpin, 2010), the national curriculum remains largely prescriptive, reductionist and dehumanising (Beckmann & Cooper, 2005; Halpin, 2010). Content and pedagogies have been narrowed at the expense of more relevant, engaging and in-depth alternatives as the pressures of high-stakes testing result in ‘teaching to the test’ (Halpin, 2010; Waters, 2010; Wyse & Torrance, 2009). Further negative consequences include increased teacher

and pupil anxiety and decreased student self-esteem and confidence to help others in a more competitive classroom environment (Wyse & Torrance, 2009). Such limitations on teacher professionalism to meet the diverse educational needs of students has been met with public protestation – culminating in an announcement in January 2011 by the Secretary of State for Education that the national curriculum would be reviewed so schools and teachers have more freedom (see UK Department for Education, 2012). At the time of writing, this review is still in process; as are national assessments and league tables that continue to ‘name and shame’ schools – particularly those with disadvantaged demographics (Plewis, 2000). In the meantime, schools are expected to follow the current national curriculum including the subjects of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) and Citizenship – both of which are particularly aimed at promoting students’ “spiritual, moral social and cultural development” (UK Department for Education, 2011a). In PSHEE, students are expected to learn how to “recognise and manage risk, take increasing responsibility for themselves, their choices and behaviours and make positive contributions to their families, schools and communities” (UK Department for Education, 2011b). In the compulsory subject of Citizenship, students are expected to understand that “individuals, organisations and governments have responsibilities to ensure that rights are balanced, supported and protected” and “explore contested areas surrounding rights and responsibilities, for example the checks and balances needed in relation to freedom of speech in the context of threats from extremism and terrorism” (UK Department for Education, 2011c). Beyond civic knowledge and duties, this subject also engages with a moral dimension to improve the quality of citizens’ characters for the benefit of the nation (Arthur, 2005).

Just as Australia followed the UK into both world wars and the US into the ‘war on terrorism;’ it seems that Australia must also follow where these nations lead in terms of education policy involving standardised curriculum and assessment – despite warnings from academics and resistance from state/territory representatives, teacher unions and parent associations not to do so (Brennan, 2011; Halse, 2004; Welch, 2010). As noted by Bates (2007), “...several well-informed critics have suggested [that] highly standardised ‘high stakes’ testing and accountability regimes result ‘not in improving schools but in damaging them’ (Gallagher, 2000; Glovin, 2000; McNeil, 2000; Lissovoy and McLaren, 2003, p.132; Popham, 1999)” (pp.130-131). The rhetoric of ‘consultation’ has been contradicted by a reality in which public and professional contributions and debate have

been limited, thereby “...making it hard for alternative contestation about curriculum to be heard” (Brennan, 2011, p.260). While the idea of establishing a common or national curriculum in Australia first emerged over three decades ago, it gained momentum during the Howard Liberal government (1996-2007), became a key aspect of the ‘education revolution’ of the Rudd/Gillard Labor government (2008-2013) and is now being incrementally developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (Brennan, 2011). National NAPLAN testing has been underway since 2008; with results publically reported on the Commonwealth Government’s MySchool website, along with further information on each school’s financial assets and socio-economic background (Brennan, 2011; Halse, 2004).

Similar to the US and UK, Australian policies of educational standardisation also include a focus on democratic citizenship and character/values education in order to address concerns about increased ethnic diversity (Macintyre et al., 2009) and produce “...future citizens and workers who will maintain the democratic nation and ideals of Australia” (Ailwood et al., 2011, p.651). Of particular mention is the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Department of Education Science and Training [DEST], 2005). This policy was created during the ‘war on terrorism’ initiated by the US and supported by other Western nations including Australia, with the neoconservative aim to ‘unite’ the Australian population via national values in order to ‘protect our country’ from a ‘terrorist threat.’ Further, national values were argued to be particularly necessary for government schools which had become, according to then Prime Minister John Howard, “too politically correct and values neutral” (cited in Crabb & Guerrara, 2004). This stigmatisation of government schools through political ‘spin’ (Gillies, 2008b), combined with an increasing diversion of government support and funding from government schools to non-government and Christian schools (Halse, 2004; Symes & Gulson, 2007; Welch, 2010) and the public comparison of school performance in national assessments on the MySchool website, are likely to be contributing factors in the rising number of non-government schools and declining number of government schools (ABS, 2001, 2011) as a part of the neoliberal agenda of privatisation (Apple, 2005). Even responsibility has become privatised (Ilcan, 2009) or ‘individualised’ (Miller & Rose, 2008, p.91) so that Australian schools are seen as sites in which students should be learning how to be responsible for their own conduct, learning and civic duties.

In this chapter, key national and state education policies involved in the construction of what constitutes 'responsibility' are analysed including: *Student welfare policy* (NSW Department of School Education Welfare Directorate [NSW DSESWD], 1996); *Environmental education policy for school guidelines* (NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Support Directorate [NSW DETCSD], 2001); *Student discipline in government schools* (NSW Department of Education and Training [NSW DET], 2004a); *Values in NSW public schools* (NSW DET, 2004b); the *National framework for values education in Australian schools* (Department of Education Science and Training [DEST], 2005); and the *National educational goals for young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). In the following sections of this chapter, I consider how the notion of responsibility is constructed in key Australian educational policy documents as well as the discipline and welfare policies of the three schools in which ethnographic fieldwork took place. In particular, I am interested in how discourses of neoliberalism, neoconservatism and morality operate in education policy to construct idealised versions of 'responsible' students, schools and citizens. I argue that responsibility – as it is conceptualised in policy documents – involves a contradictory combination of discourses such as unity and diversity, individualistic self-governance and responsibility for the other.

## **5.2 Living 'fulfilling, productive and responsible lives': Responsibility and discourses of neoliberalism**

The increasing influence of neoliberal discourses on contemporary society is evident in educational policy documents through an emphasis on productivity, effective management and accountability. Here, responsibility is largely individualised under the condition that it is used to further national interests.

Productivity is particularly referred to in the MCEETYA *Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians* (2008), which states that: 'Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to our nation's social and economic prosperity and will position our young people to live fulfilling, *productive* and responsible lives' (emphasis added, p.8). Here, a link is drawn between educational outcomes and the capacity to live a fulfilling, productive and responsible life. It is also interesting to note how productivity is so closely associated with fulfilment and responsibility – insinuating

that young Australians have the responsibility to be productive in order to be truly fulfilled. This responsibility to be productive is further expressed in Goal 2: that '[a]ll young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9), who:

- are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities;
- have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment;
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members;
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.

Young Australians are therefore expected to use their confidence and creative abilities to be enterprising, productive and responsible citizens and future members of the workforce. Such expectations are also apparent in the *National framework for values education in Australian schools* (DEST, 2005), where responsibility is defined as 'be[ing] accountable for one's own actions, resolv[ing] differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribut[ing] to society and to civic life, tak[ing] care of the environment' (p.4).

A poststructuralist reading of such policy statements recognises that the productive feature of power (Foucault, 2002; Butler, 1997) involving 'governmentality' (Foucault, 2000, p.81) or "structur[ing] the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 2002, p.341) requires the application of 'techniques of self' (Foucault, 2000, p.87). Individuals therefore have the agency to govern themselves – but only in ways that ensure an "alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities" (Rose, 1999a, p.10), such as 'productive' or 'goal-directed activities' (Foucault, 2002, pp.338-339). Such an alliance between the personal and the social is said to determine "happiness, wisdom, health and fulfilment" (Rose, 1999a, p.11). Yet, this form of happiness is conditionally tied to the concession of freedom. As noted by Levinas (2006a) '[t]he will productive of works is a freedom that betrays itself. Through betrayal, society – a totality of freedoms, both maintained in their singularity and engaged in a totality – is possible' (p.25). In other words, in order to be

productive, happy, wise, healthy and fulfilled members of society, individual freedom must be compromised in some way.

In terms of neoliberal discourses, 'success' in a marketised world is largely dependent on 'effective' management of skills and resources (see Apple, 2005). In relation to education, 'successful learners' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9) require opportunities 'to demonstrate success in a wide range of activities' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.6) in order to meet 'planned results' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.8). Students are also encouraged to develop 'resilience' or "self-management qualities such as...personal responsibility and self-discipline" (DEST, 2005, p.8). It is suggested that effective learning and teaching is enhanced by "encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour" as well as "establishing well-managed teaching and learning environments" (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.5). Student welfare in government schools is also said to 'incorporat[e] effective discipline' where staff with student support roles are responsible for ensuring that "the school develops effective mechanisms for integrating behaviour management, conflict resolution and support for students experiencing difficulties" (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.4, 10). Effective policy frameworks are said to require 'an integrated approach' including 'effective communication' and "responsible behaviour across all sectors of the community and government" (NSW DETCSD, 2001, p.9). Increasing ICT 'effectiveness' is also encouraged (NSW DETCSD, 2001, p.18). The question remains as to how such 'effectiveness' is determined and how achievable it is for all the people/organisations involved.

Accountability is depicted in these documents in both individualised and shared ways. Students are individually expected to "...embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions" (MCEETYA, 2008, p.10) as well as take "...responsibility for their own learning and behaviour" (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.5). Here, it seems that responsibility for learning, behaviour, as well as institutional and social order is being entirely devolved to the individual child; while the school/institution is being depicted as a passive receptacle of this individual responsibility and its effects. Such a 'decentralised' (Comber & Nixon, 2009; Ozga, 2009; Pykett, 2009) position may ignore the responsibility of institutions for the wellbeing of the population (Halse, 2004). Also apparent here is the 'rationalisation' of decision-making where it is assumed that "[p]ersons discharge their lives according to rational rules and impersonal duties rather than by virtue of a set of transcendent ethical

values” (Rose, 1999a, p.259). However, I see this assumption as problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, what counts as ‘rational’ is largely determined by those in dominant positions of power (Foucault, 2000; 2002). Secondly, from a Levinasian perspective, ethical responsibility is not a choice, decision or initiative – it is a preontological call, demand, obligation or duty which requires a response (Levinas, 2006a; see also Raffoul, 2010). Whether this response is to heed or to ignore the ‘other’ (Levinas, 2006a), it is made in and influenced by a specific context that cannot be rationally predicted (Raffoul, 2010 – drawing on Derrida). Lastly, the face-to-face encounter and demand to take responsibility for the Other involves non-indifference, guilt, (pure) love, care, concern – a new rationality of goodness and kindness rather than scientific/objective forms of rationality (Levinas, 2006a; Raffoul, 2010).

While individual accountability is largely framed in policy documents as involving rational decision-making; shared accountability is encouraged through student representative councils and school parliaments. Such initiatives are described as providing opportunities for individual leadership experience as well as opportunities for representing and serving the student body (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.6-7). This simultaneous expectation of accountability or responsibility for self *and* other is evident in the following statements:

[T]he school will be a disciplined, ordered and cohesive community where individuals take responsibility and work together (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.7).

...parents expect schools to help students understand and develop personal and social responsibilities (DEST, 2005, p.1)

Responsibility: be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment (DEST, 2005, p.4).

Responsibility: being accountable for your individual and community’s actions towards yourself, others and the environment (NSW DET, 2004b, p.3).

Not only are individual students responsible for themselves, others and the environment. Shared or collective responsibility is also allocated to the broader school community:



Parents and community members will participate in the education of young people and share the responsibility for shaping appropriate student behaviour (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.8)

Parents will be encouraged to...work with teachers to establish fair and reasonable expectations of the school (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.11)

Schools in NSW share with families and the community the responsibility for teaching values. While values are learnt predominantly in the home and modified through relationships and life experiences, parents and the community have high expectations about commonly held values also being taught in schools (NSW DET, 2004b, p.2)

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community (MCEETYA, 2008, p.7)

Environmental education is the responsibility of the whole school community. It is more than a curriculum issue and involves schools in managing resources and grounds in a way that causes no significant damage to the environment and considers the needs of future generations (NSW DETCSD, 2001, p.7)

According to these excerpts, parents, teachers and community members are also responsible for the 'shaping' of student behaviour and values (including environmental sustainability), the establishment of 'fair and reasonable expectations' and the achievement of national goals. The notion of 'shaping' is an example of governmentality where "individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality [is] shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault, 2002, p.334). These patterns of subjectivity are usually more aligned to national/dominant rather than individual/minority interests; as those in positions of power and dominance determine which perspectives count as accepted 'truths' and wield them strategically to "win the victory" (Foucault, 2000, p.63). The emphasis on 'reasonable expectations' or reason, (similar to the emphasis on rationality discussed previously), is problematic because it implies a universally applicable and impersonal common sense which risks complacency and does not take into account personal interpretation and the displacement of intended meaning (Levinas, 2006a).

The determination of whether teachers and schools have been 'successful' in their 'shaping' of student knowledge, behaviour and values involves regular assessment/monitoring, evaluation/review and reporting of student, school and policy

outcomes (MCEETYA, 2008; DEST, 2005; NSW DSESWD, 1996; NSW DET, 2004a; NSW DETCSD, 2001). The *National educational goals for young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) particularly states that as a part of 'strengthening accountability and transparency':

...governments will ensure that school-based information is published responsibly, so that any public comparisons of schools will be fair, contain accurate and verified data, contextual information and a range of indicators. Governments will not themselves devise simplistic league tables or rankings and privacy will be protected (pp.16-17).

The MySchool website introduced by the Rudd Labor government in 2009 resulted in heated public debate. As mentioned previously, this website presents the national assessment [NAPLAN] results of all Australian schools – allowing for public comparison. Teacher unions have concerns about “the inaccuracy and potential misuse of information on the MySchool website” (NSW Teachers Federation, 2010) which may present “an incomplete and misleading picture of school performance” (AEU, 2010a). In any case, there is enough information for the general public (including parents) to rank schools themselves. Reportedly, newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and the Northern Territory have already “printed league tables ranking schools based on their scores” (AEU, 2010b) leading to stigmatisation and lowered morale in ‘under-performing’ schools. While the MySchool website does take into account “socio-economic characteristics of the areas where students live (in this case an ABS census collection district), as well as whether a school is in a regional or remote area, and the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled at the school” (ACARA, n.d.) with the rationale of allowing comparison between ‘similar’ schools; a number of key concerns remain. Firstly, the emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative measurement of student outcomes provides a superficial rather than deep indication of student learning. Secondly, the responsibility for student outcomes is shifted from the government onto the individual students, teachers and parents. In the education ‘marketplace’, parents are particularly redefined as ‘consumers’ who are expected to exercise their democratic right to strategically *choose* which school to send their child to – even if they do not have the requisite capital or resources to do so – and are blamed for making poor choices if their children ‘underperform’ (Apple, 2005; Rose, 1999a). Thirdly, comparison between schools (even if they are classed as ‘similar’) encourages competition for enrolments, where increased pressures to ‘teach to the test’ can work to narrow curriculum and pedagogy (Au, 2009).

Lastly, individual efforts and personal-bests are not necessarily rewarded by a system that applies standardised testing under the assumption that all students have the same backgrounds, cultural and social capital or resources, abilities, learning styles and types of intelligence. Therefore, the responsabilisation of the individual is based on a globalised, homogeneous, normative, standardised conception which ‘reduces’ (Beckmann & Cooper, 2005; Koyama, 2011; Larsen, 2010) the ‘Other’ to the ‘Same’ (Butler, 2005; Levinas, 2006a). The neoconservatist push for ‘standards’ will be discussed further in the following section.

### **5.3 For the ‘common good’: Responsibility and discourses of neoconservatism**

Considerable emphasis placed on nationalism, militarism and standardisation in policy documents is characteristic of the neoconservative movement (see Apple, 2005). Here, diversity can exist – provided that it does not interfere with what is popularly understood as the common good. Responsibility is therefore framed as a national value or standard that must be continuously monitored and universally achieved in ‘normative[ly]’ (Butler, 2004, p.33) defined ways. The focus on ‘developing student responsibility in local, national and global contexts’ (DEST, 2005, p.3) maps out the concentric arenas in which students are increasingly expected to be responsible. The expectations of such ‘active and informed’ and ‘responsible’ citizens include (MCEETYA, 2008, pp.9-10):

- appreciat[ion of] Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and hav[ing] an understanding of Australia’s system of government, history and culture
- commit[ment] to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participat[ing] in Australia’s civic life
- work[ing] for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments

What is particularly evident here is the attempt to balance national unity with cultural diversity. This concept raises many questions, including whether a balance is ever achievable between such contradicting ideologies. As the nation state’s power “...is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power” (Foucault, 2002, p.332) which aims “...to produce individually characterized, but collectively useful aptitudes” (Foucault, 1977, p.162), there is a constant struggle between ‘universality’ and ‘diversity’. As Butler (1997) contends:

The universal begins to become articulated precisely through challenges to its *existing* formulation, and this challenge emerges from those who are not covered by it, who have no entitlement to occupy the place of the 'who', but who, nevertheless, demand that the universal as such ought to be inclusive of them (original emphasis – p.90).

In other words, the concept of universal cannot exist without a constant struggle over the boundaries of its inclusivity. Those compromising the most in this process are minority groups who are expected to conform to normative values and cultural identity – defined by dominant Anglo society (see Perera & Pugliese, 1998) in order to "...shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives" (Rose, 1999a, p.4). Nationalism is visually reinforced on the front cover of the *National framework for values education in Australian schools* policy via the image of the Australian flag – one of the key tools used to unify the population under a common identity (Kolstø, 2006). Its top-to-central positioning gives it the most visual weight and importance, while also constructing it as the Ideal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Students are also expected to make 'informed decisions' (NSW DET, 2004a, section 3.4), as well as participate as 'equals,' and use 'agreed upon processes such as student representative councils and school parliaments' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.7, 11). These expectations mirror the national processes of Australian democracy – particularly the idea of 'parliament.' However, the idea of making 'informed decisions' requires critique, as it is based on the assumption that students always have the freedom to choose between different courses of action – and this may not always be the case. As discussed previously (in relation to rationality), ethical responsibility is not a choice, but rather, involves an inevitable and preontological call or demand to ethically respond to the other in all their vulnerability (Butler, 2004; Levinas, 2006a; Raffoul, 2010). However, how the subject responds to the demand of the other can involve making a decision which is shaped by context and 'relations of power' (Foucault, 2002).

Expectations of responsibility as articulated in education policy seem to go hand in hand with surveillance and discipline – technologies of control which in turn have militaristic undertones (see Foucault, 1977; 2000). Such militaristic undertones are also visually expressed on the front cover of the *National framework for values education in Australian schools*, through the World War I image of 'Simpson and his donkey.' Simpson – an unarmed war veteran who rescued wounded men during WWI battles at Gallipoli – is

celebrated as a symbol of what is commonly portrayed as uniquely 'Australian' characteristics of courage, selfless service and mateship (see Nelson, 2005). The position of this image beneath the national flag is representative of a 'reality' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.186) in which war is "...the secret driving force of institutions, laws and order" (Foucault, 2000, p.61). It is interesting to note how school welfare policies and school discipline policies are so closely aligned, as evident in the phrase "student welfare, including discipline" (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.3). It is even stated that "[g]ood discipline is fundamental to the achievement of Government priorities for the public school system" (NSW DET, 2004a, section 1.1) and that "[t]he school will be a disciplined, ordered and cohesive community where individuals take responsibility and work together" (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.6-7). This notion of discipline as a condition for responsibility is explained by Foucault (1977):

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes *responsibility* for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (emphasis added – pp.202-203).

Thus, surveillance or the implied threat of surveillance promotes self-discipline and therefore responsibility for the self. This surveillance "...may apply outside of school hours and off school premises where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students" (NSW DET, 2004a, section 3.8), including (non-)attendance which is also 'monitored' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.6). Within the *Student Welfare* (NSW DSESWD, 1996) policy, the section detailing 'community participation' concludes with a picture of two policemen talking with a group of students. Such an image visually reinforces notions of surveillance, particularly as 'policy' is derived from the word 'police' (Foucault, 2000, p.69).

Discipline and responsibility are predominantly mentioned in policy documents in terms of 'behaviour', followed by 'learning':

Student responsibilities include 'act[ing] according to the discipline code established by the school community' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.11)

The discipline code of the school will provide clear guidelines for behaviour which are known by staff, students and parents who have contributed to their development (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.7)

Students will be able to learn without disruption from unruly behaviour (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.7)

Parents and community members will participate in the education of young people and share the responsibility for shaping appropriate student behaviour...[and their] understanding about acceptable behaviour (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.8)

When parents enroll their children at public schools they enter into a partnership with the school. This partnership is based on a shared commitment to provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their actions and to have a greater say in the nature and content of their learning (NSW DET, 2004a, section 3.3).

...encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.5)

Strategies and practices to promote positive student behaviour, including specific strategies to maintain a climate of respect (NSW DET, 2004a, section 1.1)

As a technique of governmentality, discipline involves “a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” (Foucault, 1977, p.138). These coercions are based on dominant ‘norms’ and productivity/efficiency agendas to which individuals must conform (Foucault, 1977, pp.164, 183). As “the definition of behaviour and performance [is] on the basis of the two opposed values of good and evil...a distribution between a positive pole and a negative pole” (Foucault, 1977, p.180), then those who conform and display ‘positive’ behaviour are rewarded, while those who do not are punished in order to ‘correct’ their behaviour and therefore reduce any gaps (Foucault, 1977, pp.178-180). Further, as the demand of responsibility for the other ‘goes beyond what I do’ (Levinas, 1985, p.96), then the predominant focus of policies on outwardly displayed behaviour fails to recognise the more internalised effects of ‘values’ and ‘attitudes’ on student responsibility and social interactions. For example, a student may display characteristics associated with ‘good discipline’ and/or ‘responsibility’ for fear of punishment or expectation of reward, rather than for altruistic or humanitarian reasons (see Kohn, 1993). Further, responsibility for ‘actions’ does not necessarily translate into responsibility for ‘words.’ Thus, the maintenance of ‘a climate of respect’ may need to include thought and word, as well as deed. Additionally, the specification of ‘unruly’ behaviour ignores more subtle forms that may affect student

learning and wellbeing, such as the subversive bullying strategies of isolation, staring, whispered put-downs, and rumour-spreading. Just because a student's behaviour is not 'unruly' does not necessarily mean that it is 'responsible.' Terms like 'positive,' 'acceptable' and 'appropriate' are also problematic as they are usually defined in standardised ways by those in dominant societal positions and may not necessarily take into account diverse or marginalised perspectives.

In fact, one of the most influential aspects of neoconservatist discourse is standardisation – where “[t]he Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching” (Foucault, 1977, p.184). Schools and education systems are allocated the ‘responsibility’ of delivering programs consistent with state/national curriculum expectations, while also allowing contextual flexibility (MCEETYA, 2008, p.14). While the acknowledgement of contextual differentiation is encouraging, it is also limited by state/national consistency or conformity. The ‘back to basics’ focus on English and mathematics is expected to be balanced with the cross-curricular integration of environmental sustainability and “...the opportunity to access Indigenous content where relevant” (MCEETYA, 2008, p.14). However, this perceived ‘relevancy’ may depend on individual interpretations and agendas. In relation to social skills (as with national values), it is expected that “all students...acquire them, or make progress towards them, over time” (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.5). All students are therefore expected to conform to what dominant society constructs as ‘social skills.’ Similarly (and as stated previously), standardised assessment or ‘examination’ of knowledge and understandings is problematic because it is based on ‘normalising judgement’ and hierarchical ‘ranks’ (Foucault, 1977, pp.146-148, 184). Such standardisation/normalisation does not take into account the different backgrounds, cultural and social capital or resources, abilities, learning styles, and types of intelligence of students. Even more difficult to assess according to standardised measures, is student acquisition of social skills and values (including responsibility). According to Rose (1999a), “[i]n compelling, persuading and inciting subjects to disclose themselves, finer and more intimate regions of personal and interpersonal life come under surveillance and are opened up for expert judgement, and normative evaluation, for classification and correction” (p.244). The question remains as to whether the assessment of these very personal things is going too far – not only in terms of intrusion into private life, but also in transforming intrinsically personal qualities and relationships into instrumental ‘social skills’ deployed for more extrinsic purposes.

#### 5.4 'Building character' and 'valuing difference': Responsibility and discourses of ethics/morality

Ethics and morality discourses are evident in policy objectives that aim to 'build character' and 'value difference' in a 'supportive' and 'caring' environment. Here, responsibility becomes more than simply a civic duty and neoconservative concern; it becomes a moral imperative to meaningfully/intrinsically engage with, understand and care about the 'other' as well as (or even before) the 'self.' According to MCEETYA (2002 – as cited in DEST, 2005), "education is as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills" (p.1). In support of the *National framework for values education in Australian schools*, this group also acknowledges "that values based education can strengthen students' self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment; and help students exercise ethical judgement and social responsibility" (cited in DEST, 2005, p.1). The ideal of sound ethical judgment is mirrored in the *National educational goals for young Australians* – a policy also endorsed by MCEETYA, where 'active and informed citizens' are defined as people who "act with moral and ethical integrity" (2008, p.9). 'Integrity' as a national/state value is defined as "act[ing] in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensur[ing] consistency between words and deeds" (DEST, 2005, p.4) and "being consistently honest and trustworthy" (NSW DET, 2004, p.3). Despite the acknowledgment of 'words' as well as 'deeds,' the focus continues to remain on external expression or action that may or may not be a consequence of subjective feelings, beliefs or commitments. Here even 'honesty' and 'trustworthiness' imply a social contract – beyond mere personalisation. Unfortunately integrity or consistency are often not supported or modelled altruistically in national policies on refugees/asylum seekers (see Christie & Sidhu, 2006). Such policies are often inconsistent with UN conventions and obligations – including human rights (Butler, 2004).

The idea that personal fulfilment is linked to responsibility for self and other is evident in the *National educational goals for young Australians*, where 'confident and creative individuals' are said to have certain characteristics including (see MCEETYA, 2008, p.9):

- a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing;
- a sense of optimism about their lives and the future;



- personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others;
- the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives; and
- relat[ing] well to others and form[ing] and maintain[ing] healthy relationships.

The acknowledgement of internal ‘emotions’ and ‘values’ is a complimentary addition to the previously discussed focus on ‘behaviour’ and ‘words.’ However, as individuals are expected to have certain skills and values to ‘manage’ their wellbeing and live ‘healthy, satisfying lives,’ the issue remains as to who decides what these skills and values are to be. Authorisation is usually given to policies and the ‘truths’ they contain because such documents are politically, financially and rhetorically endorsed by state/national governments and their ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 2002, p.131). While a connection is made between ‘self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity’ and ‘relations to/with others’, the purpose of these is primarily one of self-management, and management of one’s relations with others. Although the expectation of having empathy for, as well as respecting and relating well to others, seems to move beyond self-centred individualism, it is worth noting that the values and attributes cited above are consistent with perceived labour market expectations of future workforce employees. In this way, the MCEETYA goals can be seen as framed by an interest in education’s relation to the national economy, and “where the products of education are controlled, regulated and nationally standardized, producing generic workers who can move from one workplace to another as they are needed” (Davies & Saltmarsh, 2006, p.4). Similarly, the emphasis on health and wellbeing links “public objectives for the good health and good order of the social body with the desire of individuals for health and well-being” (Rose, 1999b, p.74).

In other documents, it is suggested that the development of character requires the provision of support networks, services and programs for students – including parent and community participation (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.6-7). The aim is to meet the ‘needs and aspirations’ of all students so that they feel ‘a sense of belonging’ and ‘valued as learners’ in “a caring, safe environment for which students, staff and parents share responsibility” (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.5-7, 10-11). This ‘care (and compassion)’ as a national/state value is defined as “care for self and others” (DEST, 2005, p.4) and “concern for the wellbeing of yourself and others, demonstrating empathy and acting with compassion” (NSW DET, 2004, p.3). ‘Care’ is also extended to the environment, as

included in the definition of 'responsibility' in the *National framework for values education in Australian schools* (DEST, 2005). The 'shared' responsibility for acting with care and compassion for others in the school environment is encouraging. However, such an assumption of shared responsibility ignores the fact that authority is not distributed equally between staff, parents and students; and that the institution (school/government) usually has the final say in terms of schooling decisions.

Apparently, not only is such development of character to be supported it is also to be protected through principles of 'equity', 'fairness' and 'justice' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, p.6). Fairness, as a state value, is defined as "[b]eing committed to the principles of social justice and opposing prejudice, dishonesty and injustice" (NSW DET, 2004, p.3). There are many limitations of such policy definitions and uses of such terms as 'equity,' 'fairness' and 'justice' – particularly as they are mostly utilised as disciplinary technologies (see Foucault 1977, 2000, 2002) rather than ethical principles. Even 'justice,' according to Levinas (2006a), is "always to be perfected against its own harshness" (pp.198-199) or inflexible imposition on individual freedom, through constant 'revision[]' (p.199) Where differences do exist, they are either to be resolved "in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways" (DEST, 2005, p.4) or 'valued' and 'respected' in an 'inclusive environment' where 'narrow and limiting gender stereotypes' are discouraged and 'socially and culturally relevant' learning experiences will 'affirm [student] individuality' (NSW DSESWD, 1996, pp.5-7). The first option involves resolution or unity, whereas the second option involves the maintenance of diversity – another example of the 'permanent provocation' (Foucault, 2002, p.342) between difference and conformity. Sometimes the ability to "relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia" (MCEETYA, 2008, p.9) may be based on political strategy relating, at least in part, to areas of global trade that are crucial to Australia's national economy; while at other times the focus may be aimed more at 'cross-cultural respect,' and 'reconciliation' particularly in relation to Indigenous Australians (MCEETYA, 2008, pp.9-10).

Spirituality is particularly mentioned in the *National Goals* (MCEETYA, 2008) and *Environmental Education* (NSW DETCSD, 2001) policies. 'Confident and creative individuals' are described as those who "have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, *spiritual* and physical wellbeing" (emphasis added – MCEETYA, 2008, p.9). Here, it seems that spiritual

and other forms of wellbeing are focused on constructs of an autonomous and self-actualising, rather than socially situated individual. On the other hand, the 'spiritual focus' of environmental education is said to "inspir[e] an emotional and sensitised response from people, not only in their appreciation of the wonders of the natural world, but making them feel *at one* with the environment" (emphasis added - NSW DETCSD, 2001, p.8). This 'oneness' suggests a connection beyond mere individualism. Levinas (2006) views responsibility for the other as an "inescapable obligation [that] brings us close to God in a more difficult, but also a more spiritual, way than does confidence in any kind of theodicy" (p. 81). While from a Levinasian perspective 'oneness' is "[a] spirituality that signifies equality between persons at peace" (2006a, p. 163) and is achieved through unique and therefore diverse 'pathways' (Levinas, 2006b, p.18); from a Foucauldian perspective, 'oneness' is yet another term that encourages conformity to dominant discourses.

### **5.5 Discourses of responsibility in school-level policy**

As it is mandatory for school-level policies to be consistent with national and state policies, it is therefore not surprising to find the same discourses of neoliberalism, neoconservatism and morality echoed in the student welfare and discipline policies of Northfield School, Riverside School and Fairview School. In fact, the *Values in NSW public schools* (NSW DET, 2004b) and *National framework for values education in Australian schools* (Department of Education Science and Training [DEST], 2005) explicitly appear as hyperlinks on the Northfield School webpage entitled 'rules and policies' where it is stated that:

Values are taught in the classroom to help our students to:

- develop a love of learning
- pursue excellence and high standards
- develop care and respect for themselves and others
- take pride in their work
- exhibit a strong sense of fairness and social justice
- have respect for and understanding of Australia's history including the cultures and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of Australia, and Australia as a multicultural society
- have an appreciation of Australia's history and multicultural society
- actively participate as citizens.

All students are expected to:

- attend school every day, unless they are legally excused
- be in class on time and prepared to learn
- maintain a neat appearance and follow the school uniform policy
- behave considerably and responsibly including when travelling to and from school
- follow class rules, speak courteously and cooperate with instructions and learning activities
- treat staff, other students and members of the school community with dignity and respect
- care for property belonging to themselves, the school and others.

Any behaviour that infringes on other people's safety such as harassment, bullying or any illegal behaviour will not be tolerated at our school.

Discourses of neoliberalism are particularly evident in the expectation for students to 'pursue excellence,' 'take pride in their work' (as future members of the workforce), 'actively participate as citizens,' and attend school/class in a regular and punctual way. Neoconservative discourses are apparent in the emphasis on 'values,' 'high standards,' respect for and appreciation of 'Australia's history,' 'neatness,' 'behav[ing] considerably and responsibly,' 'follow[ing] class rules, speak[ing] courteously and cooperat[ing] with instructions and learning activities,' and 'safety.' However, the acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as 'the first peoples' of Australia' involves a critical re-visioning of Australian history not consistent with the usual neoliberal or neoconservative influences on policy making discourse. Rather, the emphasis on including/respecting Indigenous and multicultural perspectives is more indicative of ethics/morality discourses – as is an emphasis on 'care and respect for [self] and others' and 'fairness and social justice.' Of particular mention is the alignment of responsibility with disciplined behaviour which also features in national and state policies discussed previously.

The alignment of welfare and discipline in national and state policies is particularly mirrored in the discipline policy of Riverside School, where pastoral care and discipline are "treated as the same policy." Within this policy, it is stated that pastoral care:

...is concerned with formation of responsibility. Affirmation and acknowledgement of positive characteristics displayed by students are essential elements. By developing a sense of worth, students become more tolerant of others and confident that they have something to contribute to society. Pastoral Care aims to draw people together into a community where the school culture says: 'We really do care.'

The neoconservative "...pastoral vision of like-minded people who share[] norms and values..." (Apple, 2005, p.279), is both an 'individualizing and totalizing' form of power as it "looks after not just the whole community but each individual in particular" (Foucault, 2002, p.333). It requires students to shape, confess/show and test the intelligibility of their subjectivities in dialogue with others and social norms (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 1993, 2001; Rose, 1999). The rewarding of 'positive characteristics' is said to contribute to the 'formation of responsibility. ' However, such characteristics are likely to be based on social norms that are 'tolerant' rather than inclusive of diversity. Those who cannot or do not conform to such norms must be 'corrected' through discipline (Foucault, 1977). According to this policy, "[t]he word 'discipline' and 'disciple' are derived from the Latin word 'discere' meaning 'to learn'" and "...discipline essentially is a positive concept and is part of the formation process of students, whereby through their moral development, they learn that they are accountable for their actions." Therefore, "[t]he major orientation of Riverside School's discipline policy is the fostering of self-discipline." This "self-discipline and a sense of personal responsibility" is said to be preferred over "an imposed discipline of fear." In other words, 'techniques of self' (Foucault, 2000) are preferred over 'technologies of control' (Foucault, 2002). The student responsibilities encouraged are listed as:

- I have the responsibility to treat others with understanding – not to laugh at others, tease others, call others names or try to hurt their feelings.
- I have the responsibility to treat others politely and with respect. I have the responsibility to respect teachers and other adults.
- I have the responsibility to make the school safe by not threatening, hitting, kicking or hurting anyone in any way.
- I have the responsibility not to steal, damage or destroy the property of the school or of others.
- I have the responsibility to care for the school environment – to keep it neat and clean and be prepared to remove litter.

- I have the responsibility to co-operate with teachers and other students to make sure that lessons proceed productively and that I keep up-to-date with required work.
- I will behave so as to not interfere with other students' rights to learn.
- I also have the responsibility to be punctual, to attend school regularly and to take part in activities set in the school curriculum.
- I have the responsibility to behave so that the community will respect the school, to wear the uniform with pride and behave in a manner creditable to the school.
- I have the responsibility to learn self-control.

The responsibilities of 'productive' co-operation, regular and punctual attendance/participation, and behaving in a way that does not impede other students' learning are a part of neoliberal discourse. Although 'not interfer[ing] with other students' rights to learn' gestures towards responsibility for the other, "...one can no longer rest content with educating students to pursue self-interest to the extent that they do not interfere with the rights of others to pursue their own interests" (Chinnery & Bai, 2008, p.238) as care for self may not necessarily extend to care for others. The responsibilities of 'treating others politely,' 'making the school safe,' keeping the school 'neat and clean,' upholding the reputation of the school, and 'self-control' are neoconservative; while treating others with 'understanding,' 'respect,' and 'care' are examples of ethics/morality discourses.

Apparent in the Fairview School discipline policy is a similar neoconservative aim to "...inculcate in its students self-reliance and respect for others" through 'positive incentives' or 'rewarding good behaviour.' It also aims to "...create an environment that is disciplined, relaxed and happy" where "[s]tudents shall be treated kindly and with as much tolerance as is consistent with the smooth and effective functioning of Fairview School." In other words, tolerance of diversity must not interfere with neoconservative social coherence and neoliberal efficiency of the school. The Latin definition of 'discipline' as 'to learn' makes another appearance in Fairview School's aim to "...lead students to learn rather than to simply punish or penalise them." However, this does not mean that misbehaviour is overlooked, as evident in the section entitled 'misbehaviour must not be ignored' which proceeds to list penalty procedures. Thus, students are expected 'to learn' responsibility for themselves and others largely through inculcation, reward and

punishment – which will be explored further in the following chapter on ‘pedagogies of control.’

## **5.6 Concluding comments**

Responsibility is conceptualised in contradictory ways within Australian education policy documents at the national, state and school level. There are constant tensions between or attempts to balance such binaries as unity and diversity; conformity and freedom; responsibility for the other (including the community and environment) and responsibility for the self; obligation and altruism. While such binaries may be viewed as an attempt to acknowledge life’s complexities, the ‘permanent provocation’ (Foucault, 2002, p.342) or tensions existing between them also provide a continual challenge to complacency.

The policies analysed here do have some potential in terms of incorporating notions of individual and collective responsibility into policy discourse in a meaningful way – particularly in terms of the emphasis on ‘care’ for others and the environment. However, what is particularly problematic about these policies is how responsibility is constantly re-aligned to: a) neoliberal discourses of productivity and accountability that depend largely on economic validation; and b) neoconservative discourses that emphasise standardisation, conformity, discipline and docility through self-governance (see Foucault, 1977, 2000, 2002). It is difficult to see how more altruistic or unconditional forms of responsibility are to flourish under such conditions. Nevertheless, the tensions and possibilities evident in policy documents are mediated by the pedagogy of educators in ways that impact on student understandings and experiences of responsibility as analysed and discussed in the following analysis chapters.

## **CHAPTER 6: PEDAGOGIES OF CONTROL – NORMALISING RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH SURVEILLANCE, PUNISHMENT AND REWARD**

While national, state and school policies shape the field of possibilities in terms of how 'responsibility' is to be defined; in everyday educational practice, such definitions tend to be mediated through the pedagogies applied by principals and teachers in their respective educational institutions. As "pedagogy is pivotal to the rules and procedures" (Deacon, 2002, p.437) of schools, then pedagogies are often aimed at governing student conduct through 'technologies of control' (Foucault, 2002). As noted in my theoretical framework, such technologies "structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 2002, p.341) according to normative standards. Subjects/students are expected to internalise these normative standards in order to govern themselves through 'techniques of self' (Foucault, 2000). In the educational context, technologies of control may include:

...a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differential marks of the 'value' of each person and the levels of knowledge) and...a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy) (Foucault, 2002, pp.338-339).

In each of the schools where fieldwork for this study took place, there are numerous examples of technologies of control as described by Foucault – particularly surveillance and reward/punishment. Such technologies of control are utilised in explicit and implicit ways and through a range of formal and informal pedagogies, programs and systems. What follows is an analysis of how technologies or pedagogies of control in the form of surveillance and punishment/reward are applied and justified by educators in relation to the acquisition and monitoring of student responsibility in the upper primary school context. Throughout this chapter I argue that such pedagogies of control involving mere obedience to in/formal rules and conformity to social norms do little to encourage ethical responsibility as they do not provide students with the agency required to respond to the needs of self and other.



## 6.1 Pedagogies of surveillance

Though the terminology in educational discourse has gradually (but not completely) shifted from 'discipline' to 'classroom management', surveillance remains a key practice in the educational setting. In fact, schools continue to bear striking similarities to prisons, asylums, army barracks and other panoptic institutions in terms of social discipline, physical boundaries and constant surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Whether student conduct is seen by principals and teachers as 'responsible' is largely determined through the monitoring of student attendance, location, behaviour, appearance and completion of work. Surveillance takes different forms including spatial (i.e. panoptic spaces), embodied (i.e. the physical presence of educators and the self-surveillance of students) and disciplinary (i.e. the training and control of certain conduct). While these forms of surveillance often occur simultaneously, I have decided to analyse them separately in order to better differentiate their *modus operandi*.

### 6.1.1 Spatial surveillance

The schools observed for this study are not outfitted with surveillance cameras – an increasingly popular practice in US schools as a result of school violence and shootings (Piro, 2008). However, they still constrain and monitor students (to varying extents) through the use of walls, fences, and rules like 'not going out of bounds' where the gaze of authority cannot reach. Classrooms and shared learning spaces like the library usually contain large windows and/or conspicuous seating arrangements where each "enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point" (Foucault, 1995[1977], p.197) enables staff to 'keep an eye on' students. Similarly, "[p]lay takes place in a highly regulated institutional space where children are not 'left alone'" (Richards, 2012, p.373). Such spatial elements can "operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them" (Foucault, 1977, p.172). In other words, student awareness of teacher surveillance may work to shape 'responsible' conduct in school spaces.

One panoptic space requiring particular mention is the small computer/printer room separating the Yr 5 and 6 classrooms at Fairview School. When I attended the school as a student in Yr 6 (about 14 years ago), this particular room used to be nicknamed the 'fish-tank' by both staff and students on account of the many windows

through which students can be supervised. During my attendance, the 'fish-tank' served many purposes. Firstly, it contained the phone (mainly for teacher use) and one or two computers. Access (when permitted) to these facilities conferred a feeling of privilege when inside the room. Secondly and paradoxically, it was a disciplinary space used to isolate misbehaving students. Lastly, it was also a publically observable space (in keeping with Child Protection legislation) for private discussions between teachers/students/parents/school-counsellor either in person or via the phone. Returning to this school as a researcher, I was surprised to find that the room no longer possesses its nickname. Perhaps the increasing surveillance of children growing up in a 'risk society' (Gill, 2007; Smeyers, 2010) – where "...children come to represent the lost innocence and security of the past, as well as the potential for a new hopeful, certain future" (Singh & McWilliams, 2005, p.119) – has desensitised students to the disciplinary force of such highly-visible panoptic spaces. Nevertheless, the room still functions as a space in which computer work is printed, students disciplined, private conversations held, and quiet sought – as long as supervision is not obstructed. Every Thursday morning, Yr 5 students from Fairview School move in and out of the classroom for specialist music lessons while the remaining students go on with independent 'contract work.' On one such morning:

Some Yr 5 students are chatting amongst themselves as they work. Karla turns around and warns "Guys – I'm trying to read this!" but they continue to talk regardless. Eventually, Karla and Tia move to do extra work in the computer/printer room. Karla asks Mr. Simmons if they can shut the door but he replies "No – leave it open please." Karla protests that they can hear the other students and that is why they moved into the room in the first place. However, Mr. Simmons replies "It's still quieter in there so leave the door open." (Fairview School, observation notes for 17 February 2011)

As one of the most vocal girls in the class, Karla often tells other students to be quiet when they are talking instead of working quietly. In this way, she attempts to assist the teacher in the management of the learning environment. As noted by Walkerdine (1990), "[g]irls who gain power through becoming like the teacher cannot possibly challenge the rules for which they are responsible as guardian" (p.52). However, it seems that Karla's attempts do not confer much power, as her pleas or commands for quiet are often ignored, or heeded by her peers for only a short duration. In this case, after Karla fails to significantly alter peer behaviour through verbal means, she and Tia take responsibility for their own concentration by physically retreating to a quieter setting. While the peers

in this example include both genders, three of the five male students are consistently disruptive. Such dominance of male students over public (Davies, 1989, 1993), physical (Thorne, 1993) and linguistic (Dalley-Trim, 2007) space often results in the withdrawal or marginalisation of female students and non-dominant male students. Although Karla and Tia take the initiative to appropriate a classic panoptic space into a withdrawal space, this is ironically thwarted by Mr. Simmons' refusal to shut the door and shut out the noise.

While the abundance of windows surrounding the 'fish-tank' room allows for visual surveillance even with the door shut; the auditory surveillance of conversation requires the door to be left open. In any case, there is an apparent lack of trust in students' ability to stay on-task 'behind closed doors' without visual *and* auditory monitoring. Alternatively, Karla and Tia's demonstration of agency may be interpreted by Mr. Simmons as a challenge to his authority, whereby complete separation from the class (and his perceived control of it) would be a comment on his failure to successfully do something about the noise. As panopticism alone fails to give the teacher complete control in this situation, it is therefore combined with an 'ensemble' (Foucault, 2002, p.338) of disciplinary techniques including verbal directives to leave the door open. Although Mr. Simmons occasionally warns the 2-3 boys causing the most disruption to desist and therefore does not completely excuse their behaviour as 'boys just being boys' (Allard, 2004; Dalley-Trim, 2006, 2007; Mills, 2001; Robinson, 2000, 2005); his disciplining of the girls' behaviour – even when they are conforming to the pedagogic aims of schooling – works to reinforce patriarchal privilege and hegemonic masculine dominance over the feminine (Butler, 1999; Connell, 1987; Davies, 1989, 1993; Mac An Ghail, 1994; Mills, 2001; Walkerdine, 1990). Allard (2004) particularly notes how girls' positive behaviours seem to be "...dismissed or taken for granted" (p.355) rather than acknowledged. Nevertheless, it seems that many students (of both genders) have not *embodied* the institutional expectation to be 'responsibly' quiet.

#### 6.1.2 Embodied surveillance

According to Youdell (2006), "[t]he school is populated by *embodied* students and teachers. Each moment in a classroom, corridor or assembly hall offers a plethora of apparently mundane and self-evident bodily stylisations, adornments, postures, gestures, movements and deeds" (original emphasis – p.71). As teachers embody the institutional

gaze, their mere physical presence in the classroom, on the playground and during special events like assembly or church services act as a constant reminder to students that they under surveillance and are expected to shape their behaviour accordingly. For example, during a whole-school assembly at Riverside School:

Parents sit on chairs at the back of the hall, students sit on the floor in front, and teachers sit on chairs along the sides of the student body to monitor and guide their Yr group's behaviour (Riverside School, observation notes for 25 August 2011)

Students are surrounded by parents who, in the spatial hierarchy of the assembly hall, simultaneously embody both adult authority and the support of loving adults. Similarly, teachers also embody institutional expectations of appropriate behaviour according to school rules and norms, as well as symbolically mediating between institution, students and families. Whether students in turn *embody* these expectations willingly is another question – particularly for some of the Yr 6 students from Fairview School who are in the midst of enjoying 'free' time on the playground:

It is lunchtime and Scott warns Bianca that "Mrs. Jenkins is coming." Bianca looks through the lattice at the top of the bag-rack to search for Mrs. Jenkins. Someone comments that Bianca looks scared and she explains that "Mrs. Jenkins knows I haven't got my hat – that's why..." In any case, the topic of conversation changes swiftly from 'cats licking themselves in private parts' and types of 'kissing' to "I just love homework don't you?!" as Mrs. Jenkins walks past them into the classroom (Fairview School, observation notes for 14 March 2011)

As noted by Foucault (1977) "[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (pp.202-203). Richards (2012) particularly observes how students negotiate playground surveillance by "...elaborat[ing] forms of play that respond[] to, or tr[y] to ignore, 'being watched'..." (p.387); where boys seem particularly adept at 'self-monitoring' through "...concealing, avoiding or rendering ambiguous 'combative' play" (p.383). This self-monitoring is evident in Bianca's apparent fear of Mrs. Jenkins discovering her hatless (against the school's 'No Hat – No Play' policy) and the censorship-like change of the topic

of conversation. However, Bianca (one of the most outspoken girls in the class and daughter of one of the senior school teachers) resists the 'constraints of power' through the undertones of sarcasm in her remark about homework, suggesting contempt for teacher intrusion into 'play' time and space as well as mocking triumph for having escaped detection and/or punishment. Therefore, students can appropriate surveillance techniques in order to "bring to light power relations" (Foucault, 2002, p.329) and create spaces of resistance for themselves. The reasons provided for such resistance will be discussed in Chapter 9. However, student resistance is often deterred, limited or corrected by more disciplinary forms of surveillance.

### *6.1.3 Disciplinary surveillance*

In conjunction with, and sometimes due to the ineffective application of spatial and embodied techniques of surveillance alone, disciplinary surveillance is utilised by teachers to control and train students to behave responsibly as "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1977, p.138). Such disciplinary surveillance is facilitated through verbal and non-verbal strategies. The verbal strategies observed include: questioning, reminding, directing and warning students to conduct themselves in particular ways. Non-verbal strategies include: ringing bells to signal 'quiet'; clicking at students or tapping desks to refocus attention; signing student diaries or folders at the end of the week in terms of work completion and behaviour; and staring/glaring to signal disapproval or warning. Often verbal and non-verbal strategies are applied together to maximise disciplinary surveillance – as is particularly evident in the following class of Year 6 students from Fairview School whose reputation for 'strong personalities' has preceded them over the last few years. During an afternoon literacy session, students are in reading groups working on different tasks – one of which involves using the computers at the back of the room to type and print out work:

Curtis is waiting for his work to be printed. He goes over to assist Aiden to print his, then sits back down and swings on his chair. Mrs. Jenkins asks Curtis what he is doing and he replies "I'm waiting for it to print." Mrs. Jenkins gives him instructions on how to check the printing status then reminds him that he has to "wait patiently." Scott loudly retorts "Impatiently" and is told to write his name on the board because "That wasn't necessary" and he does so. Curtis is also reminded to tuck his shirt in. Mrs. Jenkins is sitting at one of the computers at the back of the room and occasionally turns around to stare at

students who are 'off-task' until they notice and hurriedly get back to work. Toby turns around to see if Mrs. Jenkins is watching and she warns "I'm always watching Toby." He protests "But I've almost finished..." to which she replies "It's a matter of how." Toby emphasizes "I'm *almost* finished" and Mrs. Jenkins explains "Well 'almost' could be huge – it needs to be finished." (Fairview School, observation notes for 31 March 2011)

Here, the constant threat of being watched is verbally and non-verbally reinforced by Mrs. Jenkins. Students are not only reminded or warned to keep on task – they are also told that they have to 'wait patiently.' While Mrs. Jenkins may see the development of characteristics like patience as beneficial and desirable for students, her own impatience regarding the pace at which students are completing their work suggests that teachers are exempt from such expectations. Such "...mundane and day-to-day processes and practices of educational institutions" (Youdell, 2006, p.13) work to constitute 'responsible' students as continuously on-task, patient and neat-and-tidy, rather than responding to the needs of others (i.e. Curtis assisting Aiden). Those who do not or cannot conform to such constructions of obedient responsibility are usually the target of disciplinary surveillance, although this occurs along a spectrum of severity. So, while Curtis is *reminded* to wait patiently and tuck in his shirt (the significance of uniform will be discussed at a later point); Scott and Toby (two of the most vocal and overtly resistant boys in this class) receive heightened disciplinary surveillance, *warning* and action to encourage their obedience to school rules and teacher expectations.

Yet, demands for obedience may not necessarily assist in the development of responsibility. For example, during one religion lesson at Riverside School, Yr 5 students are learning about the different items of clothing worn by a priest. At one point:

After students are given time to copy down notes from the board, Mr. Andrews says "Pens down and hands on books – so that I can see who is being disobedient." (Riverside School, observation notes for 19 August 2011)

Instead of explaining the necessity of putting 'pens down and hands on books' in order to better focus on what the teacher is about to say; it seems to be more of a training exercise for obedience. Blind obedience to orders given by teachers is not really conducive to developing ethical responsibility in students as it "undermines the deliberative process" (Goodman, 2006, p.222). According to Foucault (1998), "for an action to be 'moral,' it must not be reducible to an act or a series of acts, conforming to a

rule, a law or a value” (p.28). Rather, students need to engage in processes of negotiation, reflection and invention in order to form moral selves (which will be discussed further in the following chapters). However, such processes are always mediated by socially constructed norms – including gender – as evident in the following religion lesson with Yr 5 students at Riverside School:

During the religion lesson, Aaron asks if they can work with someone else – like David, and the teacher replies “Yes, if you can be sensible.” Luke is frequently off task and Mrs. Johnson often says “Luke honey” to coax him back to work (Riverside School, observation notes for 14 September 2010)

Mrs. Johnson (a casual teacher) only addresses Luke (a male student) as ‘honey’ in what is perceived to be an effort to coax him back to work. Therefore, it could be argued that she is either drawing on maternal discourses that seek to placate a difficult child or drawing on the ‘heterosexual matrix’ (Butler, 1999[1990]) to appropriate feminine ‘sweet talk’ for the purposes of manipulating masculine behaviour. The use of gender discourses to discipline student subjectivities and conduct is also apparent during the following Yr 5/6 spelling lesson at Northfield School:

As students copy their spelling words into their books, Mr. Williams reminds them to correct their posture so that they’re sitting up straight. Mr. Williams again praises Robyn for the example she provided and adds “You’re one smart chick.” He reminds students to quietly look over the words once they have finished writing. As students quietly complete this task, Joe gets up to lean on the puck table near the front (so he can see the words better). The teacher doesn’t seem to notice or mind when students do this. Mr. Williams looks around the room and asks Faith if she’s finished, she confirms this and he replies “Well have a look over them now babe.” He asks a few more students (including Kyle) who seem to have ceased writing (Northfield School, observation notes for 6 June 2011)

While perhaps intended as colloquial endearment for the purposes of establishing or maintaining rapport, the use of words like ‘chick’ and ‘babe’ to address only female students actually works to reinforce a patriarchal and hetero-normative gaze (Butler, 1999). This gaze disempowers femininity by envisaging it as a passive, infantile or objectified state. As none of the students (male or female) openly object to this gender hierarchy, it may be argued that they either accept it as the norm or as something they cannot challenge without personal risk. They may, like the secondary school girls

interviewed by Mac An Ghaill (1994), feel powerless to 'say anything' (p.132) in case they are disbelieved or blamed. Although Mr. Williams seems to permit movement to the front of the room to copy from the blackboard without expecting requests for permission; he does monitor and correct student posture – an example of 'bio-power' involving the discipline and regulation of the body in productive and normative ways (Foucault, 1978). As Foucault (1977) further explains:

Disciplinary control does not consist simply in teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures; it imposes the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body, which is its condition of efficiency and speed. In the correct use of the body, which makes possible a correct use of time, nothing must remain idle or useless: everything must be called upon to form the support of the act required (p.152)

In an increasingly neoliberal society with an emphasis on free-markets and competition, more pressures than ever before are placed on students to be efficient with the completion of learning and assessment tasks and adapt their bodies and will to this end. This is because students are perceived as 'human capital' and "...future workers [who] must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively" (Apple, 2005, p.273). Students therefore have a civic duty to 'work' on themselves by taking more responsibility for their own attitudes, behaviour, learning and wellbeing. However, the neoliberal emphasis on individualism has encouraged the 'privatization of responsibility' (Ilcan, 2009) or 'responsibilization' (Butler, 2009, p.35) to the point where "[t]he political subject is now less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is to be manifested through the free exercise of personal choice among a variety of marketed options" (Rose, 1999a, p.230). Yet, this freedom of choice is actually a constrained 'contract for freedom' (Rose, 1999a, p.261) as individuals are expected to take responsibility for themselves by making choices that align with social goals and values – particularly those of the multiple communities to which they belong (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). Students are therefore expected to 'responsibly' shape themselves in ways that align with the goals and values of the school community – such as maintaining neat uniforms.

Uniforms are a type of disciplinary surveillance aligned to neoconservative discourses of cultured 'neatness' as well as militaristic discourses of conformity



(Meadmore & Symes, 1996). As such, they are often verbally monitored by teachers – particularly at Fairview School (evident in the previous exchange between Mrs. Jenkins and Curtis) and Riverside School (evident in the following example) as schools with strict uniform codes:

After the morning assembly and as we are walking back to the classroom, Mrs. Stephens asks “Elizabeth – why do you think I called out your name?” Elizabeth replies “My shirt” to which Mrs. Stephens responds “That’s right. If you tuck it in really well all around then I won’t have to keep reminding you.” Yr 5 seem to be dawdling so it is no surprise when Mr. Andrews comes up to them and says with humoured exasperation “Come on Yr 5!” (Riverside School, observation notes for 7 September 2011)

Uniform, as an impression management technique, reinforces the belief that appearance is the benchmark of educational quality, discipline and good behaviour (Symes, 1998). As an extension of the body, the uniform and how it is worn often becomes symbolically aligned to the personal qualities of the student – i.e. neat, organised, clean, lazy, rebellious, responsible, irresponsible (Meadmore & Symes, 1996) and therefore “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes and excludes” (Foucault, 1977, p.183). Such bio-power (Foucault, 1978) or regulation of the student population can also occur through the sharing of academic results in class.

In most of the classes observed for this study, students were expected to share their results for spelling and/or maths tests. Although this was not mentioned in student interviews, one of the student-teachers from Northfield School reflected on her own experience as a primary student in the discussion below:

**Miss Hill:** Yes – coz I know – coz I was probably one of those students, definitely in maths as a kid, coz I was (with humour) not the brightest maths student. And um, and I hated it. And I just remember, I clearly remember this – in primary school doing like, I think it was called Mentals Maths or Maths Mentals or something and it’d be like 15 quick questions that the teacher would read out and I absolutely hated it because I’d get, I don’t know, 5 out of 15 or 7 out of 15 or something. And then they’d, you know, do the whole thing “Who got this?” and I’d just feel like “Arw – I don’t want to put my hand up” like I’d be in just about tears because I didn’t want to (giggles)... (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 student teacher, Term 2 2011)

Students may feel obliged to demonstrate responsibility for themselves through the honest and public disclosure of marks but this may come at a personal cost. Such vivid

recollections of the trauma experienced through public surveillance and disclosure demonstrate how the test or exam “...is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1977, p.184). Here, “[t]he distribution according to ranks or grade has a double role: it marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes; but it also punishes and rewards” (Foucault, 1977, p.181). Nevertheless, schooling continues to replicate the same experiences that teachers themselves found humiliating and upsetting as primary students. Like censorship (Butler, 1997) and racism (Gillborn, 2006), such experiences of public surveillance, disclosure and embarrassment are ‘institutionalised’ as a normal part of schooling and are therefore perpetuated rather than meaningfully critiqued and challenged.

So far, analysis and discussion has focused on how pedagogies of spatial, embodied, and disciplinary surveillance are utilised by teachers in order to monitor and thereby shape ‘responsible’ student behaviour, values and attitudes. Although most students shape themselves in ways that conform to teacher expectations and social norms; there are times when some students resist this (often excessive) surveillance – despite the risk of punishment this entails. The following section will focus on how pedagogies of punishment and reward are explicitly and implicitly applied to control the ir/responsibility of students.

## **6.2 Pedagogies of punishment/reward**

With roots in behaviorism of the Skinnerian variety (Woods, 2008), discipline involves a double system of ‘gratification-punishment,’ where both components work together to ‘train and correct’ behaviour (Foucault, 1977, p.180). As argued by Kohn (1993), such punishments and rewards – or ‘sticks and carrots’ – are fundamentally similar in their conditional and coercive aim to manipulate and control behaviour. While behavioural approaches may sometimes be effective in the short-term reduction of disruptive behaviour (Evans, Harden, Thomas and Benefield, 2003 – cited in Woods, 2008) or enhancement of performance and intrinsic motivation (Pierce, Cameron, Banko, & So, 2003 – cited in Chen & Wu, 2010); the implementation of such systems is often to the long-term detriment of genuine relationships, empowerment, learning and/or intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kohn, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 1996, 2000). In terms of responsibility, it seems “[a] great many adults who

complain that children don't act 'responsibly' really mean that they don't do exactly what they're told" (Kohn, 1993, p.162). In the three schools observed for this study, formal and institutionally sanctioned systems of punishment and reward such as discipline books, awards, house points, and student diaries were applied alongside more informal and idiosyncratically mediated strategies such as public reprimand, exclusion, praise, lunchtime detentions, and access/denial of tangible goods. The following analysis will focus on how these formal and informal pedagogies of punishment and reward are used to control ir/responsible behaviour and attitudes.

### *6.2.1 Formal systems and programs*

Formal systems and programs are those which have become institutionalised or unquestionably accepted as the norm (Foucault, 1977, 2002) at a whole-school level. The formal systems and programs of reward and punishment observed and discussed during fieldwork include: the Positive Behaviour for Learning program; a Christian Living Book and Discipline Book; the public presentation of awards/prizes at assembly and mention in the school newsletter; the addition or subtraction of 'house' points; and the writing of comments and marks for class-work/behaviour in student diaries by teachers.

Most of the principals and teachers interviewed express that the discipline systems in their schools/classes have a focus on positive reinforcement rather than punishment. For example, the principal of Northfield School describes the aims of the Positive Behaviour for Learning Program recently implemented in the school:

**N:** Yeah. Yep, fair enough. Well what about – so you were just talking about the PBL, that's the Positive Behaviour for Learning I've noticed?

**Mrs. Henderson:** Yep, yep

**N:** So how do you think that's going – that program?

**Mrs. Henderson:** Look (clears throat)

**N:** At this point – its early days I know...

**Mrs. Henderson:** It really is and we're, we're still trying to find our feet a bit with it coz there's just so much you can do and you've really got to um, concentrate on particular things, start off small and get bigger. And you know, it's not as if our school has major, major issues. But what we're trying to do is start promoting the positive because sometimes it's a *major* infringement if a child doesn't have a hat on or if a child runs on the cement. Um, we have some issues, we have kids squabbling and you know, every now and then we have a bit of a fight with a couple of kids, um...um, but, you know, it was about changing the mind-set of the staff I think, more than anything. So that we're not concentrating on the 2% or 5% of kids that do the wrong thing, but trying

to change our emphasis to the 95% that do the right thing and are great kids every single day and recognizing them, um, and setting up a more positive framework – coz that’s gonna drag that other 5% along a lot quicker than the other way around.

**N:** Yep.

**Mrs. Henderson:** Because you know, if you’re concentrating on the 5% of negative kids, *more* kids have tended to be like that because that’s where the attention is (Northfield School, interview with principal, Term 2 2011)

While the apparent shift in emphasis from punishment to reward seems preferable – it is based on some assumptions that warrant further critique. Firstly, punishment and reward systems have more in common than is often acknowledged – namely the aim of externally controlling the behaviour of students (Kohn, 1993; Yilmaz, 2009). Simply shifting from one control system to another does not change this fact. Further, this punishment/reward dichotomy fails to recognise the potential of alternative pedagogies (Goodman, 2006; Kohn, 1993; Roache & Lewis, 2011; Sellar, 2009) which will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8. Secondly, what constitutes right and wrong is determined by ‘regimes of truth’ constructed by those in positions of power/authority (Foucault, 2002, p.131) such as policy-makers, principals and teachers. According to Mrs. Henderson, students are expected to ‘change sides’ by doing the ‘right thing’ in order to ‘get attention.’ In other words, students are expected to conform to dominant discourses of correct behaviour in order to be recognisable or intelligible (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 2002; Levinas, 2006a) subjects. This conditional expectation fails to recognise cross-cultural differences or complexities (Rollock, 2008; Sommers, 2009) such as alternative peer moralities that may clash with school rules (Woods, 2008). It also fails to be sensitive to the vulnerability of students who may not want nor be able to conform, yet still require recognition and love/care for a meaningful existence (Kohn, 1993; Levinas, 2006a; Butler, 2005). Thirdly, even though the terminology may have changed from ‘discipline’ to the more euphemistic ‘classroom management’ in educational discourse and theory, this does not necessarily translate into practice where primary and/or secondary teachers frequently remain dictatorial or authoritarian (Roache & Lewis, 2011; Yilmaz, 2009).

In any case, positive reinforcement in all three school contexts is said to be formally provided through public recognition in the form of awards/prizes, mention in the school newsletter and/or letters home to parents. For example, one of the Yr 5 teachers at Riverside School explains the purpose of a Christian Living Award:

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yeah, so that's really good... And I mean, really as a school, we've got the Christian Living Book, which is really good. So we're always putting kids in there for doing something like that.

**N:** Mm...OK, now do teachers – can students, can students write in that book as well?

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yep, teachers, parents, students, whoever...

**N:** Wow...

**Mrs. Stephens:** Cleaners...

**N:** And so, is that book, like, readily available?

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yeah it's in David's office – on the shelf. Yep and we can just go in and write anything in it. So, depending, it could be anything. Like for example, we've had, a little girl brought in a cake for the staff to eat, so she went in it. Or it could be finding money in the, in the playground and handing it in. So, yeah, for all sorts of – just depends on what the teacher would like to put them in...

**N:** Mhm...

**Mrs. Stephens:** So that's very nice – positive – so in assemblies, you know, David reads it out and they'll get a sticker, and they'll usually get their names in the newsletter.

**N:** Yeah... I went to [one of] the assemblies and one of the Yr 5 – was it Jake - got a Christian Living Award or something? So, what did he, what did he do to get that?

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yep, yep. OK, so well, with the awards, we give them out every fortnight. And so we have a Christian Living and we have all the other awards – sports award and merit awards – so just, general... But the Christian Living one we're trying to promote living in a Christ-like manner... So we just have to pick someone every fortnight who we think has been living in that way the best. So, it could even be – I mean, it's hard in my classroom because they're all

**N:** They're all...

**Mrs. Stephens:** ...so nice! (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 classroom teacher, Term 3 2010)

While award systems play a major role in all three educational contexts in terms of positively reinforcing particular attributes; they are problematic for a number of reasons. In addition to being another mechanism of external control (as noted previously), even when the aim is to promote genuinely altruistic qualities rather than compliance, awards can decrease intrinsic or unconditional motivation as “anyone who is rewarded for acts of generosity will be less likely to think of himself as a caring or altruistic person; he will attribute his behaviour to the reward instead” (Kohn, 1993, p.173). In other words, the reward can become an expected and conditional part of ‘being responsible.’

Despite the emphasis on positive reinforcement, there is still the expectation that students know and conform to formal school and class rules or be disciplined/punished

accordingly. As Foucault (1977) notes, “[t]he whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable” (pp.178-179). The principal of Riverside School particularly discusses the importance of rules in the following interview excerpt:

**N:** Um, alright. So thanks – uh, we’ll move onto the next question... So, uh, what do you see as the key things that students need to learn about responsibility and why do you see these as important?

**Mr. Andrews:** First and foremost is they need to take responsibility for their own actions.

**N:** Mhm...

**Mr. Andrews:** And that’s what our discipline policy works on.

**N:** Mhm...

**Mr. Andrews:** So many of them... I mean especially when I first turned up here, was that you would discipline a child and the parents were explaining why and why not – whereas how on earth would they know when they haven’t even been at the school (starts to laugh) when the issue occurred.

**N:** Mm...

**Mr. Andrews:** So, first and foremost they have to learn to take responsibility for their own actions – which, to a large degree, is what has to happen once they’re adults.

**N:** Mhm...

**Mr. Andrews:** And that, well that’s easily *said*...You know, little ones, it’s very hard to do, hard to expect them to be totally responsible – but they certainly do know the basic school rules and we do expect them to stick to that.

(Riverside School, interview with principal/Yr 5 classroom teacher, Term 3 2010)

Mr. Andrews speaks of responsibility as involving student adherence to rules. While the establishment of class rules often involves students in a seemingly democratic decision-making process (as will be discussed in the following chapter); there is still an expectation that these rules coincide with the broader school rules, which are in turn expected to mirror state/national discipline policies in more of a top-down rather than democratic process. The trouble with lists of specific rules and consequences imposed on students is that this “establishes a confrontational tone; the message is not that members of a community will work together and try to help someone who stumbles, but that anyone who violates a pre-established edict is in trouble” (Kohn, 1993, p.171). Further, when ethical values like responsibility become aligned to ‘rules,’ there is a risk that these values may become devalued. As Goodman (2006) explains “...when every rule is a moral obligation and every infraction elicits moral blame, students are poorly equipped to differentiate amongst wrongs – the administratively efficient from the morally injurious –

and, in any case, will have little motivation to try, for morality is trivialized when so extended” (p.227). Giving administrative and largely trivial infringements discursive equivalence to more damaging behaviours like bullying and violence can therefore desensitise students to moral considerations of ‘tak[ing] responsibility for their own actions’ (Mr. Andrews).

Yet, even if students know the rules, there is no guarantee that they will ‘stick’ (Mr. Andrews) to them. In such cases, punishment is often used as a corrective reminder. For example, the ‘negative part of discipline’ is explained in the following way by the principal of Fairview School:

**Mr. Harvey:** So, there is a clear system but all that is about doing things well, um, and being – getting feedback for something you’ve done well. And it’s um...at each, I suppose – the negative part of discipline, the punishment, um, I treat each individual situation on its own merits, so we don’t have a set policy that you know, you do this thing wrong and you get this punishment as a result. Um, it depends on the child and the circumstance, and what’s happening at that child’s life at the time. So I treat each one individually and um, certainly, I don’t need to see many children because, uh, 99% of the behaviour at this school is positive. (Fairview School, interview with principal, Term 1 2011)

While Mr. Harvey may indeed address discipline issues on a case-by-case basis if/when students are sent to him; this seems to be contradicted by the broader school-wide discipline procedures. Here, specialist teachers (i.e. librarian, music, Japanese etc.) habitually record in student diaries formal marks (and sometimes comments) for class-work and behaviour ranging from CW1 (class work merit), CW2 (needing improvement), CW3 (demerit) to CW4 (detention) at the end of each specialist lesson – such as the following music lesson in which Yr 6 students are completing a written test:

Students are reminded to be quiet while completing the test or they will receive a mark of zero. Rory’s watch makes beeping noises as he adjusts it and Mrs. Ford tells him to stop and put it away. He explains that “I’m just adjusting it to the right time” but puts it away. Mrs. Ford reminds students to sit on the floor quietly once they have finished the test and that they have a few minutes to check their work. She adds that “This test is as much about testing appropriate behaviour and self-control as it is for music content.” Rory plonks on the floor and starts snoring. He is reprimanded by the teacher who writes a CW3 in his diary and a zero on his test. Mrs. Ford informs the class that Q4 is tricky and to make sure they check it. Boyd says out loud “Which one is question 4?” and is warned not to talk. He starts giggling while lying on the

floor and receives a zero mark and the comment “You have been warned” written along the top of his test. Mrs. Ford occasionally looks at me in exasperation and at one point mimes ‘wringing their necks.’ She collects the completed tests and asks students to sit quietly on their chairs. (Fairview School, observation notes for 6 April 2011)

It is interesting to note how Mrs. Ford reminds students that this music test ‘is as much about testing appropriate behaviour and self-control.’ This means that even if students do have the music knowledge to pass the test, they may fail according to their behaviour – a challenge accepted by Rory and Boyd, perhaps to reassert a dominant form of masculinity antagonistic of middle-class schooling (Willis, 1977). In any case, these marks are then checked by classroom teachers (and parents), recorded and translated into ‘house’ points to be added or subtracted from the weekly/overall score. Classroom teachers can also add or subtract ‘house’ points at any time in their own classes. For example, Mrs. Fraser (substituting for Mr. Simmons) ‘threatens’ to subtract house points if students waste time during an HSIE lesson on Antarctica:

Mrs. Fraser warns that she’ll take House points off the board entirely if they keep wasting time. Students sit down hurriedly at their desk and Mrs. Fraser comments that “It’s a shame I had to threaten to take house points off in order for you to do what you should be doing.” (Fairview School, observation notes for 22 March 2011)

A house points system is also an option at Northfield School. However, Mr. Williams expressed that he chooses not to implement it in his class because he believes it to be unnecessary. Other formalised procedures are apparent in Riverside School where students’ names are entered into the ‘Discipline Book’ on certain levels with certain consequences:

For the next activity, students are instructed to write down an example of peer pressure, and Mrs. Stephens explains “Think about peer pressure (even parents)...Luke – where’s your folder?” Luke replies “At home” and Mrs. Stephens announces “Three people who haven’t remembered their folders – if you don’t bring them back tomorrow – you will be in big trouble – possibly Level 1 in the Discipline Book.” (Riverside School, observation notes for 7 September 2010)



The use of the word 'discipline' in 'Discipline Book' is intimidating in itself – where the simple inscription of the student's name in the book performatively (Butler, 1997) inscribes punishment onto the student's identity through mere stigmatisation.

Yet sometimes the formal systems of reward and punishment alone may not be effective in and of themselves, as evident in another HSIE lesson with Yr 5 students from Fairview School:

Karla is walking back to her desk making an annoying noise. Selene warns "Karla..." Selene then asks Brent again "Why were you holding your eye before?" and Hayley answers sharply that "He stabbed his pencil into his eye." Karla asks if he needs some ice and Selene warns "Karla!" Karla explains that "He'll need ice - otherwise it will get swollen." Brent and Selene are warned by the teacher to stop talking and get on with their work. Selene comments again and Mr. Simmons says "Selene – you can take 5 House points off. I've told you to be quiet and I'm getting tired of hearing your voice." Selene gets up and deducts 5 House points. Hayley receives 5 House points for her work, tells Kylie (whose role it is to add and subtract House points) and then instructs Selene "I got 5 House points back Selene." Selene makes a face and says something under her breath. Oliver and Bradley are 'wizard-duelling' across the classroom and at a closer range when they are near each other. Hayley asks Mr. Simmons if she can move because Cody and Brent are distracting her. She moves to sit next to Emma (rather than Karla) and opposite Kylie. Hayley receives more House points for her maths homework and Cody tries to discredit her by saying "Why? Because you use a calculator". She denies this by stating "I do not use a calculator – I don't even own a calculator." Oliver, Brent, Cody and Bradley are really joking around, doing silly dance moves, walks, talking and mime-duelling. Cody is warned by Mr. Simmons that "If you don't finish your work today – you'll have to do it for homework." Oliver is told to take 5 House points off the board. Cody does a hoola dance as he walks to and from the board to record House points for members of his House. Selene and Oliver openly laugh at him. Selene looks over at me as I try not to laugh. Mr. Simmons warns Selene and Oliver to be quiet and reminds them that "You've already lost House points." Oliver, Selene, Brent and Cody are giggling. Mr. Simmons tells Cody to take off House points and he does so. Then someone else almost immediately receives House points so he turns around to go back and record them. As usual, he wiggles his backside as he does so. He then jokes to Oliver "What you lookin' at boy?!" Selene and Oliver are still giggling. Mr. Simmons tells Selene to "Grow up. You don't have to be an adult but try not to be an idiot." Cody is half-way back to his chair after looking at the times-table chart on the board and says "Oh – I forgot!" and turns back around. Mr. Simmons humourously remarks "Speaking of idiots..." Selene adds "He doesn't know his tables!" and Mr. Simmons sends her into the 'fish-tank' room to do her work. (Fairview School, observation notes for 10 March 2011).

The 'house' system is thus another disciplinary technology involving peer pressure from fellow house mates (and competition between students from opposing houses) to win collectively shared rewards. However, the gain and loss of house points can also become a depersonalised game, as students may not consider the ultimate result of winning or losing the House Shield/Spirit Cup to be worth missing out on having some fun. During such unauthorised mirth, many gendered dynamics are taking place. The one most pertinent to this particular discussion is that Selene is more frequently singled out for punishment than her male peers. While Selene and Oliver both lose house points and both giggle at Cody's provocative antics, it is Selene and not Oliver who is reprimanded by Mr. Simmons and told to 'grow up' and not 'be an idiot.' While Mr. Simmons implies that Cody is also an idiot for forgetting his times-tables, this is said with less seriousness than his comments to Selene. Yet, when Selene tries to join in with this seemingly humorous turn, she is banished to the 'marginalised' (Miller & Rose, 2008, p.105) space of the computer room; while male dominance over public space (Davies, 1989, 1993) is restored. As Allard (2004) has similarly found, when girls misbehave "...they [are] never granted the same reasons or sympathy as the boys, since this [is] understood as due to choice rather than factors beyond their control" (p.355). Nevertheless, 'house' systems involving many people or third parties may be more abstract and less immediately demanding. Thus, formal systems emphasising social responsibility are often supported by informal strategies or everyday practices which may have more 'personal' effects.

#### *6.2.2 Informal strategies applied in everyday practice*

Informal strategies are applied idiosyncratically by teachers in their everyday practice to reinforce the 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968) which usually involves the general expectation that the teacher maintains 'discipline' in a 'quiet' classroom (Kohn, 1993, p.164). The most popular informal strategies of punishment and reward applied in the schools and classrooms observed include: public reprimand, exclusion or praise; early marks or lunchtime detentions; and access or denial of tangible goods.

When students do something that is in conflict with teacher expectations – though this may differ from teacher to teacher (Goodman, 2006; Kohn, 1993) – students are cut down to size with the double-edged sword of public reprimand, where they are not only

reproached by the teacher but publically shamed as well. For example, during a library lesson with the Yr 6 class at Fairview School, students are reprimanded for being 'silly':

Once students are seated on the library amphitheatre, Mrs. Marshall warns the group of boys to her right (Scott, Rory, Aiden, Boyd and Hayden) to behave or they will have to move so that there is a girl in-between each of them. Toby has moved down to the front next to Mrs. Marshall and then sits next to Ebony. Someone comments that he's only sitting next to one girl and he puts his arm around her shoulders and smilingly says "Yep" while she leans away in smiling embarrassment. Mrs. Marshall tells Aiden to leave Rory alone. Toby jokes "G-g-g-gay!" a few times but is told by the teacher to be quiet or he'll be sent out to Mrs. Jenkins. He continues to talk and is sent out. Caleb has a plastic bag on his head and is told to "Take it off" by Mrs. Jenkins once she enters the room. Rory, Boyd, Scott and Aiden are hitting each other with their library bags. They are told to stop by Mrs. Jenkins. Aiden is then told that they expel people from school for continuing to fight/hit etc. As students find some books to borrow, Toby throws cushions at Caleb (who is sitting on one of the amphitheatre steps) and tells him to join him on one of the window-seats. However Caleb ends up sitting down in his original spot. Once students have borrowed their books, they make their way over to the computer room and wait outside for the teachers. One of the students informs Mrs. Marshall that both computer rooms are full. While Mrs. Marshall goes to sort the situation out, Mrs. Jenkins heavily reprimands the class about their behaviour in the library. She elaborates that it was mainly the boys and that they need to "Be responsible for their behaviour and grow up." She adds that it only takes a few silly people to "ruin the reputation of Yr 6 as role models" and that it only has to happen a few times. She says she hopes this behaviour doesn't occur in specialist classes (i.e. music, Japanese) because people think that they're not being closely watched or supervised by an adult and therefore believe they can "behave like idiots." (Fairview School, observation notes for 22 February 2011)

Although Mrs. Marshall pre-emptively warns Scott, Rory, Aiden, Boyd and Hayden to behave; such warnings actually signal an expectation of misbehaviour. Most of these boys accept their constitution as 'impossible' (Youdell, 2006) or irresponsible learners by engaging with a form of hegemonic masculinity that involves ignoring female teacher directives and hitting each other with library bags. As female students are often perceived to be more responsible than their male counterparts, then discipline systems frequently utilise space to separate groups of 'irresponsible' students (most often boys) and disperse them amongst 'responsible' students (most often girls) – almost as if responsibility can be transferred through osmosis. However, the implied threat of being placed in close proximity to female student bodies is similar to the pollution ritual of 'cooties' (Thorne, 1993, p.73) and draws on the normative discourse of male/female duality (Connolly,

1998; Davies, 1989, 1993; Kehily, 2002; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Youdell, 2006). Thus, close proximity to the feminine may be perceived as 'cross[ing] the gender divide' for which male students risk the 'category-maintenance work' (Davies, 1989, 1993), 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993) and 'boundary-policing' (Mills, 2001) of their peers. However, Toby subverts this threat by using his proximity to Ebony as proof of his own heterosexuality and non-'gay'-ness and therefore his alignment with dominant societal norms and the power this confers. When Mrs. Marshall is out of hearing, Mrs. Jenkins reprimands the entire class – particularly the boys – for their behaviour in the library which may not only 'ruin the reputation of Yr 6 as role models' but her own reputation as a teacher who has control over her class. The perceived need for students to 'grow up' in order to be responsible is also directed at Yr 5/6 students at Northfield School when they fail to listen to their student-teacher:

As students are discussing their ideas, the noise level increases to the point where Miss Hill asks them to "Be quiet please" and Brett adds "Shh! Miss Hill is trying to speak!" Mr. Williams eventually gets up and points to Adam, Tony, Celeste and Mason and tells them to get up. He explains that he is pointing at them because he is "sour." He says that it's disappointing that he has to "publically shame" people. He explains that student teachers are learning to be teachers and that the class should be more considerate and not be fiddling or talking. He then asks "Is your learning going ahead?" and most of the students reply "No." Mr. Williams explains the pressure that Miss Hill is under because she is being assessed by him as well in terms of her teaching. He then asks "Are you considerate, caring people or are you a rabble of wild animals that need to be kept in line?" He then asks the class what point he's trying to make. Jennifer replies "That we need to be quiet because student-teachers are trying to learn." Brett adds "To treat student-teachers with respect because they are here to learn about how to teach." Mr. Williams asks what it is like when people are talking during sport practice etc. Kimberly replies "You have to scream to be heard." Mr. Williams confides that he's had to tell Miss Hill to be "harsher" on them because of their behaviour and adds "Grow up. Grow up. Grow up as people because when teachers are trying to guide or teach you – it's in your interests." As Mr. Williams sits back at his desk, Jennifer says "I'm sorry Mr. Williams" and he replies "Yes, thank you." Miss Hill continues the lesson and students are noticeably quieter – whispering if at all. Mr. Williams turns to me and jokes "How to teach responsibility? Grind them."  
(Northfield School, observation notes for 30 May 2011)

In such instances (from the plethora of examples available in all three school contexts), individual and collective reprimands are executed to deter certain behaviours and attitudes deemed irresponsible by the teacher. The choice of a public rather than private

execution of reprimand has the extra impact of humiliation as students are opened up to judgement by their peers as examples of ‘what not to do/be.’ Telling students to ‘grow up’ may signal a consideration of developmental factors impeding the ability to make responsible decisions (Goodman, 2006). Such notions are reflected in student comments (analysed in Chapter 9) and are problematic because “...the idea that we have to wait until children are mature enough to handle responsibilities may set up a vicious circle: it is experience with decisions that helps children *become* capable of handling them” (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.96). Further, it may work to humiliate upper-primary students by infantilising them despite their position at the top of the primary-school-age-hierarchy. In any case, humiliation may ignore the vulnerability (Levinas, 2006a) of students and is considered an aggressive discipline tactic which is more likely to increase student anger, sense of injustice, alienation, rebellion and misbehaviour rather than responsibility (Goodman, 2006; Lewis, 2001; Lewis, Romi, Qui & Katz, 2005; Roache & Lewis, 2011; Woods, 2008). In fact, the emphasis is mostly placed on the supposed personal/moral deficits of students who are described as ‘silly’ and ‘idiotic’ (Mrs. Jenkins) or ‘wild’ (Mr. Williams) rather than using these adjectives to describe their actions. For example, a student may still be a caring person even if their actions are occasionally considered ‘silly’ by teachers. As noted by Roache & Lewis (2011), “...an engaged student may well still misbehave, and equally, a well behaved student may be passively disengaged from learning...” (p.143). Such complexity is not really acknowledged by binaries of competent/deficit, right/wrong, good/evil (Foucault, 1977, p.180) or responsible/silly.

Public exclusion or ostracism is another informal way in which such binaries are spatially reinforced – where ‘insiders’ who conform are sheltered, and ‘outsiders’ who do not (or cannot) conform are banished:

During maths, Jared gets in trouble for talking and is sent out of the classroom, “out into the cold” and told that he will be sitting on the bench at lunchtime. (Northfield School, observation notes for 20 June 2011)

During news time, Selene presents her Star Wars toys/figurines. Mr. Simmons asks if she is a big fan and she replies that “I like it but I don’t know much about it.” Mr. Simmons tells Vanessa to go and stand at the back of the classroom and face the wall because she was talking and she does so. After a couple of minutes, Mr. Simmons asks her to sit back down at her desk and she does so. (Fairview School, observation notes for 23 February 2011)

While ‘time-outs’ may serve a protective or rehabilitative function in allowing students the opportunity to recover self-control and rejoin the group (Charney, 1991 – as cited in Goodman, 2006, p.223); as evident in the examples above, it can also be employed as a coercively punitive strategy (Goodman, 2006) which threatens self-esteem (Carter-Sowell, Wesselmann, Wirth, Law, Chen, Wydia Kosasih, van der Lee & Williams, 2010) and is unlikely to resolve the issue at hand (Kohn, 2006[1996]). Regardless of intent, the general expectation is for students to conform to group norms in order to maintain membership and the overall survival of the group (Carter-Sowell et al., 2010). Ironically, the survival of the group is compromised by ostracism when it is not judged as a fair process by those who witness it, therefore lowering group morale (Carter-Sowell et al., 2010). Such witnesses may therefore be involved in substituting themselves for the person being ostracised by “suffering for the suffering of the other” (Levinas, 2006b, p.63). On the other hand, when students are sent outside or told to face away, this demonstrates a refusal by the teacher to engage with the vulnerability of the Face of the other (student) and thereby respond to the needs of the other (Levinas, 2006a).

In addition to public reprimand and exclusion, one of the most popular informal pedagogies of control is public praise. For example, during an advanced maths lesson at Northfield School, Mr. Williams publically praises his ‘bright’ class and individual students within that class:

Mr. Williams fills up a water bottle to 1L and carries it around for the class to see. He asks Kyle, Jared and another boy to measure the dimensions of the water in the bottle and asks “What do we have men?” and they give him their measurements. Mr. Williams explains that “The volume of 1L (1000mL) of water is 1000cm<sup>3</sup>.” He asks students how they could convert m<sup>3</sup> into litres and reminds them that this is a Yr 9 level maths question but he wants to see if they come up with anything because he knows they’re a bright class. Robyn says that it will involve division and Mr. Williams praises her by saying “Robyn – I love you” and blowing her a kiss. Some students laugh etc. One girl explains her correct working out and Mr. Williams praises her by saying “You’re a good chick” to which she replies “Thank you” (in good humour). (Northfield School, observation notes for 20 June 2011)

According to Kohn (1993) “we need to look carefully at why we praise, how we praise, and what effects praise has over time on those receiving it” as some forms of praise “feel controlling, make one dependent on someone else’s approval, and in general prove to be no less destructive than other extrinsic motivators” (p.96). Contrary to common belief,

such forms of praise that infer low or unrealistically high expectations can actually decrease students' intrinsic motivation, persistence, intellectual risk-taking and achievement (Kohn, 1993; Möller, 2005). While behaviour-specific praise is advocated by some as an effective alternative to reprimand – particularly in terms of students with at-risk or challenging behaviour (Niesyn, 2009; Stormont, Covington-Smith & Lewis, 2007); such praise may not give students “reason to continue acting responsibly when no one is likely to say nice things to them after they do so, and it gives them neither the skills nor the inclination to make their own decisions about what constitutes responsible behaviour” (Kohn, 1993, p.105). Even when self-monitoring/management/ determination is the end goal (Ganz, 2008; Niesyn, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), such ‘self-surveillance’ (Foucault, 2000, p.87) is still based on conforming to social norms and ‘adult approval’ (Kohn, 1993, p.105). Further, value judgements like ‘good chick’ (Mr. Williams) made by the giver of praise and the resulting power imbalance or clash of perception can often be met with resentment or resistance by the receiver (Kohn, 1993). As noted previously, Mr. Williams’ deployment of sexist terms like ‘chick’ – in addition to references of ‘love’ and the act of blowing kisses – works to reinforce a patriarchal and hetero-normative gaze (Butler, 1999). As noted in my methodology, I experienced similar hyper-personal remarks about my physical appearance and suggestive questions/comments (made by the same teacher and some upper-primary male students from a variety of school contexts) in order to subvert my authority as adult/teacher/researcher and ‘put me in my place’ as a passive object of the male gaze (Robinson, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). Such disempowering conduct may therefore be experienced as insulting and inappropriate rather than complimentary. Given the potential for embarrassment in such situations, it is not surprising that most students prefer private rather than public praise (Burnett, 2001 – cited in Burnett, 2002).

Yet, such considerations of gender are not mentioned or reflected upon by Mr. Williams when the topic of praise arises at interview:

**Mr. Williams:** You allow mistakes and you give praise when it goes well. You know “That was tremendous! You did a good job with that game. What a great group we are” you know...And you’ve seen me in here – you’ve heard me praise them and seen me knuckle them

**N:** Yeah well (laughs). I guess so long as you balance them?

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah. I think there’s far more praise then there is knuckling. (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

While Mr. Williams suggests that he praises students more than he reprimands them, he does not offer gendered examples which he so readily applies in practice. Here, the application of both observation and interview techniques has assisted in the identification of such a disjuncture "...between what people say and what they actually do" (Hammersley, 2006, p.10). Although this omission could imply awareness that such gendered praise may be perceived as problematic; it seems more likely that the normalisation of such gendered dynamics (see also Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001; Walkerdine, 1990) has rendered them invisible to Mr. Williams as an issue requiring critique. As similarly noted by Mac An Ghaill (1994), through interviews with white, middle-class heterosexual male teachers, "[a] major omission in their accounts was an acknowledgement of their position and cultural investments in the existing gendered social relations of domination and subordination" (p.32). While Mr. Williams acknowledges that he 'knuckles' (or reprimands) as well as praises students; there seems to be a lack of recognition that sexist praise can also be experienced in a punitive way.

A more explicitly punitive technique observed at all three schools was informal lunchtime detentions. These took place in the classroom with the teacher, or outside in the playground with indirect supervision. For example:

I enter the Yr 6 classroom before students leave to visit their Kindy buddies. Mrs. Jenkins congratulates the class on working well. As we walk over to the Kindy classroom, Mrs. Jenkins tells me that the class is going really well today and that she's been applying the "owing minutes in lunchtime and then working them off" strategy involving a stop-watch. (Fairview School, observation notes for 18 March 2011)

Instead of explicitly using the term 'detention,' Mrs. Jenkins couches it as a de-personalised economic transaction whereby productivity lost in class time is made up for in free time. Nevertheless, this lunchtime detention serves as a collective punishment for the apparent misbehavior of a few students. According to Kohn (1993) collective punishment or reward "calls forth a particularly noxious sort of peer pressure rather than encouraging genuine concern about the wellbeing of others...That of course is the whole idea: divide and conquer" (p.56). Alternatively, one student may be threatened with punishment on behalf of the whole class:



Mr. Williams interrupts to inform the class that they are being too noisy and refers to the last instruction Miss Hill gave them: to be quiet. Students start chatting again and Mr. Williams warns "Alright – the next person who I name talking will be sitting on the bench with Kimberly (last name) at lunchtime." Despite this, a few students continue to quietly chat. Mr. Williams tells Miles that he will now be sitting on the bench. He then asks Miles "Yes? You were talking weren't you?" and he reluctantly replies "Yes..." Mr. Williams jokes "Alright – no more talking or Robyn gets it" and the class noticeably quiets. Mr. Williams humourously adds "I know she's scared..." (Northfield School, observation notes for 14 June 2011)

Individual detentions involving 'sitting on the bench' may be less punitively intended and more of a last resort, "[c]oming, as they often do, after a series of milder interventions have failed..." (Goodman, 2006, p.222). However, what is particularly sinister here is Mr. Williams' dehumanising treatment of Robyn who is held hostage while the rest of the class is forced to pay a ransom of silence. This not only implies that transgressions of the social body can be punished through the violation of a single person or group; it also makes the other children responsible for the teacher's unconscionable conduct (however humourously intended). On the one hand, Mr. Williams denies Robyn's alterity (Foucault, 1980[1970]; Levinas, 2006a) by reducing her unique otherness to the sameness of the class (on whose behalf she is threatened with punishment). On the other hand, Robyn's unique 'physical' (Butler, 2005, p.101) or 'mortal' (Levinas, 2006a, p.31) vulnerability is used as a form of blackmail in order to make students do what the teacher wants. While Mr. Williams *intentionally* holds Robyn hostage as a 'technology of control' to "structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 2002, p.341) so that students stop talking; Robyn's unique vulnerability *unintentionally* holds each of her class-mates hostage or responsible for her wellbeing and potential suffering. As Butler (2005) further explains:

'Being held hostage' implies that something encircles me, impinging in a way that does not let me get free. It even raises the possibility that there may be a ransom for me that someone must pay (but unfortunately, in a Kafkaesque vein, that person no longer exists or the currency at one's disposal has become obsolete). It is important to note here that Levinas is not saying that primary relations are abusive or terrible; he is simply saying that at the most primary level we are acted upon by others in ways over which we have no say, and that this passivity, susceptibility, and condition of *being impinged upon* inaugurate who we are (p.90)

While subjectivity and ethical responsibility involve being vulnerable to the impingement of the other; “[w]e do not take responsibility for the Other’s acts as if we authored those acts” (original emphasis – Butler, 2005, p.91). In other words, Robyn has not elected to be taken hostage for the purposes of Mr. Williams’ blackmail; just as Robyn’s peers have not elected themselves to pay her ransom. Nevertheless, Robyn’s peers must ambivalently struggle between accepting or refusing responsibility for her vulnerability (Butler, 2004, 2005; Levinas, 2006; Thiem, 2008). As the class noticeably quietens, it seems that most students decide to accept this responsibility. However, any ethical significance of such decisions is tainted by the teacher’s manipulation of student responsibility for coercive purposes.

The access or denial of tangible rewards is another informal strategy frequently applied by teachers in order to shape student behaviour in particular ways:

**Mrs. Stephens:** But I mean, you know, in terms of say the tidiness of the room and stuff like that, they all just dig (pitch) in and do it...Like we had a big clean-up day yesterday and uh – coz it was my last teaching day yesterday – and I’d just say ‘Once you’ve done your desk and that – just come up to me and I’ll give you another job’ and in the afternoon I said ‘You can have a games afternoon’ but I said ‘But I really need a couple of other things to do’...and a few of them said ‘Oh, can I help you? Can I do it?’ And I say ‘Well I don’t want to take up too much of your time – but yeah, that would be good if you did a little for me.’ And they just went and cleaned the cupboard out for me. So, they’re actually a really lovely class for that – they’re really good...

**N:** Mm...Yeah, no – so that’s, that’s good... So, when they kind of volunteer for those kinds of roles, why do you think they do that? Volunteer?

**Mrs. Stephens:** Oh...I don’t know...I suppose they have a sense of ownership for the classroom really... So we’re always... And – I mean – I reward them too... I mean, we always have a competition of who can keep their ‘sides’ the cleanest...

**N:** Oh yeah!...

**Mrs. Stephens:** ...and I give lollies out of an afternoon or something, so I suppose that sort of eggs them on as well... But I mean, sometimes I don’t do that either and they just do it coz they know the room looks nice... I don’t know what gives them that – that (motivation)... (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 classroom teacher, Term 3 2010)

Mrs. Stephens seems to be aware that ‘egging on’ student behaviour through tangible rewards requires a balance with more intrinsic motivators such as the classroom ‘looking nice.’ Nevertheless, tangible rewards remain largely applied in the form of lollies or ‘Credit Card’ stamps:

During the morning session, Mrs. Stephens comes around to stamp student 'credit cards' for completed maths work. Later on in the day, students receive a stamp for sitting/standing up straight in lines after recess as they wait to go back to class. I ask students what their stamped cardboard sheets are for and am told that they are 'Credit Cards' that once full (or consisting of around 12 stamps) results in a reward of 30 minutes computer time. (Riverside School, observation notes for 3 August 2010)

The currency of 'Credit Cards' for computer time may temporarily *buy* docile 'line-up' (Richards, 2012, p.386) behaviour to mark the transition from playground to classroom; but studies have found that tangible rewards do not promote long-term intrinsic motivation in reading (Chen & Wu, 2010) or physical activity (Hardman et al., 2011), and the same could be posited for responsibility. Regardless of duration, the competition for tangible rewards reinforces the binary of winners/losers where "everyone else is a potential obstacle to one's own success" (Kohn, 1993, p.55) rather than vulnerable others requiring one's responsibility (Levinas, 2006a).

### **6.3 Educators' justifications for pedagogies of control**

While at times such surveillance, punishment and reward systems may seem excessive; the reasons provided by principals/teachers for their application – other than the usual time and convenience factors (Kohn, 1993, p.162) or organisational/social constraints and pressures (Ball, 1982, p.286) – seem to centre on providing a safe, supportive and fair learning environment for students and to meet duty of care requirements. This may be as simple as double-checking the student marking of tests during a combined Yr 5/6 spelling lesson at Riverside School:

Students (including visiting Yr 6 students) are given a spelling test and usually mark their own work. However, Mrs. Stephens justifies the need for surveillance as "Some people are ticking work that is wrong so I am going to have to check." She also reminds students: "If you don't want people to copy then cover your work." (Riverside School, observation notes for 3 August 2011)

Mrs. Stephens' students are usually trusted to mark their own spelling tests. However, when this trust is compromised by a few students, double-checking everyone's work may seem justified in terms of fairness. Similarly, a focus on maintaining school rules may be

based on fairness for all students who are required to follow them – as expressed by the Yr 5 substitute teacher at Fairview School:

Bradley gets up and starts running outside to his bag. Mrs. Fraser asks him to stop and tell her what he is doing. He informs her that he is going to get his pencil from his bag. She tells him “You’re going about it the wrong way. You need to ask politely and be granted permission before leaving the classroom. You can’t go in and out of the classroom as you please.” Bradley asks and is granted permission and then runs outside to his bag. As he is out there, some of the Yr 6 boys come over and start teasing him about his hair-cut. Mrs. Fraser calls them in and on their way over they say “But Bradley’s so cute!” Mrs. Fraser says “That’s not what I was hearing. You don’t go around calling people’s haircuts ‘funny’ because it can damage a person’s opinion of themselves. It’s ‘Great haircut Bradley’ or nothing. Do you understand?” They agree and then as they walk away, they call out “Yeah, great haircut Bradley!” though they still appear to be joking around. (Fairview School, observation notes for 3 March 2011)

When Mrs. Fraser reminds Bradley of the need to ask permission before leaving the classroom, this is explained in terms of the expectation of all students to conform to rules that restrict freedom of movement in the school environment, rather than a genuine and/or legal concern and care for his personal safety. As Kohn (2006[1996]) notes “[a] restriction would be more legitimate if, for example, its objective were to protect children from hurting themselves as opposed to imposing order for its own sake” (p.86). However, when intervening in the interaction between Bradley and the Yr 6 boys, Mrs. Fraser demonstrates her concern for Bradley’s self-esteem by explaining that teasing ‘can damage a person’s opinion of themselves.’ However, the order “Its ‘Great haircut Bradley’ or nothing” does not encourage open and meaningful discussion with the other whether it be in the form of confession (Foucault, 1993), unconditional listening (Levinas, 1996; Todd, 2003) or critique (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2002). Such pedagogies of alterity will be the focus of Chapter 8. Although Mrs. Fraser’s order may be aimed at constraining “possible or actual future or present actions” (Foucault, 2002, p.340) for the benefit of Bradley’s wellbeing; the Yr 6 boys instead react to her re-asserted power/authority by appropriating the provided phrase or performative (Butler, 1997) in a subversive way.

Sometimes the protection of student wellbeing in the face of danger is a more immediate concern than their self-esteem – as evident in the following ‘honeycomb’ lesson with Yr 6 students from Fairview School:

Fr. John arrives with a plan to take the class up to his house (on the school premises) to cook honeycomb. He asks if I'm coming too and I reply "Yes – if that's OK?" He links his arm in mine as we walk and says "Of course. It will be good to have a woman there as well while we're cooking." The Senior School has their cross country carnival today and the course runs past Fr. John's house. As the honeycomb is made and eaten, Aiden, Curtis, Paige and Toby (and gradually more students) stand right next to the cross country course and cheer students on. At some stage, Curtis and Aiden run beside one of the guys while giving him a pep-talk. Sometimes, Aiden and Scott in particular, run up behind the runners while making scary noises in what seems like an effort to make them run faster. Most of the senior school boys either ignore them or think it's funny. Sometimes Scott hides behind a tree and jumps out at the senior school students who are running past. He eventually picks up a head-sized boulder and starts running towards some of the senior school students and throwing it behind them. Most are not impressed and when Fr. John realises what is going on, he calls out "That's a CW4 Scott!" Scott doesn't seem to hear him and throws the boulder another two times until Fr. John shouts "That's 3 CW4's Scott! Come over here now!" He tells Scott that he'll talk to him after they finish on a prayer to end the school day. As students head back down to the classroom, Fr. John talks to Scott about his dangerous behaviour being unacceptable and that he'll sort out the CW4s tomorrow. I sigh in compassion for Scott's fate but realise that there needs to be consequences for dangerous behaviour. Fr. John and I walk back towards the classroom together and he asks me why I think Scott is behaving that way. I reply that the whole class has a lot of energy. He says that he thinks Scott is just doing it for attention. He adds that he'll probably just give Scott one CW4 rather than three of them but that Scott needs to know that there are immediate consequences for actions. About a week later, as I walk back from the music room to the Junior School, Fr. John asks if he can talk with me about the 'Honeycomb' lesson and his disciplining of Scott because he thought he heard me sigh etc. I tell him that I would have probably disciplined Scott the same way if I was in a teacher role but that it's a little different being an observer. I agree that Scott needed to be cautioned against dangerous behaviour. Fr. John explains that he spoke with Scott again in order to further explain why certain behaviours are inappropriate and adds that males particularly need good role-models at this age. (Fairview School, observation notes for 31 March 2011 and 6 April 2011)

In situations of dangerous behaviour where "...individuals need to be protected from the damage that they can inflict upon each other" (Piro, 2008, p.44), it may be difficult to think of alternative immediate measures other than punishment (or the threat of punishment) – although Fr. John does privately explain the seriousness of Scott's actions to him after the event. While it seems that Fr. John trusts students enough to let them out of his sight and it is rather the student/s who exploit the situation; perhaps this trust

and the responsibility it entails could have been explicitly discussed with students as a proactive or 'preventative' rather than reactive measure (Stormont et al., 2007, p.287). This is a potent example of how my researcher positionality is questioned and negotiated during ethnographic fieldwork. As noted in my methodology chapter, it is difficult to maintain rapport with both teachers and pupils who compete for the ethnographer's attention and loyalty – particularly in situations involving discipline. In this case, my sigh of compassion for Scott seems to have been interpreted by Fr. John as a demonstration of my loyalty to students as opposed to teachers. Although Fr. John invites me to his honeycomb lesson because "It will be good to have a woman there as well while we're cooking," his initial distrust of my presence as a researcher (demonstrated through semi-serious comments made earlier in the term such as "Are we under the microscope again today?") resurfaces when he seeks to justify his punishment of Scott immediately after the event. My avoidance of making judgemental comments about participants – evident in my ambivalent suggestion that the 'whole class has a lot of energy' – does not seem to address his apparent concern of being misinterpreted, misrepresented or painted in an unfavourable light. Therefore, when he approaches me again a week later in order to question my 'sigh' and again justify his disciplining of Scott, I attempt to allay his concerns by expressing my empathy for teachers who are expected to prevent/discipline/correct dangerous student behaviour. Nevertheless, my own 'realisation' and agreement that dangerous behaviour needs cautioning and consequences requires further problematisation. While Butler and Levinas argue that the suffering of the other cannot be justified (Thiem, 2008); the other includes not only the students Scott threatens with a boulder, but also Scott himself. Therefore alternatives to punitive approaches may be more sensitive to Scott's own vulnerabilities and needs and a more effective way of preventing violent and/or attention-seeking behaviour. Fr. John alludes to such alternatives through his further discussions with Scott about why dangerous behaviours are inappropriate.

Given such instances of dangerous behaviour, it is therefore not surprising that another reason cited by teachers for the use of such systems of surveillance/punishment/reward is the fear of letting go of control by trusting students and risking the unpredictable:

As Yr 6 students make their way outside to walk up to the music room for choir, Mrs. Jenkins and I discuss the class. She tells me “I know I might look stern but if you give them any leeway, they’ll take it and go too far.” I empathise with her and explain that I had a similar class for my internship where you had to “keep on top of it all the time.” (Fairview School, observation notes for 22 February 2011)

Mrs. Jenkins tries to distance herself from her approach to students by saying that she only ‘looks stern’ rather than ‘is stern.’ While the pre-emptive assumption that students will ‘go too far’ may be based on experience, it also suggests a pessimistic view of students as inherently immoral (as critiqued by Yilmaz, 2009) which serves as an excuse not to ‘give them any leeway’ and may end up being a self-fulfilling prophecy (Kohn, 2006[1996]). Also evident here is the common dichotomous assumption that teachers need to maintain ‘control’ of their classrooms or else risk ‘chaos’ (critiqued by Kohn, 2006[1996], p.2). The attempt to withhold agency is a repressive rather than productive mode of power – one that is more likely to be met with resentment and resistance (Foucault, 2002, p.120). However, the need to look or be ‘stern’ may depend on the class and student personalities within it. Roache & Lewis (2011) found that perceived misbehaviour of students positively correlates with aggressive management and provision of consequences, suggesting either that “...teachers could not be selecting the ‘positive’ strategies in response to the amount of misbehaviour in their classrooms” (p.140) or that “...teachers’ use of aggression discourages students from exhibiting responsible behaviour, while their use of ‘positive’ strategies has the reverse effect” (p.141). In other words, teachers either respond to or create misbehaviour through aggressive discipline techniques. I empathised with Mrs. Jenkins as my internship involved teaching an upper-primary class with a reputation for misbehaviour. Although I felt uncomfortable with my internship mentor’s “keep on top of it all the time” approach which students were used to; when I tried to apply less authoritarian methods, I often found that many students did take this leeway and went too far in order to “...reclaim some of the autonomy that ha[d] been denied them” (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.7). Perhaps if I had been teaching the class full-time from the beginning of the year, I would have had more time and agency to establish a different classroom environment where students had more opportunities to choose how to respond. Such opportunities must exist in order for students to be able to engage with issues of ethicality and take responsibility for themselves and others as will be explored in the following chapter.

Unfortunately, many teachers feel pressured by administrators and society to keep their classes under control and “are often judged on the basis of whether their students sit quietly and obey” (Kohn, 1993, p.163). According to Mr. Williams from Northfield School, such expectations of orderliness have a gendered dimension:

**N:** Yeah, that’s true...Do you think it’s also – in some ways, they might be – they might feel pressured to control their class?

**Mr. Williams:** Oh God yeah.

**N:** According to societal standards

**Mr. Williams:** Absolutely! Tash, I’ll be honest with you, in the first five years I was a teacher, I was teaching in a – well I still am – principally among women

**N:** Mhm?

**Mr. Williams:** Don’t get me wrong here

**N:** (chuckles) OK

**Mr. Williams:** But I’m not a woman – clearly – OK?

**N:** OK.

**Mr. Williams:** But these priss(y) – no – these very orderly and tidy classrooms with pink...scalloped things and bunny rabbits with curly bums and all the same and pink things and programs that contained you know, the lovely section in red and then the lovely section in pink and so on. And for quite some time I thought “Gee, I’m not much of a teacher. I just don’t kinda go like that, you know? I haven’t got a wall full of pink bunnies”...

**N:** (laughs)

**Mr. Williams:** But then – but then we do science in here like you wouldn’t believe. You know, we’ve had explosions, we’ve (laughing) blown up thermometers – which caught fire to things

**N:** (laughs)

**Mr. Williams:** And the stuff that’s on the wall here has been put here by kids  
(Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

Mr. Williams speaks of pressures to conform to gendered perceptions of what constitutes an effective teacher in terms of neatness and organisation rather than intellectual risk-taking and student ownership. Although this may indeed be based on Mr. Williams’ personal experience – particularly as teaching is a feminised profession (Brennan, 2009) – any generalisation, such as the apparent binary between feminine orderliness and masculine risk-taking, requires problematisation as it is possible that such characteristics may depend on personal preference rather than gender. Further, although Mr. Williams’ misogynistic comments display a hegemonic form of masculinity (similarly critiqued by Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; and Mills, 2001, 2004), they are nevertheless fraught with contradiction. While he derides women’s work if it conforms to ‘prissy’ gendered norms of femininity; such work also makes him feel inadequate – that



is, until he dismisses it as irrelevant and gets on with the importance of explosions and starting fires in Science lessons. In fact, as males outnumber females in principal positions (Seddon & Palmeri, 2009; Vickers, 2010) – despite the notable exclusion of such data in the ‘staff section’ of the latest ABS (2011) report – it could be argued that female teachers are more often required to conform to male expectations of power and control over others. This is particularly evident in the following scene outside the library with the Yr 5 class from Fairview School:

Mrs. Fraser asks students to get their library stuff and line up at the door. She warns students before they leave for the library that she would like them to walk over as a class quickly and not in “dribs and drabs” and to line up sensibly once they get there. Students still walk freely (and not in lines) to the library. As they line up outside the library, Bradley, Cody, Oliver and Brent are at the back of the line pretending to shoot lasers or fire-balls (in either ‘Star Wars’ or ‘Street-fighter’ style) at each other. Mrs. Fraser warns them to stop but they continue to talk and play around. The Head of the Senior School walks out of the library and says “G’day” to Mrs. Fraser and Yr 5. He also notes that the people up the back don’t seem to be behaving and then adds in a semi-serious tone “That’s not a Harvey boy up there too is it (in reference to Brent)?” As he walks away, Mrs. Fraser reprimands the students up the back by saying something along the lines of “Not to discriminate or anything, but it does seem that the majority of people being silly up the back are boys.” She tells them to move away from the line and says to them (but loud enough for the rest of the class to hear) “I asked you to line up quietly before we left the classroom. I don’t mind you having a chat and pretending to shoot lasers while we’re walking over as long as you’re not disturbing other classes. I don’t want other teachers or the HOS having to say ‘Pity about the people misbehaving at the back of the line.’” She then addresses Brent directly by saying “And this especially goes for you because you’re a bit famous at this school. And if you do something wrong – it won’t just be me who tells your father, he’ll also be hearing it from other HOS.” Mrs. Fraser tells them to get to the front of the line and remain there every time they line up from now on. Karla is talking and Mrs. Fraser warns “Karla, I’d hate to have to talk to people again because they’re at the back of the line...” and Karla stops talking. Students walk into the library and Mrs. Fraser asks Cody to hold the door open for other students and he does so. (Fairview School, observation notes for 3 March 2011)

Mrs. Fraser is made acutely aware that her ‘classroom management’ skills are under scrutiny when the male Head of the Senior School comments on her students’ behaviour. Robinson (2000) similarly observes the ways in which male teachers often undermine the authority of female teachers by intervening (or rather interfering) on their behalf in order to address perceived discipline issues. Robinson (2000) further suggests that such conduct

perpetuates the historically gendered discourse that males are more powerful, authoritative and intimidating than females and therefore have more control over students in schooling contexts. As aggressive and coercive discipline strategies are often perceived by male staff as the most effective way to control 'difficult' (Robinson, 2000, p.78) male students, then it is not surprising that Mrs. Fraser attempts to regain control of the class by publicly reprimanding the misbehaving students (most of whom are male). However, the application of more aggressive forms of discipline is not always effective and may result in female teachers being perceived as either 'losing control' or paradoxically being 'too masculine' (Robinson, 2000, p.81). Therefore, Mrs. Fraser draws on the authority of the male Head of the Senior School in order to lend more weight to her threat of 'telling' on Brent – who is 'famous' because of his father's position as Head of the Junior School. This is despite the fact that the Head of the Senior School only semi-seriously comments on Brent's misbehaviour, suggesting that it is at least partially excused because of his father's position and/or as a natural part of 'boys just being boys' (Allard, 2004; Dalley-Trim, 2006, 2007; Mills, 2001; Robinson, 2000, 2005). Such biologically-deterministic excuses are analysed further in Chapter 9 from the student perspective.

#### **6.4 Concluding comments**

From the analysis and discussion of observation fieldnotes and teacher interview data, it is evident that pedagogies of control in the form of surveillance and punishment/reward continue to be applied and justified by educators as means of encouraging and monitoring student responsibility in the upper primary school context. Upper-primary student experiences of such pedagogies work to reinforce constructions of responsible subjecthood as obedient, efficient and adhering to social (particularly gendered) norms at the expense of more ethically-oriented considerations.

Students are overwhelmingly expected to demonstrate responsibility by following in/formal rules and teacher directions. Whether student conduct is seen by principals and teachers as 'responsible' is largely determined through the monitoring of student attendance, location, behaviour, appearance and completion of work. Such surveillance takes different forms including spatial, embodied and disciplinary – although they often occur simultaneously. Spatial surveillance is largely achieved through the use of windows, walls, fences, and rules like 'not going out of bounds' where the gaze of authority cannot

reach. Embodied surveillance takes the form of teacher bodies whose physical presence in the classroom, on the playground and during special events like assembly or church services act as a constant reminder to students that they are under surveillance and are expected to shape their behaviour accordingly. In conjunction with, and sometimes due to the ineffective application of spatial and embodied techniques of surveillance alone, disciplinary surveillance is utilised by teachers to control and train students to behave, dress and achieve academic standards through verbal (i.e. warning) and non-verbal (i.e. glaring) strategies.

While most students shape themselves in ways that conform to teacher expectations and social norms (for which they are usually rewarded); there are times when some students resist this surveillance (despite the threat of punishment). Punishments and rewards are fundamentally similar in their conditional and coercive aim to manipulate and control behaviour and are prolifically applied in educational settings for such purposes. Here, formal and institutionally sanctioned systems of punishment and reward such as discipline books, awards, house points, and student diaries are applied alongside more informal and idiosyncratically mediated strategies such as public reprimand, exclusion, praise, lunchtime detentions, and access/denial of tangible goods in order to control irresponsible behaviour and attitudes.

While educators themselves face pressures to keep their classes under control and therefore justify the application of such pedagogies as a means of providing a safe, supportive and fair learning environment for their students; the controlling nature of such pedagogies actually works to undermine intrinsic or unconditional motivation and fails to provide the agency required for ethically responding to the needs of self and other. In the midst of such pressures for teachers to control the behaviour of their students, some educators also realise that such systems do not inspire “the sort of relationship that is defined by genuine concern and that invites us to take the risk of being open and vulnerable – the sort of relationship that inspires people to do their best and can truly make a difference in their lives” (Kohn, 1993, p.58). The resulting pedagogical tensions, contradictions and possible alternatives will be discussed in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER 7: PEDAGOGIES OF AGENCY – FACILITATING RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH NEGOTIATION/CHOICE, ENCOURAGEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY**

As noted in Chapter 3, the poststructuralist conceptualisation of power as productive suggests that power delimits rather than determines the subject's actions and choices. Even so, such limitations apparent in 'pedagogies of control' (discussed in Chapter 6) seem rather *unproductive* in that they are more likely to result in obedience or resistance rather than responsibility. As noted by Kohn (2006[1996]) "...if we want children to *take* responsibility, we must first *give* them responsibility, and plenty of it" which "...depends on teachers who pointedly decline to lay down the law and take control" (p.84). However, this often proves challenging for educators who are expected to demonstrate authority over students in order to align themselves with education policy where "[t]he rigid cookie cutters of *accountability, standardization* and *high stakes testing* are trimming; some would argue hacking at the truth of democratic teaching ideals" (Cherien 2008, p.289).

Although pedagogies of control remain a predominant practice in primary school contexts, some teachers and principals also attempt to apply what could be termed 'pedagogies of agency.' As agency is necessary for students to be able to 'take' responsibility for personal and social demands (Chinnery & Bai, 2008; Gupta, 2002; Johansen, 2011; Lazar, 2009) then pedagogies of agency involve student empowerment. Such empowerment can contribute to a safe, caring, connected 'community' (advocated by Kohn, 2006[1996], pp.101-119) which requires a move from 'doing things *to* students' to 'working *with* them' (Kohn, 2006[1996], pp.23, 104).

From participant observation and principal/teacher interview data, it is evident that pedagogies of agency involving work *with* students include negotiation/choice, positive role-modelling, humour, encouragement and opportunity. It is argued in this chapter that although teachers and principals seem to be moving towards such pedagogies of agency, any progress is often limited or hindered by the continued threat and application of pedagogies of control. This means that "[s]ome schools end up taking away with one hand what they've given with the other" (Kohn, 2006, p.153). Students are therefore placed in an impossible position whereby they are expected to take responsibility for themselves and others without the agency required to do so.

### 7.1 Negotiating boundaries: The potential for transgression?

Boundaries or expectations of behaviour – often referred to as ‘rights and responsibilities’ – are usually determined at the beginning of the school year. According to Foucault (1984a), such boundaries or limits are flexible and must exist in order to enable the possibility of resistance, ‘transgression’ towards otherness, and a broadening of perspectives. The establishment of boundaries in the schooling context is more ‘teacher-directed’ if “...expectations, rules and consequences are imposed on students” (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.xii). For example, Mrs. Jenkins outlines her expectations of prompt work completion in the following way:

**Mrs. Jenkins:** ...Being responsible myself, in that I allocate work and I expect them to give it back - then I also make sure that it's marked promptly.

**N:** Uhuh...

**Mrs. Jenkins:** ...so that when due dates are given, that I um, adhere to those due dates and um, give them immediate feedback. Um, and I feel that is a responsibility of a teacher to do that.

**N:** Yes...

**Mrs. Jenkins:** Um, as sort of also being a role model. It's your responsibility to be a role model. It's also your responsibility to also um, be an adult and um, respond to them appropriately, I suppose is the word.

**N:** Yes.

**Mrs. Jenkins:** Um...so it's my actions, what I say, what I do, um, how I behave around them, um, and my expectations I suppose is another thing too that I convey to them. Um, I have high expectations and I expect them to live up to those expectations and that also means living up to their responsibilities (Fairview School, interview with Yr 6 teacher, Term 1 2011)

Here, Mrs. Jenkins acknowledges her responsibility as a teacher to uphold her own expectations. However, such expectations are said to be ‘conveyed’ rather than discussed and negotiated with students in a more ‘learner-centred’ (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.20) way. Moving towards a more learner-centred discussion is described by Mrs. Stephens:

**N:** ...And so with the – because I had a look around in the classroom, and there's, there's some, um anti-bullying posters and then there's um, a rights and responsibilities list as well...

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yep.

**N:** Do you often, do you use that or remind students about their rights and responsibilities when – like are there situations when you...

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yeah, usually that rights and responsibilities one – I do the first day. So I took them out of the classroom – we didn't even go into the classroom. We talked about rights and responsibilities of the student, the rights and responsibilities of the teacher, and we, made a list. And that was it.

And I actually got them to sign it before they were allowed in the classroom.

**N:** Mm...

**Mrs. Stephens:** And I said 'If you sign it, then that means you've agreed – that these are the rights and responsibilities.' I probably haven't, so much, brought them back specifically to that list, but that was to give them some kind of responsibility before they entered Yr 5 – this is what is expected. So, yeah, that's what that was about (laughs)... (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 teacher, Term 3 2010)

Although students in Mrs. Stephen's class are included in the process of discussing and listing rights and responsibilities; their admission into the classroom remains somewhat conditional (in the signing of an informal contract) and coercive (in the pressure to conform or risk physical exclusion). Here, there is little room for negotiation as "...individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality [is] shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault, 2002[1976], p.334). According to Mrs. Fraser, removal of such external pressures is said to promote student 'ownership' of rights and responsibilities:

**Mrs. Fraser:** Mm... (sigh) I think, expectation. I think putting a context to a lot of things – I mean, I showed you over here, this – 'We agree to do our best to be...' because that was – I find that explaining to the students, I mean, particularly, uh, when I had last year's Yr 5 for a full term and it was their first term in Yr 5...

**N:** Ahhh – wow...

**Mrs. Fraser:** ...and it was like, "Right, you set the expectations" and I talked to the students initially about what my responsibilities were, what I felt I was responsible for, what my job really was to do here and what I would help them with and what I could guide them with, what – and roles and responsibilities were. I found my role and what my responsibility was and that I expected certain things. And then I got them to say – "Alright, I want you to talk about your roles, your responsibilities and your expectations. So I expect quite a few things. I expect that you will speak to me with respect. I also expect that that's something that you would expect back. You want your teachers to treat you with respect," "Oh, yeah, yeah!" So they actually came up with those things, and, and out of - you know, we wrote a list of all of those things that they thought, and it was like "Well, you agree that these are the things?" and I said "Well you know what? Every single one of those things up there is what I would expect from you and you would expect from me to have that. That I'm helpful, that I'm polite, that I'm those things too." So, that they actually feel that they have, again, that is their responsibility, that they are responsible for how they behave and their application and I'm also responsible for how I behave and my application to how I treat them and how I treat the, the class and individuals. You know, I'm not, I try not to be picking on a certain, you know, person or subject that I like so that – at the detriment of others. So, that

they see it's fair. And really I think...those things are important so that, again, they don't feel - they're given ownership of a classroom, it's how they feel, this is their classroom, they have the right to expect things from me, as much as I can stand there and say "I expect this from you" even though I'm in [a] authority...

**N:** Role.

**Mrs. Fraser:** Role – exactly, so (laughs)

**N:** Oh, that's great. So, they feel it's fair, and they also have a visual reminder of what they've agreed – what they've also come up with...

**Mrs. Fraser:** Yeah... and that is, I can (bring their attention) up there and say "Are you doing that? You agreed to do your best at.... Are you doing that?" "No." "Well then you're telling me that you're choosing now, (not) to do something that you've agreed to try and do..." and that's – we all...

**N:** Yeah, we all...

**Mrs. Fraser:** (laughing) ...stray from that!

**N:** Yeah, that's right, of course...

**Mrs. Fraser:** But at the same time, it is a visual reminder. It's also there to say "Well, you agreed to those things. Everyone agreed that these – none of these were something that I told you 'This is what I want – you will be a kind student, you will be polite students, you will be honest.' No, you told me these are the things and therefore I will say to you 'Well, you've agreed that this is something...'" So again, that responsibility is that "You came up with it, you have ownership over that. Therefore I can call you on that. And you can't say to me 'Oh yeah but you told us...' and 'That was somebody else'" – again, that removal of um, control, that external locus of control, you know "I don't have control of this, therefore I don't need to take responsibility"... (Fairview School, interview with Yr 5 casual teacher, Term 1 2011)

Mrs. Fraser explains that the involvement of students and the 'removal of the external locus of control' give them more 'ownership' over their responsibilities and humbly acknowledges that 'we all stray from' such responsibilities occasionally. However, she still sets the tone by providing her own expectations as examples which seem to be mirrored or 'parrot[ed]' (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.97) back by students. Being able to 'call you on that' (Mrs. Fraser) is an example of "...the *appearance* of participation in order to secure compliance" (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.72). For real participation to occur, students should be able to create, define, justify, question and debate the necessity and inclusivity of expectations/rules and ethical principles through 'a deep and ongoing conversation' (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.72). In such a conversation, "[t]he wrestling with dilemmas, the clash of ideas, the need to take others' needs into account...are ultimately more meaningful than any list of rules or guidelines that may ultimately result" (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.74). Consideration of the other's needs is particularly discussed by Todd (2003), who draws on Levinasian theory to argue that "[w]hile some guidelines are

unavoidable (and legally necessary), mere rules alone do not ensure ethical, nonviolent interactions” (Todd, 2003, p.38) particularly in “...*moments of relationality that resist codification*” (Todd, 2003, p.9). In other words, responsibility for the other’s needs is more immediate, contextual and relational than abstract, imposed rules may allow. Nevertheless, such rules continue to be applied in schooling contexts in the name of ‘rights and responsibilities.’

Mrs. Fraser also refers to removing the ‘external locus of control.’ The psychology-based term ‘locus of control’ is defined as "the degree to which [an] individual perceives that [a] reward follows from, or is contingent upon, his own behavior or attributes versus the degree to which he feels the reward is controlled by forces outside himself and may occur independently of his own actions" (Rotter, 1966, p. 1 – as cited in Hawkes, 1991, p.476). An internal locus of control is said to be connected to high self-concept, self-discipline and self-motivation (Hawkes, 1991; Tommaso, 2010) while an external locus of control is linked with ‘learned helplessness’ (Tommaso, 2010, p.14). Although such concepts differ from the sociological perspective underlying this study which is based on the premise that the internal/self is continuously shaped in relation to external/social interactions and norms; external pressures (which eventually become internalised pressures) do little to encourage intrinsic agency and responsibility in students. Overcoming such obstacles is said to involve positive teacher modelling with an emphasis on student empowerment (Tommaso, 2010, p.15). It is this pedagogical strategy of role-modelling which will now be addressed.

## **7.2 Role-modelling responsibility: The good, the bad and the ugly**

Role-models may exist in diverse forms and for diverse purposes. Research indicates that parents are most frequently nominated by students as role-models (McClean, 2004; Perry, Nixon, Duffy & Robison, 2005 – as cited in Perry & Nixon, 2005) followed by teachers, other relatives, employers, coaches, clergy, youth leaders, associates/peers and the media (Perry, Nixon, Duffy & Robison, 2005 – as cited in Perry & Nixon, 2005). Alternatively, students may perceive pop-culture idols (Carrington & Skelton, 2003) and peers (Ashley & Lee, 2003) to be more influential role-models than their teachers. In any case, the sheer amount of time students spend in school where they are in regular (if not constant) contact with teachers increases the likelihood that they will be influenced by



these individuals in some way. While teachers may be role-models 'willingly or not' (Hawkes, 1991, p.475), a survey by Korkmaz (2007) found that 66% of 148 teachers agree that they should be role models for students. This view is also expressed by most of the teachers and principals for this study. For example, Mr. Williams suggests that such role-modelling can occur subconsciously:

**Mr. Williams:** ...So teaching at all levels, modelling um, you know, personal example is so – so important.  
**N:** Yes. Yes, and it's a big responsibility of teachers to role-model those kinds of things  
**Mr. Williams:** Yeah – yeah. Some things are taken up, you know, subliminally – is that the right word? Subliminally?  
**N:** Yeah  
**Mr. Williams:** I suppose so – you never really know why it is you are like you are – but it is. You know, he does that because that's the way his mum twisted her mouth, that's the way his mum swept the floor – you know, she always swept it around anti-clockwise  
**N:** (laughs) Yeah  
**Mr. Williams:** And I think I'm correct in saying that. I think that might be an over-generalisation, but I think there are a lot of things we do because we've just absorbed them from observation (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

The consideration of 'subliminal' role-modelling acknowledges some of the passive ways in which student subjectivities may be socialised into existence. However, role-modelling may also involve consciously 'showing' students what to do in particular situations, as noted by Mrs. Stephens:

**Mrs. Stephens:** I don't know... (with humour) I get worried when I'm trying to explain the Maths and I have to look it up for the tenth time!  
**N:** Aw – everyone has to do that!  
**Mrs. Stephens:** ...coz I can't remember how to do it. Or I ask Jake – 'Have I done that right Jake?' – 'Ah, yes' – 'Thanks Jake!' Or I have to spell a word and I second-guess myself all the time now – but I suppose it's OK coz I'm showing them that you don't have to know it straight away – it's OK to check. And that's what I say to them 'I don't know everything' but you know, if you don't know it – just say you don't know it and go and check if you're right, so... (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 teacher, Term 3 2010)

Mrs. Stephens describes role-modelling as 'showing' students how to be honest, humble and diligent in the face of academic challenges. But beyond incidental teaching moments, role-modelling can also take the form of a more purposeful duty to 'lead by example':

**Mr. Andrews:** Mm. Well it's...the thing is...you've got your beliefs that you have to instil...

**N:** Mm.

**Mr. Andrews:** ...and one way of doing it is leading by example

...

**N:** OK, thank you... Um, so then, do we always have the choice to be responsible or are there situations where we might not have a choice?

**Mr. Andrews:** Well, it's forced onto us to a large degree – you know, with our situation as being a Catholic school educator – you've all – when you're out in public – you've always got to be seen as the responsible adult. And, it becomes a headache. In my previous school, where I lived in a small community, you're in a fish-bowl and you're always meant to be the responsible individual. So it means that if you went to the pub for a few beers – instead of having one, it became an issue because they seemed to believe that you had 21.

**N:** (laughs)

**Mr. Andrews:** How, how small communities work...

**N:** Yeah, yep...

**Mr. Andrews:** And to the point where... I avoid going out, because if you so much as let your guard down, you're seen as not carrying out the Catholic ethos – so it becomes difficult...

**N:** Mm...

**Mr. Andrews:** In the small school, you were certainly seen as pseudo-clergy...where your school became so, so um, part of the parish – that the school was utilized so much by the parish and they community – right down to photocopying, to organizing prayers and so forth...

**N:** Mmhm.

**Mr. Andrews:** I know my mother, who's a principal of a small school – her responsibilities go far beyond the school but to playing the organ at mass, to organizing funeral booklets...

**N:** Mmhm...

**Mr. Andrews:** So responsibility's huge in this role.

**N:** Mm...

**Mr. Andrews:** Mm...

**N:** Yeah, for sure... Well I can relate, in a sense, um... I think, teachers especially um, yeah have that, have that role-modeling expectation, where going out – I mean, your role doesn't stop once you leave the school premises – you're always in that role.

**Mr. Andrews:** Certainly in the Catholic system and you do sign a contract saying that you will uphold the Catholic ethos.

**N:** Mm...

**Mr. Andrews:** But it does – it is a pain in the neck - when um, you know, you can't go out...

**N:** Mm...

**Mr. Andrews:** ...and, and be yourself...

(Riverside School, interview with teacher-principal, Term 3 2010)

Mr. Andrews describes the process of role-modelling as 'instilling your beliefs' through 'leading by example.' He is especially vocal about the pressures associated with being a role-model, where responsibility is not only 'forced onto' educators, but continues to shape and restrict their conduct well beyond the school gate. Being a teacher in a small community is likened to 'living in a fish-bowl' which 'becomes a headache' and 'pain in the neck when you can't go out and be yourself' particularly when conduct might be misconstrued and rumours spread. According to Mr. Andrews, this constant surveillance occurs not only in terms of professionalism but also in terms of being 'seen as pseudo-clergy' where there is a need not to 'let your guard down' in order to 'uphold the Catholic ethos.' While historically, traditional forms of Christianity have insisted on sternness, discipline and moderation of speech and action (Gordon, 2010, p.739); schooling discourses also elevate secular teachers to a high moral ground (Campbell, 2003 – as cited by Russell, 2010, p.144) or "a sort of secular priesthood as an exemplar of the values which the community, state, or society promulgates" (Pidcocke, Magsino & Manley-Casimir, 1997, p.213 – as cited by Russell, 2010, pp.144-145). Whether educators feel as obliged as Mr. Andrews to uphold such values in their public/private lives is another question. Further, the acknowledgement of such obligations may not necessarily translate into moderation of speech and action in schooling contexts. In fact, there are times when educators (including Mr. Andrews) deploy destructive and inappropriate humour in ways that may not demonstrate ethical responsibility. Such humour will be explicitly analysed and discussed in the following section.

While leading by example may be forced onto teachers to some extent, Mr. Harvey suggests that such responsibility cannot be 'forced upon' children:

**N:** OK, thank you. Um, so then, do we always have the choice to be responsible?

**Mr. Harvey:** Yes, I think we do. Uh, and that's often the way I will always speak to children – um use that exact word 'choice.' And it's always the children's choice how they behave. And um, if they chose to behave in a responsible manner, that's totally up to them – we can't force it upon the children. We can set the examples and we can, I suppose, set the tone for the school, but at the end of the day, it's the child's decision and choice how they behave.

...

**N:** Mmhm, OK, thanks. So, how do you communicate ideas about responsibility to students in the school? The main ways...

**Mr. Harvey:** Well, like I said, setting the example...

**N:** Yep...

**Mr. Harvey:** So, um, a very powerful way for children to learn from adults is to imitate adults' behaviour. So certainly setting the example... (Fairview School, interview with principal, Term 1 2011)

Although Mr. Harvey adds that 'at the end of the day, it's the child's decision and choice how they behave,' it is usually expected that students align their choices with teacher and school expectations or face the consequences (as discussed in the previous chapter). This 'pseudochoice' (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.48) redefines punishment as something students have chosen through their 'misbehaviour' and ignores other potential factors impacting on student decision-making (i.e. the undemocratic nature of schooling, disengaging curriculum or pedagogy, sleep deprivation, peer pressure). In fact, the representations of role-modelling as: 'subliminal' absorption facilitated through the observation of role-models (Mr. Williams); 'showing' students how to be honest, humble and diligent in the face of challenges (Mrs. Stephens); 'instilling your beliefs' through 'leading by example' (Mr. Andrews); and 'setting the example and tone of the school' (Mr. Harvey); all contain some degree of direct or indirect 'inculcation' (McClean, 2004; Ottewill, 2001). Such inculcation warrants critique given that it is usually a one-way process where those in positions of power determine what beliefs, examples, tones and responses are 'appropriate' and permissible. According to Ottewill (2001) inculcation or 'setting the example' needs to be balanced with encouraging students to develop their own identity where "[t]he aim is not to create 'clones' but to stimulate a desire on the part of students to become role models in their own right" (p.438). Formal programs such as Buddies, Peer Support, SRC and School/House captaincy are acknowledged by teaching staff to be conducive to this end. The Buddies system will particularly be discussed in Chapter 9 from the students' perspective on how such roles impact on the process of becoming responsible.

The role-modelling offered to students may be positive or negative (Ottewill, 2001; Perry & Nixon, 2005). Students may accept and internalise the standards of conduct and moral reasoning modelled by adults in order to "govern themselves" (Perry & Nixon, 2005, p.26). Alternatively, they may reject or remain indifferent to certain values, attitudes and/or behaviours espoused or exhibited by their teachers. Students may particularly question the validity of role-models if discrepancies, hypocrisy or incongruence compromise the integrity of these role-models (Bandura, 1977 – as cited in

Perry & Nixon, 2005; Liddell, Cooper, Healy, Lazarus Stewart, 2010). Such inconsistencies are particularly evident in the use of humour.

### **7.3 Humour or humiliation?**

Humour has been found to have a range of physiological, psychological, emotional, social and educational benefits for both the teacher and student (Evans-Palmer, 2010; Garner, 2006; Hurren, 2005/2006; Lems, 2011; Meyer Englert, 2010; Popescu, 2010; Narula, Chaudhary, Agarwal & Narula, 2011; Webb White, 2001; Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, Faiz Abdullah, 2011). Initiated by the teacher or student in planned or spontaneous ways, humour may help to: diffuse anxiety, tension or embarrassment; facilitate self-transcendence and empathy through humility, critique, open-mindedness and patience; connect people; and/or develop rapport between teachers and students (Evans-Palmer, 2010; Fovet, 2009; Gordon, 2010; Henman, 2001; Lems, 2011; Mayo, 2010; Meyer Englert, 2010; Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, Faiz Abdullah, 2011; Willard, 2006; Woods, 1983). Such open rapport in a supportive environment can further empower students to take responsibility for self and other. The productive role-modelling of humour is evident in the examples below:

During the weekly spelling test, some of the sentences Mr. Simmons creates for each word are quite humorous and students and I giggle in response. For example, Vanessa asks what an 'artichoke' is and Mr. Simmons replies "It's an artwork that has been choked. No, not really..." (Fairview School, observation notes for 18 February 2011)

As Mr. Andrews is walking around checking people's work, Ava says "I made a mistake." Mr. Andrews humorously whines "Don't make a mistaaake..." He then jokes "I made a mistake once but I was wrong." It takes a while for the students to get it and then William retorts "You're always making mistakes!" to which Mr. Andrews responds "Aw, he's really pushing it now!" As the class begins to settle down, Mr. Andrews returns back to the board at the front of the room. There is still some noise, so he asks in a serious tone "Who is that?" and students quieten down and refocus on their work (Riverside School, observation notes for 23 September 2010)

Humour may take many forms including: self-deprecatory humour to de-emphasise status and power differences; extra-institutional humour such as joking with teachers rather than against them; aggressive/coercive humour to control others; and subversive humour

to resist control (Popescu, 2010; Mayo, 2008; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010). The word-play evident in the examples above seems harmless enough given that the humour is: content-oriented (i.e. 'artichoke') rather than student-oriented (Garner, 2006; Huss, 2008); deceptively self-deprecatory (i.e. 'I made a mistake once but I was wrong') where the focus is nevertheless shifted onto the teacher rather than the student; or extra-institutional (i.e. 'Don't make a mistaaake...') where the joke seems to be aimed at the institutional imperative not to make mistakes in the competitive neoliberal context of schooling. Nevertheless, it seems that when teacher authority is called into question or begins to interfere with a quiet learning environment, such humour is quelled through the use of more serious, interrogative questions like 'Who is that?'

Even without reverting back to more explicit pedagogies of control, humour in and of itself may not always be so innocuous. To begin with, humour is subjective and may differ from culture to culture and person to person and thus may be interpreted differently to what was intended (Garner, 2006; Hurren, 2005/2006; Lillemyr, Søbstad, Marder & Flowerday, 2010; Meyer Englert, 2010; Webb White, 2001). Whether such intentions are honourable or not (Meeus & Mahieu, 2009), the potential to wound, degrade, stereotype, marginalise or control others through humour means that it is in fact a double-edged sword (Fovet, 2009; Gordon, 2010; Hellman, 2007; Mayo, 2010; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010; Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, Faiz Abdullah, 2011). The detonation of destructive humour is apparent in the following interaction between Mr. Andrews and his Yr 5 class:

During a maths/art lesson on vanishing points, Mr. Andrews makes a joke and William replies in good humour "That was so funny I forgot to laugh!" Mr. Andrews replies "You know, I liked you better when you were sick [i.e. away]" and the whole class collectively makes an 'Aww!' noise in protest. William melodramatically gets up and says "Fine, I'm leaving then" and walks out of the classroom. He eventually comes back in and sits down. As the lesson progresses, William and Mr. Andrews exchange another humorous spar. In response to something that William says or does (which I do not catch/record) Mr. Andrews asks "Has anyone got mumps? Can you give them to William?" William responds with "What are mups? I thought you said muppets" to which Mr. Andrews retorts "You are a muppet." At some stage, William asks Mr. Andrews "Do you still want me to leave?" to which Mr. Andrews replies "Yeah I do." William then jokes "I thought you were a nice teacher until I found out you were a Dragons (football team) supporter." When the lesson is over, Mr. Andrews says "I hope that if Mrs. Stephens asks what a vanishing point is, you can answer otherwise I'll blow you up with a space rocket." Jake retorts "Well

at least I'll see something cool before I die." William starts to join in and Mr. Andrews says "I wish you'd vanish." The whole class makes the "Awww (that's harsh)!" sound again. During the afternoon Tables Challenge, Mr. Andrews sorts out students into class lines – Yr 5 versus Yr 4 and adds "Sitting down on your bottoms please or you're going to be shot." Yr 5 wins the challenge by 1 point. Students then move back to class to clean up the room and their desks. Mr. Andrews gives back marked books by dropping them on the floor (Riverside School, observation notes for 31 August 2010)

Here, Mr. Andrews applies humour to openly wish for the absence of William (a studious yet vocal student) through illness or some other means. Mr. Andrews and William often engage in such repartee or 'sparring' in front of the whole class. Although on the surface it appears that William may enjoy the attention resulting from such interactions and theatrics; his exit (however melodramatic) is nevertheless a form of protest in response to some of Mr. Andrews' harsh use of humour. Such protestation is further voiced by William's class-mates who therefore take responsibility for his vulnerability through the "suffering of compassion" (Levinas, 2006a, p.92). Mr. Andrews also draws on humour to threaten violence such as blowing up students with space rockets or shooting those who do not follow his orders. The threat of violence for non-conformity is also implied by Mr. Williams through the use of humour:

Students share their words and dictionary definitions with the rest of the class. Celeste shares the definition of the word 'foreign' and Mr. Williams offers a further example from the Australian context. Brett shares the definition for the word 'solemn' and Mr. Williams asks him to do a 'solemn face' but Brett seems unsure or unable to do so (as he seems to be finding it hard not to smile and other students' reactions only reinforce this). Mr. Williams provides the example "The jury has decided that Brett (last name) will be sentenced to execution and hanged by the neck until dead" and Brett gets up to leave in mock-resignation or protestation. At the end of the lesson, Mr. Williams asks the class what they've learned. Brett says "That if I don't talk in class you don't pick on me" and the teacher agrees and says that even though he's "full of beans" he needs to work on it (Northfield School, observation notes for 23 May 2011)

Brett (one of the most vocal and resistant boys in the class) is frequently the target of Mr. Williams' 'humorous' barbs. When Brett fails to provide a 'solemn' face as requested, Mr. Williams vividly and performatively sentences him to death. As Butler (1997) notes, such utterances as 'hate speech' are performatively injurious because they "...constitute the subject in a subordinate position" (p.18). In similar ways, negative humour deployed

by teachers is often used to maintain power or control over students through humiliation (Woods, 1983). Disguised in humour, power and violence become normalised and difficult to recognise or resist (Foucault, 1978, p.85 – as cited by Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010). Nevertheless, it seems that students in both examples recognise and resist the power and violence inherent in their teacher's comments. Firstly, William and Brett both stand up and/or exit the classroom in protest. Secondly, William's class-mates voice their protestation on his behalf. Lastly, Brett insightfully shares the lesson he has learned about talking in class whereby he risks being 'picked on' by the teacher.

Even when undertaken with irony rather than malice, the performative power of such words or actions (by teachers in positions of authority) means that they are still likely to be taken to heart, working "...not only to regulate bodies, but to form them as well" (Butler, 1997, pp.158-159). Teachers' ironic or sarcastic remarks may therefore form or construct students as, for example, deficit in intelligence:

Mr. Andrews asks everyone to rule up another page for answers. Nathan asks whether he can just use the page he is already on as he has only used up 4 lines. Mr. Andrews replies "What do you think Planet Earth?" and Nathan pretends to think hard and then responds with "Uh – no!" Mr. Andrews agrees and then asks Nathan whether he can lick his own elbow. Nathan attempts to do this and other students start to join in. Mr. Andrews jokes "Well you look more sensible doing that!" Eventually, Matthew says "So we have 3 sessions a day..." Mr. Andrews begins 'slow clapping' and other students begin to join in. Someone asks why people are clapping and Mr. Andrews explains that Matthew has just found out that there are 3 sessions a day. Matthew laughs and starts to protest but the lesson moves on (Riverside School, observation notes for 16 September 2010)

While Nathan seems to go along with Mr. Andrews' sarcastic humour without any outward signs of distress, this could simply mean that he is more skilled or practiced at masking his inner feelings. Yet some students may not be able to completely mask the hurt that often accompanies such humour. So, while Matthew laughs off the 'slow clapping' initiated by Mr. Andrews, he eventually protests the construction of himself as a 'slow' or stupid person. Similar jokes about the deficit use of 'brain space' are made by Mr. Williams:



Mr. Williams asks the class to stand up and guides them in stretching because they all seem a bit sleepy and he wonders whether he's 'projecting' his sleepiness onto them because he had a tiring weekend. I yawn subconsciously and he jokingly points this out to students as well. They stretch their arms and shoulders and are humourously told to squeeze their buttocks because "You need to squeeze blood into what is sometimes your brain space. But that doesn't even apply to Brett." Brett sits down in mock-protest and Mr. Williams jokes "Oh no – I've hurt his feelings. Psychological damage going on here" and Brett and the rest of the class smile/laugh in response (Northfield School, observation notes for 23 May 2011)

Despite obvious signs that Brett disagrees with the teacher's construction of him as a person lacking 'brain space' or intelligence; Mr. Williams continues to make light of the fact that such comments may 'hurt' and 'psychological[ly] damage' the person to whom they are directed. It appears that Mr. Williams is clearly aware of the negative effects such humour may have on students and therefore intentionally rather than ignorantly wields it in order to maintain his position of power and dominance.

Similarly, teachers may deploy humiliating nick-names that reinforce the construction of students as deficit in gender – particularly when their own gender is called into question:

During a Japanese lesson, Anita confides that some of the Senior School students have made Mr. Lewis cry. One of the student-teachers says banana in Japanese and mimes eating one. Some students laugh and Scott says (half out loud, half to himself) "We've all interpreted that in the wrong way." Mr. Lewis stops him by saying "Scottine – is it your turn to talk?" Other students laugh and Scott seems somewhat embarrassed at the feminisation of his name. Later that day in Mrs. Jenkins classroom, Hayden says "Scotty" and Scott reflects "I hate how Mr. Lewis says 'Scotty'." Toby adds "Yeah, it sounded like he said 'Scottine!'" (Fairview School, observation notes for 2 March 2011)

Mr. Lewis refers to Scott as 'Scottine' in order to discourage him from talking. Other students seem to find this amusing and the resulting humiliation in front of peers leads to feelings of 'hate' and resentment. Perhaps Mr. Lewis is on the defensive given that some of the Senior School students have apparently made him cry before, bringing his own ability to demonstrate dominant masculinity and authority into question which he then attempts to reassert through heteronormative humour.

In terms of identity formation, "[h]umour has an important influence on constructing masculinities and the social status of boys" (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari,

2010, p.369) and is deployed mainly by males of a high social status (Castell & Goldstein, 1977 – as cited by Woods, 1983). It is therefore not surprising that most of the ‘ribbing’ (Hellman, 2007) in the examples above occurs between male teachers and male students and is usually initiated or finished by the teacher. Denigrating, intimidating or subversive humour is used to establish, maintain, negotiate and resist social hierarchies of hegemonic masculinity involving ‘toughness,’ light-heartedness and heterosexuality (Dalley-Trim, 2007; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010; Renold, 2001, 2004; Willis, 1977). Those who do not fit within this hegemonic mould become the ‘butt of the joke’ with long-lasting negative effects potentially leading to depression, bullying, suicide or school shootings (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010). Educators are therefore advised not to cross the fine line between humour and humiliation or else they risk poisoning what could otherwise have been a supportive and effective learning environment (Berk, 2009; Gordon, 2010; Hurren, 2005/2006; Huss, 2008; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010; Meyer Englert, 2010; Narula, Chaudhary, Agarwal & Narula, 2011; Willard, 2006). Such a supportive environment is necessary for students to have the agency and empowerment they need to take responsibility for self and other. However, there may be times when support and encouragement risk being confused with coercion.

#### 7.4 ‘Prodding them along’: Encouragement or coercion?

A tension exists between the encouragement and coercion of ‘responsible’ student dispositions. This is particularly evident in the phrase ‘prodding them along’ which occurs in the following discussion about encouraging students to turn off the classroom tap (used to fill drinking bottles) when it is dripping:

**Mrs. Fraser:** Yeah, no but that’s the sort of thing – exactly – because if they see that somebody else will be doing it for them, and that’s my temptation, that’s a lot of people’s temptation – to have things a certain way. Um, I don’t want the taps dripping, and it’s a bad habit. However, so I’ve pointed it out a few times. But, like you said – I might have to wait for 15 or 20 minutes if I’m chatting and suddenly realise that if nobody else has noticed it – and, fair play, they’re working (laughs) I can’t expect them to be – it’s my monitoring and it’s my issue as much as it is. But they’re over here often having drinks, so it is their responsibility to make sure the tap’s off.

**N:** Yep...

**Mrs. Fraser:** So, you know, and then...it’s just habit breaking – “Oh, I didn’t

have a drink out of that!" – coz you often say to the kids "Well, you know, someone turn it (off)" – "Oh, I haven't drunk out of it" – "So...you don't use the tap ever?" – "Yes..." – "Well, then, do you think it might be everyone's responsibility to make sure – just because you mightn't of used it last..." you know? So it's more about "It doesn't matter that you didn't touch it last or that you haven't been to that sink today – that's OK, you can still turn the tap off if you notice that it's dripping." So, just the next step, just sort of prodding them along to say "Alright, good, maybe you didn't touch it, but a responsible person might say 'It's dripping, I can see it, I'll do something about it.'" So take a bit of control, a bit of initiative... (Fairview School, interview with Yr 5 relieving teacher, Term 1 2011)

The metaphor 'prodding them along' conjures up images of cattle-prods used to control the movement of cattle. While such an instrument and other forms of corporal punishment are obviously not applied to students in current school contexts; verbal or mental prodding still involves "act[ing] upon the action of others" (Foucault, 2002, p. 341) so that 'bad habits' are replaced with conformity to social norms. In such ways, "[t]he Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching" (Foucault, 1977, p.184). However, Mrs. Fraser's approach seems to move away from coercion towards a more empowered encouragement of responsibility where students take 'control' and 'initiative' instead of the teacher 'doing it for them.' In suggesting to students "It doesn't matter that you didn't touch it last or that you haven't been to that sink today – that's OK, you can still turn the tap off if you notice that it's dripping," Mrs. Fraser alludes to a responsibility beyond the self and for the other (as advocated by Levinas, 2006a and Butler, 2005). Nevertheless, there seems little room for students to openly and meaningfully discuss why the tap should be turned off in the first place (i.e. minimising the class' waste of water and negative effects on the natural environment) and why it is their responsibility to do so. As noted by Knight & Pearl (2000), "...[i]f no persuasive case is made for the importance of any school activity, students will resist or subvert it no matter how high authority raises the stakes..." (p.201).

However it seems that students need little verbal persuasion when 'being naughty' in class is modelled and condoned by the teacher for personal amusement:

Mr. Andrews receives a text message from a friend during class. He calls the person back and gives the phone to Eric telling him to say "G'day Beer Drain" once he answers. Once Eric has done so, Mr. Andrews passes the phone along to Jack and Nick for them to say the same thing. He then gets the whole class to say this phrase as well as "God bless you (the usual greeting for staff and

visitors). Mr. Andrews then talks briefly and jovially with his friend and then gets the whole class to say “Goodbye Beer Drain” in unison. Charlotte asks “Is that his real name?” and Mr. Andrews replies “No – it’s because he drinks beer like a drain” – which students laugh about (Fieldnotes, Riverside School, 23 September 2010)

This is one of two examples where Mr. Andrews is directly observed to engage in a personal phone call during class time. Answering phone calls in class has been noted elsewhere as ‘disturbing’ (Barbour, 2010, p.164) in terms of a perceived lack of professionalism. Further, underage students are prompted to: 1) address a stranger on the phone; 2) call a stranger a derogatory name; and 3) make fun of alcoholism. Such behaviour hardly encourages students to take responsibility for themselves or for the vulnerability of others like ‘Beer Drain’ who may suffer from alcoholism, derogatory name-calling and/or public humiliation. Although students seem to find the situation amusing and do not openly object; they are *told* rather than *invited* to participate and may therefore feel coercively obliged to follow rather than defy the teacher’s directions – reinforced by his position as principal with the highest school-level authority to discipline and punish. With reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, such coercion does not inspire responsibility in primary school settings (Bacon, 1993; Lewis, 2001; Po-Ying, 2007; Roache & Lewis, 2011; Romi, et al., 2009). Instead, students need to be entrusted with agentic opportunities to develop, negotiate and practice responsibility in meaningful ways.

### 7.5 Trust and opportunity

The breach of trust is often used by teachers to justify pedagogies of control (as discussed in the previous chapter). However, in order to provide students with genuine opportunities to be responsible, teachers need to trust students enough to ‘give up some power’ (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.xv), or, as noted by Mr. Williams in the interview below, to ‘let go of some of the control’:

**Mr. Williams:** What is challenging is being open enough as a teacher to encourage responsibility – to teach responsibility you need to let go of some of the control

**N:** No – yeah

**Mr. Williams:** I think – yes, I’m gonna say it – I think a lot of teachers are really shit at that.

**N:** (laughing) I agree with you.

**Mr. Williams:** They can't – they can't *live* without control. I'm almost getting cynical enough to think that some of the people who become teachers do it because it's the only way in which they find any value in themselves. And I'm not gonna go on with that but I've heard some *scary* people in that staffroom, they *scare* me – they scare me. I think "What is your motivation for being here? Are you so tiny in yourself that you have to get some sort of uh...sense of self from controlling kids?" So that's a challenge – you've gotta let go. How can you encourage initiative and taking responsibility if we're going to control everything? (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

Mr. Williams iterates the challenge faced by teachers, some more than others, to be 'open' to students taking initiative and responsibility. As Kohn (2006[1996]) notes, "...it takes a special teacher to be open to this kind of conflict, someone who is not only patient but secure enough in [themselves] not to need to have the last word" (p.76). However, this is often a difficult task for teachers who are expected to maintain authority over their students. For example, while students may have the agency to choose where to sit in class, Mrs. Stephens has the 'last word' on whether they have made a responsible choice and can move them accordingly:

**Mrs. Stephens:** I mean, I have had a couple of kids come up to me and say 'I think I need to move' and they've made the decision for themselves – instead of me saying 'Well you need to move.'

**N:** Is that – was that Nick as well? Because I saw that he... or do they sit in separate seating arrangements in your class than in David's class? Coz sometimes they move around...

**Mrs. Stephens:** Sometimes they move, yeah... Sometimes they move – they like moving...

**N:** (laughing) OK... And they're allowed to just do that?

**Mrs. Stephens:** Yeah they can ask. Sometimes if someone's away they'll say 'Oh, can I just sit in their spot?' and every few weeks I say to them 'Oh, well let's have a swap around and see where we go' but I always say to them 'Now be careful who you sit next to because you're only going to get one warning and then I move you.' That's why Nick is up the front – because he was sitting down the back talking all the time. And he's got – even though he's a very smart boy – his attention span can be very easily distracted...

**N:** Mm...

**Mrs. Stephens:** (Semi-laughing) So that's why he's up the front now... So I mean they know that they'll be moved – but, you know, they can make that decision to sit next to someone if they like... If they want to sit next to their friend, I don't have any problem with it if they can work together – but otherwise they get moved (laughs) (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 classroom teacher, Term 3 2010)

Even during SRC meetings where students are explicitly responsible for representing the student body, it seems that principals rather than students have the 'last word' on matters of interest:

Renee asks people to raise their hands to vote on the (fundraiser) morning tea. She suggests that hopefully it could start next week but Mr. Andrews says that it is more likely to start next term. Olivia asks what the major prize will be for the talent night. Mr. Andrews reminds the President to focus on one topic at a time (Fieldnotes, Riverside School, 24 August 2010)

Mr. Harvey asks for any ideas in terms of disco themes. Hazel shares that a few ideas from Yr 6 include 'Flower Power,' 'Celebrity' and 'Nerds.' Mr. Harvey says that he doesn't think the 'Nerds' theme is appropriate and that the 'Flower Power' theme is more for adults. He then asks for any other ideas and is rewarded with 'Underwater,' 'Autumn' and 'Pyjama Party' – which he likes better. Mr. Harvey asks students to put their hands up for which theme they would prefer. The majority vote on the 'Pyjama Party' theme (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 24 March 2011)

Students can hardly be expected to take their responsibility seriously if their attempts to do so are not taken seriously. Both of these meetings are examples of traditional student councils critiqued by Kohn (2006[1996]) where "...only a few get to participate, students are set against each other in competition to decide who those few will be, and decisions of real significance are rarely part of their purview...the agenda is more likely to include social events than school governance" (p.95). Becker (in Adorno & Becker, 1999) similarly acknowledges that student councils can be set up as a 'mere façade' (p.30). Instead, students need to generate possibilities rather than simply choose from a range of possibilities, negotiate a consensus or compromise rather than simply vote (where the majority is favoured over the minority), and engage in democratic activity throughout each day rather than only during meetings (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.95).

There are instances where students are given more trust and opportunity to take responsibility for themselves and others – even though this entails the risk that students may make 'irresponsible' decisions as voiced by Mr. Williams:

**Mr. Williams:** I can be disappointed, I guess, too. One of the things, another one of the things I like is, this is not responsibility but its initiative. I think uh, taking the initiative – I – I like to see people take the initiative. I'd rather a decision than a lack of decision. I love to see the kids take decisions. As a leader or manager with a lot of training and experience, I encourage initiative

and I understand that you've got to support people when they take it – even when they make a blue [i.e. mistake]. Um, you can't encourage initiative without letting people take risks (Northfield School, interview with Yr5/6 teacher, Term 3 2011).

In other words, the opportunity and responsibility to make decisions should be unconditional and “...part of a nonpunitive problem-solving process” (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.162). In practice, Mr. Williams often allows his advanced maths class to choose which topic to focus on during the lesson and provides open-ended tasks requiring more student direction and responsibility:

A female student says “I want to learn more about squared numbers” and another girl adds “Yeah – what she said.” Mr. Williams writes this suggestion up on the board as a topic to cover during this lesson (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 23 May 2011)

Mr. Williams explains that they'll be continuing on with the 'Where's the maths?' activity they began last week on the dimensions of one of the new school buildings (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 20 June 2011)

The open-ended and student-directed 'Where's the maths?' lesson occurred outside and it is interesting to note that this is frequently the setting for opportunities to be responsible in other school contexts. For example, upper-primary students at Fairview School are permitted to walk to and from specialist music, drama, physical education and language lessons in the senior school buildings (about 200 metres away) without direct teacher supervision. Some students are observed to frequently take advantage of this in terms of tackling each other (boys), running, dawdling and jumping over hedges. While such decisions may be perceived as 'irresponsible,' they may also provide students with a 'break' from pedagogies of control and the chance to release any pent-up energy which could interfere with concentration in class (thereby taking responsibility for their learning). The link between opportunities for responsibility and the outdoors is also apparent at Riverside School through the student-initiated Garden Club and Garbologist Group where members are occasionally trusted to do weeding/harvesting or collect and dispose of rubbish during class time without direct supervision. Again, some students took advantage of this trust in order to 'get out of class':

**Chris:** Yeah - we've had to fire people because they were just doing it to get out of class. Wouldn't come down, wouldn't do anything.  
(Everyone talking at once)

**Nathan:** Yeah, they brought balls, the brought cricket bats, they brought – coz some Kindies maybe left sport equipment down there...and they would play with the sport equipment...

**Chris:** Oh – one time somebody purposely left something down there...  
...

**N:** OK. So what happened – coz Chris and William were talking before about like firing people from the club – so who makes those decisions?

**All:** We all do, vote on it etc...  
(Everyone talking at once)

**William:** Well last year, Jarryd – before he left...

**Matthew:** Who's Jarryd?

**William:** Oh – he's – (me and him were the creators)... He elected two captains which were me and Zach, but we decided that we will share the roles – like, everybody now is like equal...

**Matthew (butting in):** So if (they want something) we have to discuss it.

**William:** So, we all have a unanimous vote to see if we want to fire them... and, the people we're firing can't have a vote...  
...

**N:** OK. And then what happens if they're really upset and they still want to stay?

**Nathan:** If they're really upset and they still want to stay, well...

**Chris:** Well – we'll give them a chance – say...

**N:** Alright – let Chris have a go...

**Chris:** Yeah, if you like do lots of work – coz, like, they normally don't do anything – we might consider letting you stay...

**N:** OK...

**William:** Like in jail – they give a good sent(ence) (behaviour bond?) – they have to be good for a certain amount of time and stuff... (Riverside School, focus group discussion with the Garbologists, Term 3 2010)

The Garbologists draw on democratic processes in order to take responsibility for resolving the issue among themselves without seeking teacher assistance. While this process begins with discussion and voting (again problematic in terms of favouring the majority over the minority), it eventuates in punitive action (i.e. 'firing') and correction (i.e. 'doing lots of work'). In such ways, students echo the emphasis placed on pedagogies of control in schooling contexts and liken this with technologies of control found 'in jail' – a connection famously noted by Foucault (1977). Similar instances of reverting back to pedagogies of control are further discussed in Chapter 9. It seems that pedagogies of agency in general and opportunities for 'democratic decision-making' (Salter, Venville & Longnecker, 2011, p.156) in particular, may not necessarily involve taking responsibility



for the other beyond the self. In the words of Kohn (2006[1996]), “[a]utonomy is not enough: we need community, too” (p.105).

## **7.6 Concluding comments**

As agency is required for ‘taking’ responsibility and deciding how to respond to the needs of self and other; then pedagogies of agency such as negotiation/choice, positive role-modelling, humour, encouragement and opportunity aim to *work with* and empower students. If students are to feel empowered and confident enough to make responsible decisions, their unique perspectives and experiences need to be supported and encouraged rather than humiliated and overly controlled. While such pedagogies have the potential to support the agency required for responsibility, they can quite easily be tarnished by an overall emphasis on student obedience and conformity.

So, while the establishment of class rules and expectations at the beginning of the year may seemingly draw on student input through democratic means, the process remains somewhat conditional and coercive when teachers have the final say – rather than allowing students to meaningfully create, define, justify, question, debate and negotiate the necessity and inclusivity of such rules and expectations. While most principals and teachers acknowledge the importance of role-modelling ‘responsible’ behaviour their representations of role-modelling still contain some degree of direct or indirect inculcation. Further, in practice, the role-modelling offered to students is not always positive or responsible. For example, teachers may role-model (and therefore authorise) the humiliation of others through destructive humour. Tensions also exist between the encouragement and coercion of ‘responsible’ student dispositions; and giving or withholding trust and opportunities for students to be responsible.

Although teachers and principals appear to be moving towards pedagogies of agency, any progress is often limited or hindered by the continued threat and application of pedagogies of control. Students are therefore placed in an impossible position whereby they are expected to take responsibility for themselves and others without the agency required to do so. In such ways, giving students ‘responsibility’ in schools becomes an empty promise. Further, pedagogies of agency are not enough to support ethical responsibility which involves a relation with the other or alterity. Pedagogies that support such alterity will be explored in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 8: PEDAGOGIES OF ALTERITY – WELCOMING AND LEARNING FROM THE OTHER THROUGH EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND OPEN DIALOGUE**

As noted previously in my theoretical framework, both Foucault and Levinas insist on maintaining alterity or otherness ‘as other’ without reducing it to the sameness of the self (Levinas, 2006a, p.150; Hofmeyr, 2005, p.247). From either perspective, the self must remain open to alterity or otherness in order for ethical responsibility and ‘non-violence’ (Todd, 2003, p.3) to be possible. As Butler (2005) notes, “[b]y not pursuing satisfaction and by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it” (p.43).

In moving away from pedagogical approaches that construct students as passive receptacles who can be abstractly known and classified; pedagogies of alterity or ‘pedagog[ies] with empty hands’ (Biesta, 2008) seek to “welcome the unexpected and unknown” (Chinnery & Bai, 2008, p.239). To do so requires accepting the uniqueness and humanity of each individual student (Ruiz, 2004) in order to learn from the other “who is absolutely different to myself” (Todd, 2003, p.15) and who therefore cannot be completely recognised, known or empathised with (Jagodzinski, 2002; Todd, 2003).

The responsibility to welcome and learn from the other ‘as other’ may involve emotional labour (including love, care and guilt) and open dialogue (with an emphasis on confession, listening and critique) – pedagogies which will now be explored as they appear in upper-primary school contexts. In this chapter it is argued that while ethical considerations of the other are often rhetorically acknowledged by educators – in practice, this is often constrained by expectations of conformity that reduce the other to the same.

### **8.1 Pedagogies of emotional labour: Love, care and guilt**

According to Kohn (2006[1996]) “...a move from ‘doing to’ to ‘working with’ is impossible unless there has been an effort to create and sustain relationships among the people involved” (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.104). Occurring in a ‘fragile learning community’ where all are susceptible or vulnerable to demands of responsibility for the other, such relationships require ‘emotional labo[u]r’ (Todd, 2003, p.113). The need for emotional labour or the development of emotional intelligence is explicitly mentioned by Mr. Williams in the following interview excerpt:

**Mr. Williams:** Only that I believe uh, sincerely that it's important for everybody to take responsibility for themselves – their actions and so on and so forth. I'm very interested in – in the notion of emotional...emotional knowledge – emotional sense...it's...it's not something which I know a lot about but um, developing an emotional sense...We can learn to spell, we can learn this – but can we learn to understand our emotions and the emotions of others so that we become more empathetic?

**N:** Mm! Mm...

**Mr. Williams:** And indeed (laughs) – love ourselves even more. So it's something I'm thinking about and reading a bit about. And I think the more emotionally...the – I'm using the wrong term Tash – I can't think of it...

**N:** No – um...

**Mr. Williams:** The more emotional um awareness

**N:** Intelligence?

**Mr. Williams:** Intelligence – that's it! The emotional intelligence that we can develop as people – I think that would assist a lot of us to develop personal responsibility (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

Mr. Williams explains that understanding 'our emotions and the emotions of others' can assist in the development of empathy for others as well as love for the self. As noted previously, empathy in and of itself is problematic in that it reduces the Other to the Same and thus fails to be responsive to the Other 'as Other' (Jagodzinski, 2002; Todd, 2003). Although love or 'care for the self' may extend to others as "...the one who cared for himself correctly found himself, by the very fact, in a measure to behave correctly in relationship to others and for others" (Foucault, 1984b, p.7); this is not guaranteed. Instead, love for the other requires an unconditional orientation and openness towards the other.

According to Levinas (2006a) "[l]ove is originary" and a requirement for "giving the other priority over oneself" (pp.92-93). In a similar vein, Butler (2005) notes that "...love, from the outset, is without judgment..." (p.77). Further, Todd (2003) suggests that "[a] passionate commitment that leads to a responsible response can emerge precisely through that loving bond that gives itself over to the other in a gesture of communicative openness" (p.89). In other words, love can provide the passion and commitment required to altruistically act without self-interest and risk self-assurance in order to welcome, learn from and be transformed by the other (Todd, 2003, pp.87-89). Such passion and commitment to 'looking after' others is expressed in the following way by Miss Hill:

**Miss Hill:** Yeah – exactly. I mean, I think, coz I have um a brother and then two sisters, I think – especially because the two sisters have been a lot younger – not a lot younger – but quite younger than me, um, I always felt like a motherly sort of role. Like looking after them – I always loved doing that when I was younger (Northfield School, interview with student-teacher, Term 2 2011)

Miss Hill describes how she was transformed by her siblings into a ‘motherly sort of role’ in order to ‘look after them’ or take responsibility for their wellbeing. This is later linked to her choice of profession. Such passion and commitment to take responsibility for others is apparently exemplified by students in relation to community service:

**Mr. Harvey:** ...Another part of it as well is I have a partnership with Macquarie Care Centre and Aged Care Facility. So on the peer support afternoons, each week I take a different peer support group to play bingo with the residents at Macquarie Care Centre. So that’s a big part of the program as well.

**N:** Mhm...

**Mr. Harvey:** And um, I suppose it’s all about um, that, that involvement’s about giving something back to the community. And we’ll also invite the residents out to our Christmas Concert and Chapel Service as well at the end of the year.

**N:** Oh that’s wonderful – yeah...

**Mr. Harvey:** So um – and the kids love going there to play bingo (Fairview School, interview with principal, Term 1 2011)

Although the reason why students ‘love going there to play bingo’ may involve the chance to play bingo rather than ‘give back’ or take responsibility for the elderly; I prefer to take a more optimistic view. However, as the expectation of reciprocity may detract from pure altruism (Levinas, 2006), it would be interesting to see whether this perceived student passion and commitment changed if such community service occurred in their own free-time and/or involved less engaging activities. Similarly, it may be difficult for teachers to have an unconditional orientation and openness towards students without expecting something in return:

**Mrs. Jenkins:** ...mm, he’s [Toby] a very loveable person. But he surprises you in the things that he does and you just want to strangle him because you know he does stupid things... (Fairview School, interview with Yr 6 teacher, Term 1 2011)

So while Mrs. Jenkins describes Toby as a ‘very loveable person’ this lovability is conditional as it does not include the times when he apparently ‘does stupid things.’ Instead of passion and commitment to unconditionally welcome, learn from and be transformed by the other; it seems that the other is expected to transform itself in ways that conform to social norms. According to Kohn (2006[1996]), “[w]hat kids most need is to know that we value them even when they screw up or fall short” (p.151) where “[t]he willingness to persevere with care and trust is what makes all the difference” (p.150). This emphasis on care is otherwise known as ‘care ethics’ (Noddings, 2010).

Care ethics or pedagogies of care involve a face-to-face relation between at least two parties – the carer and cared-for (Noddings, 2010). In this relation, the carer puts aside their own interests in order to receive, listen attentively and meet the needs of the cared-for; while the cared-for provides feedback on whether such efforts are indeed ‘caring’ (Noddings, 2010). Preparing students to care-for others is said to require modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2010). The potential and limitations of role-modelling and the need for opportunities to practice responsibility have been discussed previously but are also applicable here in terms of caring-for others in formal ways as explained by the principal of Fairview School:

**Mr. Harvey:** And, so sometimes teachers can get caught up in just focusing on those things that are due for assessment and uh, put less time into the pastoral care component. But – I think that’s a challenge for the teachers – but I, uh, I certainly think here we have a very good balance and um, we really strongly emphasise the uh, pastoral care and peer support, and I suppose, developing positive relationships – just as highly as we do Maths, English or sport or music (Fairview School, interview with principal, Term 1 2011)

Mr. Harvey mentions the need to balance academia with care through the formal pastoral care policy of the school with an emphasis on ‘developing positive relationships.’ As noted in Chapter 3, pastoral care involves an ‘individualizing and totalizing’ (Foucault, 2002, p.332) form of pastoral power whereby individuals are expected to show they care about the ‘common good’ by shaping themselves in ways that conform to social norms. Such expectations are reflected in school-level policy (analysed and discussed in Chapter 5) where pastoral care, inculcation and discipline remain closely aligned. Role-modelling care-for others in more informal ways is described by Mr. Williams of Northfield School:

**Mr. Williams:** And the children do notice, they do notice, they do notice – there’s no doubt about it. Um, so if in that sense my personal model of doing my fair share and some, shows just 1 or 2 of them that “He was a good bloke because when we needed a soccer coach – he turned up, he didn’t duck back into the staffroom.” When they needed a dance – a whole lot of little girls wanted to start a dance troupe five years ago – who, which teacher came forward and did it? Mr. Williams – who knows nothing about that. So, your personal practice – not just in this room – does count.

**N:** Mm. And it shows the students that you care too.

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah it does (Northfield School, interview with Yr 5/6 teacher, Term 2 2011)

Here, it seems that Mr. Williams puts aside the personal comfort of retreating to the staffroom in order to model responding to and caring-for the needs of students who require a soccer coach and dance supervisor. As noted by Mills (2004), a normative presumption in the field of education is that caring is the domain of female teachers while discipline and management are the domain of male teachers. Therefore, Mr. Williams’ demonstration of care-for students may come with a risk of having his masculinity called into question – a risk that he remedies through heterosexualised and misogynistic comments (particularly discussed in Chapters 4 & 6). Further, there are times when teacher input is unnecessary or unhelpful in establishing caring relations required for responsibility:

**Mrs. Stephens:** ...No, I’ve witnessed it even out on the playground. Even the person whose caused, you know, the injury or whatever, has actually brought that kid up to me and said ‘I’ve accidentally hurt that person’ and I’ve said ‘Oh, did you apologise?’ – ‘Yes, I did’ and they’re taking care of them and I said ‘Well that’s the best way to make up for it – if you’re taking care of them.’ So, yeah, I mean, not only does it happen in my class, but I’ve had quite a few situations where...I mean I suppose it’s half-and-half, 50/50 that you have to go and get the person that’s done it – maybe they didn’t realise it. But, I think most of them that they realise they did it on – you know – an accident, you know, they come up and, you know, they’re helping that person. So that’s really good, so... (Riverside School, interview with Yr 5 teacher, Term 3 2010)

While Mrs. Stephens seems to offer affirmation and absolution to the student who ‘accidentally hurt’ another, this is somewhat unnecessary given that the student has already apologised and is ‘taking care of’ the hurt student without teacher prompting and direction. Alternatively, there may be times when teachers excuse teasing as a normal

part of life regardless of the negative effect it may have on caring relations – as evident in the following observations of a Yr 5/6 class at Northfield School:

Brett comes over and makes fun of Michelle's spelling/writing and she starts to cry. Tiffany pushes him away and walks with him out the door. I go over to comfort Michelle and show her my messy writing. Mitchell humourously adds that his writing is so bad that his parents call him "Egyptian" (i.e. writing like hieroglyphics). Outside the classroom, Mr. Williams talks to Michelle, telling her that she needs to "toughen up" because everyone gets teased about something – usually by people who don't feel good about themselves. He adds that he thinks Brett might be a bit like that – putting people down to make himself feel better. Mr. Williams leaves to go to his doctor's appointment as Billy, Jeffrey and I walk down to the hall – trying to offer Michelle further comfort. Jeffrey says something along the lines of "One day his mouth will falter" (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 29 July 2011)

Although Mr. Williams attempts to care for Michelle by explaining why Brett may be teasing her (and others); he also tells Michelle that she needs to 'toughen up,' thereby locating her as the problem in ways similar to dominant discourses on sexual harassment which locate 'women as the problem' (Robinson, 2000, p.76). Overall, it seems that this approach has failed to address the issue and comfort Michelle to the point where Billy, Jeffrey and I feel compelled to offer further consolation. As Brett is often the target of teacher reprimands and 'humour' which may be contributing to his perceived lack of self-esteem, it may be necessary for teachers to keep in mind that children "...are more likely to care about others if they know *they* are cared about. If their emotional needs are met, they have the luxury of being able to meet other people's needs – rather than spending their lives preoccupied with themselves" (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.111). This view is also taken by Foucault (1984b) who theorises that "[t]he care for self takes moral precedence in the measure that the relationship to self takes precedence" (p.7). Nevertheless, students like Brett may still need a caring explanation that "...helps them see how their actions affect others" (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.10) even though this may involve guilt.

As noted in my theoretical framework, the susceptibility of the self to the other's suffering involves a 'strangely innocent' (Butler, 1997b, p.108) guilt as the self is already 'late' and 'wanting' (Levinas, 1991, pp.87, 91) in its response to the other. Extending on these theorisations, Todd (2003) argues that guilt has pedagogical potential for social justice and responsibility "...in its tacit acknowledgement that some harm has been committed against another, for which one feels some kind of obligation, whether or not

one has been directly involved in such harm” (p.92). Guilt is not explicitly mentioned by teachers or principals as having connections to responsibility. However, in the example below, Mr. Williams indirectly appeals to students’ sense of guilt in thinking about how their actions have negatively affected others:

A female student gets up to explain how she worked the answer. Mr. Williams asks her to check her working out. The student explains that she had difficulty understanding because her group members were talking. Mr. Williams stands up and chastises the class for talking when they should be listening to each other and Miss Hill:

*Student teachers are under a lot of pressure when they come to schools to teach. Pressure one is that they have to succeed in my eyes and the other teachers’ eyes – that they can teach. The other big part of teaching, guys, is actually building a relationship with the people you work with – developing trust and respect for what you’re gonna do (inaudible) and it takes a long time to learn. And if kids just think “Arw gee – here’s a new teacher – they obviously don’t have all the (rig moral). Let’s just work ‘em over and just muck around” – very, very difficult. Gary you haven’t shut up from the minute you walked in the room – and none of it’s been productive. Miles – I don’t know what you think you’re here for son, but you came in – the minute you walked in the room – you were goofing off and doing something over there. I sympathise with – Celia – a good mathematician and a good kid, but you weren’t giving her a fair go down here, OK? And you know, get real. Whose time are you wasting? Guys – I get paid to turn up here. You know, I could go a whole year – it doesn’t matter to me – well it does it matters a lot – I shouldn’t say it like that – that’s terribly negative. But um, I can do this – I can do this maths and a lot more on the side. You can’t yet. This is your opportunity to learn it. And to (take care for it). Right? Another thing I’d like you to consider is just consideration for other people. You’re having a conver – I’ll give you the analogy, it’s called an analogy: You’re having a conversation with your friends in the playground, and next to you, there is a bunch of other kids and they’re talking so loud you can’t hear your friend telling you about what they did on the weekend. How would you feel? Pretty bad. OK? Or there’s someone making shrieking, stupid noises when you’re trying to have a conversation here. Alright? If it was in the playground you’d get mightily peeved. But what about the classroom? This is where we come to work and learn. In some respects, I couldn’t hear myself think half of the time because of silly noises, stupid things, you know – and I know you’re children. I was a child once, and as much as it’s hard to believe, I was a child once...(inaudible aside)...But to be as*



*rude as you kids are to an adult, I can't conceive it. Here's the teacher saying "Look, listen now" – Gary, you just kept on talking. Not only are you rude to the adults, but that your own mate gets up – the whole time – and Celia was under a lot of pressure, there is pressure being out there doing that – and you were talking. That's pretty poor form – pretty poor form – and I expect better of you and not only that, I know that you're better than that. So, let's buck up on this alright, let's buck up. Otherwise, you see, I have to tell Miss Hill "You've gotta learn your classroom management" and to do that you've got to be (claps) on them all the time." And there's an extent to which teachers have to be on kids all the time. It's exactly the stuff that you hate – when the teacher's on you all the time: "Show me the 5 L's"; "I'm going to put a red sticker against your name"; "You better sit in at lunchtime." It's exactly the stuff that you hate! All that being managed every minute of every day. But what's the choice? What's the alternative if you're not doing your other bit and you're not pulling your weight? This is your work. Learning in school is kids' work (long pause). And you know something Yvette? When you've shovelled as many holes as I have, when you've dug poo out of the sewer when the sewer in the house is blocked up, when you've picked fragments of people's bodies off the roadway [reference to his military past], you realise that this [schoolwork] is actually very reasonable, real and quite interesting work. If you'd laid as many pavers as I have in my lifetime in the Queensland sun, you would realise that this is very real and reasonable work to be doing.*

Mr. Williams asks students to complete the questions on the board and explain the strategies/concepts in order to end the lesson "productively." Students work quietly and Mr. Williams comments "See how we can now concentrate? I can even hear my own brain ticking over" (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 30 May 2011)

Mr. Williams explains the pressure that student-teachers (like Miss Hill) are under, the difficulty of peers being able to concentrate due to noise, and the more unreasonable tasks he has undertaken in his lifetime – particularly as an army veteran. While he explicitly recognises that students 'hate' being 'managed every minute of the day' (similar to the pedagogies of control analysed in Chapter 6); Mr. Williams sees no other alternative when students are inconsiderate of others by not working quietly. However, this is a one-sided speech rather than an open discussion. When questions are posed, they are either rhetorical (where the teacher answers them himself) or closed (i.e. 'OK?' or 'Alright?'). As such questions assume that students will feel the same as the teacher and/or each other, then "[l]earning through empathy cannot but mask, despite our best

intentions, the Other's radically different feelings, experiences, and needs as unique" (Todd, 2003, p.63). If students indeed feel their own unique sense of guilt for the other, then Todd (2003) suggests teachers should "...encourage a more open dialogue about the place of affect in one's moral life" (p.114) because "...if our students are suffering under the burden of an awakening responsibility for the Other, struggling to work through their own love and aggression with regard to another's pain, then guilt needs to be heard – and, indeed, listened to" (p.115). Such open dialogue through confession, listening and critique will now be explored as pedagogies of alterity that may work to facilitate ethical responsibility.

## 8.2 Pedagogies of open dialogue: Confession, listening and critique

Establishing an environment that supports responsibility through open dialogue, where students' voices are respected and problems are solved together; is said to require time, effort, student involvement, and teacher flexibility (Kohn, 2006[1996], pp.128, 163), humility (Todd, 2003, p.15), generosity and sensibility (Zembylas, 2005, p.155). In other words, teachers need to "*[t]alk less, ask more*" (original emphasis – Kohn, 2006[1996], pp.126, 144) through questions that are "...open-ended, with students encouraged to explore possibilities, reflect on their own motives, disagree, and, in general, to **construct an authentic solution**" (original emphasis – Kohn, 2006[1996], p.126). While in all three upper-primary schooling contexts there is a notable absence of formal class meetings to share, decide, plan or reflect as a class (Kohn, 2006[1996], pp.88-89); more informal instances of open-dialogue through confession, listening and critique were observed and discussed with varying degrees of success.

In terms of confession, some students are honest about their 'failure' to meet teacher, school or societal expectations despite the risk of punishment:

Mr. Williams asks students to stand up and stretch again. While they're standing up, Mr. Williams asks them to discuss/share the main points of the 2nd complication as he writes their ideas up on the board. Some students start to chat. Mr. Williams stops talking and asks "Who's talking? Point to them." Celeste and Danielle point to Joe, and Brett and Gavin point to Kimberly. Mr. Williams asks "Kimberly – were you talking when I was talking?" and Kimberly admits "Yes" to which Mr. Williams comments "OK – bench (at lunchtime)" (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 14 June 2011)

**Mrs. Jenkins:** [Has a student taken responsibility for] something or someone in a way that has surprised you? I suppose Toby is a classic.

**N:** Yes?

**Mrs. Jenkins:** In that Toby is a rogue but he has a heart of gold and...when he does something wrong, he's the first one to tell me, when he comes back with his diary, that he's gotten a bad mark from a specialist teacher. So, he's very good in taking responsibility for his actions. He doesn't lie, so he, whatever he tells you, you can believe. Um...

**N:** Even if it means that he's

**Mrs. Jenkins:** In trouble.

**N:** In trouble, yeah...

**Mrs. Jenkins:** Yeah, he's very good like that and it doesn't surprise – well it does surprise me the fact that he owns up to something and he doesn't try and um, push it off to someone else. And if he does say that someone else did it, it's generally because that's the truth. So, it's a surprise in the fact that he's always the clown and he's very loud – but it surprises you the other side of him as well (Fairview School, interview with Yr 6 teacher, Term 1, 2011).

Confessions like the ones above may occur for a number of reasons including: a desire to be punished; a need to please others or gain their trust; a commitment to personal values of integrity; and/or coercion (Gross, 2007). According to Foucault (1978), confessions are based on a ritualised obligation to tell the truth to an authorised other in order to exonerate or absolve the self (pp.60-62). Such dependence on the other is also iterated by Levinas (2006a) and Butler (2005) in terms of subjectivity or 'giving an account of oneself.' However, confession is not only a contract between the confessing self and the authorised other; it is also a way to recognise the self in the other and reflexively engage with the self – albeit in opaque and incomplete ways shaped by normative discourses (Butler, 2005; De Baerdemaeker, Buelens & Demoor, 2008). Regardless of veracity, research indicates that confessions rather than denials are more likely to be believed because there seems to be no motive for deception (Levine, Kim & Blair, 2010). In the examples above, the presence of witnesses may make denial even more difficult to believe and confession more likely. Another influential factor may be the minimisation of punishment for an honest confession:

**Mrs. Fraser:** ...OK, for example, today, I was watching...one of the kids got tripped...

**N:** By someone else?

**Mrs. Fraser:** Yes, by someone else – because he ran through their handball game. He retaliated – so he ran through and got tripped, the girls laughed, he ran back and pushed the girl, and because they were all giggling and laughing, he ran off and got really upset – because he was embarrassed, he was... So I

saw all this happen from the window as I was walking across and I went "Right" and I saw him, you know, run off and I went out there and I said "OK" and it was "No I didn't" immediately "No I didn't." One of the other girls, however, said "I accidentally tripped him" and I said "How did you *accidentally* trip him?" I said "You were standing on the sideline. Now, I saw him run through your game – did he?" – "Yes" – "Did you trip him?" – "Yes." So when you can go back and put it in say "I realise that what that person did wasn't right either"...

**N:** Mm...and then they don't feel like they're being attacked...

**Mrs. Fraser:** Exactly. So, sometimes going back and saying "I saw..." - but you don't always. And it is very much a 'He said, she said' and you have to say "OK...." But the biggest challenge is for students to recognise their behaviour at the time. And often if there's a witness, and generally speaking, like I said, the hardest thing is that when you as the adult, as the person either on duty or as the teacher, you've seen a behaviour and they will just say "No. No I didn't" – "Yes you did" – very clearly, explicitly watched and then trying to get them to say "OK"...

**N:** "I understand what you're saying"...

**Mrs. Fraser:** "I now get (it)..." (Both laugh). So, mm...

**N:** Yeah, that's interesting how, how that happens isn't it...

**Mrs. Fraser:** And I don't know about strategies other than pointing out that...often there's a lead up to – there's a reason certain behaviours are – and being able to sort of, get behind what was initially what you've seen – so it was often a lashing out or a pushing or a rough behaviour or something that ended fairly inappropriately. Um, so the strategy is to go back and say "OK, so what happened before that?" And giving opportunities for each person, coz I had to go "Right, you know, we've got a kid who's now upset and embarrassed" (and they'll be like "Ahhh!" protesting) and I'll say "Yes, OK. They did the wrong thing, they shouldn't of tripped you and it's not nice to be laughed at. Do you run through the middle of their handball game?" – "Yes." So, just getting them to go backwards to say "What led up to that point might've been what I had done" and that takes some time, it just does. And they need trust and they need to know that I'm not going to go "Rararara! You shouldn't have done that and you're on detention! Rara!" so that it's an inflammatory thing more than it is to, to get behind it. And I think that that's taken a little while to hone those skills where you immediately might just say "Well, you shouldn't have tripped him. And you shouldn't have done that. You're both in trouble!" because I don't feel they've actually – not trusted you with that information, but if they admit to something then you have to give them praise and...

**N:** Some credit for that...

**Mrs. Fraser:** Yeah, to say "I'm pleased that you've recognized that and I'd hope that you wouldn't see that again" and most of the time I haven't... (Fairview School, interview with Yr 5 relieving teacher, Term 1 2011)

Although the students in the scenario above eventually take responsibility for their conduct and confess to Mrs. Fraser; they do so only after further questioning (to determine what led up to the incident), explanation (that their actions have been

witnessed and have had negative effects on others), and persuasion (that their perspectives will be considered fairly and their honesty will not be punished). While the focus seems to be on 'getting behind' or understanding the underlying reasons for student actions (as advocated by Kohn, 1993, p.59); this may not necessarily result in genuine empathy, remorse or reconciliation between students. So while the girls admit to tripping the boy and justify their actions by recounting how he ran through their game; it is Mrs. Fraser who connects these actions to the boy's embarrassment in the hope of inspiring empathy. As noted in Chapter 6, telling students to feel or behave in certain ways does not inspire open and meaningful discussion with the other whether it be in the form of confession (Foucault, 1993), unconditional listening (Levinas, 1996; Todd, 2003) or critique (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2002). Nor can the boy's unique experience be truly 'felt' or empathised with by the girls without reducing him to the Same (Todd, 2003). The question also remains as to whether those who hurt others should be excused (or in this case, let off with a warning) simply because they honestly confess. According to Kohn (2006[1996]), "[w]e don't need to ignore what the student has done. Instead, she can be assisted in thinking about ways to **make restitution** or reparations" (original emphasis – p.127).

While some students may expect or accept punishment as a consequence for their actions; when it is perceived as unfair or inconsistent, the focus may shift to avoiding punishment altogether by not getting caught, rather than taking responsibility for conduct through honest confession:

Mrs. Stephens asks the class "Did anyone write on Melissa's raffle ticket?" No-one replies. Jake tells William that he filled out his raffle ticket for him (while he was at Welsh Choir practice) and William gives Jake a high-five in thanks. Mrs. Stephens directly asks Rebecca if she wrote on other people's raffle tickets for them and Rebecca replies "No Mrs. Stephens." Mrs. Stephens asks "Who wrote on Sophie's? If I don't get someone to admit to it – I will throw them all in the bin. Because this shouldn't happen – we shouldn't have to worry about people being dishonest in this class. Zach? Did you fill anyone's out?" Zach replies "No" and Mrs. Stephens disbelievably asks "So why are there two tickets with Zach written on them?" Zach replies "I got one of them this morning." Mrs. Stephens eventually agrees with him and then moves on to say to the rest of the class "If you're the dishonest person in here you better not get caught. Because I will tell Mr. Andrews and the SRC. I'm very disappointed..." (Riverside School, observation notes for 7 September 2010)

During her interrogation, Mrs. Stephens threatens “If I don’t get someone to admit to it – I will throw them all in the bin” and that “If you’re the dishonest person in here you better not get caught. Because I will tell Mr. Andrews and the SRC.” The rationale for this warning seems to be the deterrence of students from writing their own name on other people’s tickets in a ‘dishonest’ way (evident in the interrogation of Zach). However, this approach automatically assumes that students are inherently immoral (as critiqued by Yilmaz, 2009) rather than stopping to consider other possible reasons for the missing raffle tickets (i.e. accidental misplacement). In any case, warning students that they ‘better not get caught’ is more likely to inspire self-preservation than honesty (see Kohn, 2006[1996], p.25). Such prioritisation is echoed by students (albeit at a different school):

**Evan:** Like if you get in a fight, and like they punch you first, and then like why would you go and tell the teacher – like if you get in a fight – why would you go tell a teacher and then you know that you’re gonna get caught. And if you don’t tell the teacher you have a half-decent chance of not getting caught (Northfield School, focus group 3, Term 2, 2011)

Evan justifies not telling the teacher about involvement in fights in order to avoid ‘getting caught.’ Such fights are deemed necessary by many upper-primary boys in terms of self-defence and revenge (explored in the following chapter) and are prioritised over taking responsibility for the vulnerability of the other (Butler, 2005; Levinas, 2006a) and the confession required for self-formation and transformation (Foucault, 1993). According to Kohn (2006[1996]):

To help an impulsive, aggressive, or insensitive student become more responsible, we have to gain some insight into why she is acting that way. That, in turn, is most likely to happen when the student feels close enough to us (and safe enough with us) to explain how things look from her point of view (p.27)

Perhaps such confessions or explanations on the part of the student would be easier if teachers were more open to listening to students without the threat of judgement or punishment.

Such unconditional listening occurs “beyond language, meaning, and comprehension” (Todd, 2003, p.130). As Levinas (1996) explains “[o]ur relation with the other (*autrui*) certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him, but this relation overflows comprehension...” (p.6). The point is not to ‘understand’ the other in a

reductionist way, rather, the point of unconditional listening is to remain open, attentive and responsive to learning from the unique difference of the other (Todd, 2003). This may involve being willing to listen to students as 'experts' in their areas of interest which is particularly apparent during one Yr 5 news time observed at Fairview School:

It is news time and Melanie and Blake present a power-point on the universe, including information on space, galaxies, solar systems, planets, black holes and meteorites. Melanie does the introduction while Blake does most of the talking and elaboration. As they begin to talk about Earth being sucked into a black hole or predicted 'end of the world' scenarios, Mr. Simmons comments "Well Blake, you'll have to study hard and stop it from happening" and Blake replies "Yeah, I will." Blake is full of information (his father apparently has an observatory) and after quite a lengthy and complex presentation, Mr. Simmons suggests that perhaps Blake and Melanie can present more next week and thanks them both for their contributions (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 18 February 2011)

Mr. Simmons seems content to listen and learn from Melanie and Blake about some of the finer details of space and does not interrupt to question, correct or expand on the content of their presentation. Perhaps this is because 'news time' usually involves minimal teacher interruption. The suggestion that Blake can 'study hard and stop it [Earth being sucked into a black hole] from happening' may be an attempt to silence the transgression of these students who seek to discuss such a controversial topic. Alternatively, the agency ascribed to students to address such issues and present more on space the following week seems to acknowledge them as 'experts' on this topic from which the whole class can learn. Other than news time, unconditionally listening to student ideas especially occurs in the subject Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PD/H/PE). For example, during a lesson on relationships with Yr 5/6 students from Northfield School:

Miss Hill asks groups to find the 3 most important things to do with relationships. Brett quickly darts over to Tiffany and gives her a note which she puts under her desk while giggling and going red. Miss Hill explains that one person from each group is to read out their ideas. Eden (on behalf of herself, Tiffany, Kimberly, Mason and co.) nominates: 'bond,' 'stay in touch' and 'meaningful.' Jeffrey (on behalf of himself and Jim) nominates: 'respectful,' 'spiritual understanding (i.e. marrying a person with the same spiritual beliefs means a greater understanding)' and 'care.' Joe (on behalf of himself, Gavin, Brett, Jared and Mitchell) nominates: 'sexual,' 'love and compassion' and 'attractiveness.' Melody's table nominates: 'special,' 'safe' and 'no

restrictions.’ Xavier’s table nominates: ‘love (i.e. sexual, boyfriend/girlfriend)’, ‘communication’ and ‘flexible.’ Celeste (on behalf of herself, Jennifer, Robyn and Nicole) nominates: ‘connection,’ ‘friends,’ ‘marriage’ and ‘knowledge of self and partner’ (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 23 May 2011)

During this lesson, students feel comfortable enough (despite initial giggling and whispering among some groups) to mention ‘sexual’ as a type of relationship. Perhaps this is because all ideas are listed on the board in unconditional acceptance or at least with non-judgemental commenting by the teacher. Similarly, personal stories are more likely to be shared in such an open environment as evident in the following PD/H/PE lesson with Yr 5 students from Riverside School:

At one point during the introductory PD/H/PE lesson on ‘Growth and development,’ Mrs Stephens asks “Who likes to do things by yourself?” Most students raise their hand and she continues “Makes you feel grown up doesn’t it? But sometimes we need some help.” She then asks students to think of a time when they needed some help. One student up the front shares with the rest of the class that they needed help the first time they rode a bike and the teacher agrees that needing help while learning to ride a bike would have been an experience most would be familiar with. Zach nominates ‘learning how to fish’; Rebecca - trying/learning to walk; James – learning how to fix cars; and Josh – doctor looking after him in hospital. Mrs. Stephens then asks if anyone has any “...stories about something that happened when you could/should have asked for help but didn’t?” Answers are quickly provided and I only catch Chris’, which involves getting hot stuff out of the microwave and burning himself. The teacher then reiterates that “It’s OK sometimes to ask for help. At school – remember the Bully Busters play? Sometimes it’s hard to ask for help if you are being bullied because you could be bullied more for ‘telling’ on them. But if we work together, bullying is easier to overcome.” Students are then asked to share with the person next to them 3 key words that they have highlighted on the worksheet. As students are doing this, Olivia shares a news story with Mrs. Stephens and she asks the class to listen so that Olivia can also share it with them. Olivia talks about a program on ACA involving a woman called Libby who can’t put on weight. Someone taped this interview and placed it on Youtube under the title of ‘The world’s ugliest woman.’ However, she overcame this and published a book entitled ‘Libby beautiful’ (Fieldnotes, Riverside School, 17 August 2010)

Here, students share personal experiences of times when they needed help and did/not ask for it. As the sharing of these stories (and the stories themselves) involves vulnerability and humility, it is encouraging to note that Mrs. Stephens mostly listens to rather than comments on student contributions. This “...requires a trust in that what students say has meaning for them and acknowledges that their significations might



signify differently for them than they do for us as listeners” (Todd, 2003, p.137). Having learned from Olivia’s story about ‘Libby,’ the teacher encourages the rest of the class to listen and learn from the story of an other who had the courage to overcome personal and public obstacles. Such listening is also necessary for being open to critique and transformation.

Critique particularly requires open dialogue where people feel safe enough to express or work through constructive criticism. As outlined in my theoretical framework, critique can be voiced through ‘parrhesia’ (Foucault, 2001) or the moral duty to speak the truth, regardless of personal risk, in order to “...convince someone that he must take care of himself and of others; and this means that he must *change his life*” (p.106). In schooling contexts, students may risk punishment by critiquing or speaking the truth (from their own perspective) about social norms in order to encourage change:

During a PD/H/PE lesson on the qualities of friendship, Mr. Andrews explains patience as “Sometimes when I’m sick and tired or have a headache – I do not have any patience.” To which William adds “We know – we’ve been on the receiving end of that!” and Mr. Andrews replies “Fair enough” (Fieldnotes, Riverside School, 31 August 2010)

Not often are teachers open to critique by students but Mr. Andrews seems to accept William’s comment as true. As William and Mr. Andrews frequently engage in ‘humourous’ verbal spars (discussed in Chapter 7), Mr. Andrews may feel that in order to colloquially ‘dish it out’ he must also be able to ‘take it’ too. Further, as it is unclear whether the teacher intends to change as a result, the constructive-ness of this critique is brought into question. However, there are often times when critique is not as personal but involves the application of critical thinking to whole-class discussions:

Mr. Williams hands out a typed up draft of the *Class Wars II* story as it has been collaboratively written by the class so far. Students volunteer or are nominated to read a paragraph each. Other students say “Stop” and put their hands up to question grammar and/or offer editing suggestions (especially Mason). A few times during this group-editing exercise, students (especially Mason vs. Jared and Billy) debate the use of adverbs and past tense etc. (Fieldnotes, Northfield School, 22 June, 2011)

In this collaborative writing task, students are encouraged to engage in critical reflection, discussion and debate in order to take responsibility for editing their *Class Wars II* story.

As the writing process involves Mr. Williams drawing on student ideas to write the overall story; then it is his grammar, adverbs, tense etc. being called into question by students. Nevertheless, Mr. Williams seems open to student suggestions and "...a learning from the Other through which our own pedagogies might be put into question" (Todd, 2003, p.138). This openness to critical discussion is also evident in the following Christian Studies lesson:

Students have a Christian Studies lesson with Fr. Luke. He begins the lesson by asking students what they learnt last week. He instructs them to whisper to each other about it in groups and then a table leader can present the groups' ideas. Belinda makes an interesting point about God creating the 'big bang' (melding scientific and religious beliefs). Fr. Luke acknowledges that this might be the case and then clarifies that they were "Talking about how God was responsible for creation." He adds "Certainly the world wasn't created in 6 days. It was a story. Why do you think that story was told?" Students provide answers along the lines of "To show how powerful God is" and "To show God is the creator." Fr. Luke asks "What didn't God create?" and Vanessa replies "He didn't make our happiness." Fr. Luke acknowledges "That's very interesting – I've never thought of that before." Emma adds "He didn't make us do things – we can decide" and Fr. Luke is very impressed.

...

When discussing the differences between animals and humans, Fr. Luke admits that he doesn't agree that only humans have emotions and asks how we might know that animals have emotions. Selene answers that if you treat a dog badly then they might be frightened or sad. Fr. Luke tells a story about a dog having emotions and wagging its tail because it was happy (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 23 February 2011)

While this critical discussion does not include whether or not God actually exists (which is taken as a given), Fr. Luke seems open to critical engagement with some traditional assumptions about creation and animals. He also seems open to listening, acknowledging and learning from student ideas – some of which he has apparently 'never thought of' before. The questioning of established truths and the "call for the institution of new norms" (Butler, 2005, p.24) that are more inclusive (Butler, 1997) are among the main aims of critical and/or social justice pedagogies (Cherien, 2008; Giroux, 2010; Griffiths, 1998; Todd, 2003). As a pedagogy of alterity, critical inquiry involves "moving students beyond valuing self and embracing the meaning and realities associated with others" (Cherien, 2008, p.291) and "...[taking] responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit" (Giroux, 2010, p.194) in order to work towards "...both individual and collective wellbeing" (Griffiths, 1998, pp.66-67).

### **8.3 Concluding comments**

Ethical responsibility requires maintaining alterity or otherness 'as other' without reducing it to the sameness of the self. Pedagogies of alterity seek to welcome and accept the uniqueness and humanity of each individual student in order to learn from their diverse perspectives and experiences. The responsibility to welcome and learn from the other 'as other' may require emotional labour (including love, care and guilt) and open dialogue (through confession, listening and critique). Emotional labour and open dialogue are necessary for creating and sustaining relationships; and such relationships between self and other are necessary for ethical responsibility to be possible.

While teachers may refer to emotional labour as 'emotional intelligence,' or passion and commitment to 'care-for' others and 'give back' to the community, it seems difficult for them to maintain unconditional relationships with students without expecting some conformity in return. Such expectations of conformity do not support the open discussion or negotiation required for ethical deliberation and responsibility. Although there is a notable absence of formal class meetings in all three schooling contexts, more informal instances of open-dialogue are evident when teachers unconditionally listen to student confessions and constructive critique.

Pedagogies of alterity involving ethical considerations of the other are often rhetorically acknowledged by educators. However, in practice this is often constrained by expectations of conformity that reduce the other to the same and pedagogies of control used to enforce such conformity. The resulting tensions, contradictions or mixed-messages make it difficult for students to comprehend and navigate their 'responsible' subjectivities in meaningful ways. The negotiation of such contradictions by students throughout the process of becoming responsible is explored in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 9: BECOMING RESPONSIBLE**

As discussed in the preceding chapters, it is evident that upper-primary students receive often contradictory messages on how and why they should be responsible in schooling contexts. On the one hand, students are expected to unquestionably follow rules and teacher directions or face the 'consequences.' On the other hand, they are expected to have the agency to 'take responsibility' for themselves and be open to taking responsibility for others. While students are sometimes given formal and informal opportunities to take up such positions of agency and alterity; these attempts are often thwarted by the deeply embedded threat and continued application of pedagogies of control. Thus far, the ethnographic data analysed has focused on student *experiences* of responsibility as observed during fieldwork and justified by principals/teachers in individual interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a space for student *understandings* of responsibility as they are specifically voiced by students in focus group discussions. Here, my particular interest is to explore how students negotiate contradictory discourses of responsibility in order to become 'responsible' subjects.

As outlined in my theoretical framework, *becoming* a responsible subject is a *continual process* involving the negotiation of social norms, work on the self and relations with others. The discursive production of subjectivities, according to Foucault (1977, 2002), involves the normalisation of 'truth claims' to which the self must accordingly be subjected, constituted and measured. Similarly, Levinas (2006a) suggests the universal or social laws that "govern[] the other's winks and smiles" (p.20) are drawn on by institutions "empowered to judge" (p.198). In other words, those in positions of authority mandate the laws that govern the human population. These social norms or laws condition the 'intelligibility' (Butler, 2004, p.45) of the subject; and their ritualistic repetition 'performatively' (Butler, 1997) reinforce certain subjectivities and stereotypes. Thus, what constitutes 'responsible' studenthood is not pre-determined but rather socially defined and reinscribed. In neoliberal times, subjects are not only expected to construct their subjectivities according to social norms; they also have a civic duty to continuously 'work' on themselves by taking more responsibility for their own attitudes, behaviour, learning and wellbeing. This means that students are increasingly being called upon to ensure that their 'techniques of self' (Foucault, 2000) are aligned to neoliberal discourse in order to render themselves intelligible to self and other.

Our relation to others therefore plays a pivotal role in becoming a responsible subject – particularly an *ethically* responsible subject. Becoming an ethically responsible subject requires a continual response to the needs of self and other in ways that seek to avoid or minimise harm. In terms of responding to the needs of the self, it is theorised that ‘care for self’ (Foucault, 1984b) through ‘self-mastery’ (Foucault, 2000) may prevent the abuse of one’s power or freedom at the expense of the other (Coelen, 2007; Wain, 2007). However, there is no guarantee that care for self will extend to care for others – particularly in situations of ethical dilemma whereby remaining unconditionally open to the alterity of the other may prove to be more difficult. Nevertheless, an ethically responsible subject is *dependent* on the other who not only incites self-examination, confession and critique (Foucault, 1993; Butler, 2005); but also dispossesses and forms the self through an overwhelming address or demand to take responsibility for the vulnerability of the other (Levinas, 2006a; Butler, 2005). For Butler (2005), this other includes “...the other in its singularity...but also [] the social dimension of normativity that governs the scene of recognition” (p.23). As the self is constantly shaped in relation to the other and social norms, then from a Foucauldian perspective “...reflexivity, self-care, and self-mastery are all open-ended and unsatisfiable efforts to ‘return’ to a self from the situation of being foreign to oneself” (Butler, 2005, p.129). Similarly from a Levinasian perspective (albeit with a preontological emphasis), “...‘self-recurrence’ is infinite, can never be accomplished, and takes place at an an-archic level, permanently prior to conscious reflection” (Butler, 2005, p.129). Thus, the process of becoming an ethically responsible subject requires a continual and often tenuous relation between the self and the other. As Butler (2005) notes, “...our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of *becoming* human” (my emphasis – p.136). What follows is the analysis of how students understand and negotiate contradictory discourses of responsibility including biological determinism, duty/obligation, conscience, choice, and alterity, in the process of becoming ‘responsible’ subjects.

### **9.1 ‘So you can’t blame us then?’: Responsibility and discourses of biological determinism/escapism**

Responsibility is often understood by students as a quality constrained by biologically determined factors including instinct, ‘type’ of personality, gender and developmental maturity. These understandings frequently echo the views of teachers, principals, and society at large. Since the mid-twentieth century, the notion that prenatal hormone exposure determines gendered patterns of desire, personality, temperament and cognition has become increasingly popular in scientific and mainstream culture (Jordon-Young, 2010; Spurgas, 2011). More recently, scientists in the field of evolutionary neuropsychology claim that “[g]ender identity (the conviction of belonging to the male or female gender), sexual orientation (heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality), pedophilia, sex differences in cognition, and the risks for neuropsychiatric disorders are programmed into our brains during early development” (Bao & Swaab, 2010, p.550). Although most studies testing prenatal hormone exposure have been found to lack the necessary levels of rigor, reliability and validity (Jordon-Young, 2010; Spurgas, 2011); their ‘results’ can nevertheless be used to ‘biologize’ (Caporael & Brewer, 1991, p.2) or ‘normalize’ (Foucault, 1977, 2002) stereotypes and discrimination based on gender, race, and sexuality (Jordon-Young, 2010; Spurgas, 2011). As “...people tend to feel a lesser responsibility to redress inequities attributed to biology than inequities that arise from defects in policy, law, or social structure” (Caporael & Brewer, 1991, p.2 – drawing on the work of Lambert, 1987); then discourses of biological determinism can also undermine the agency and responsibility of students who may believe they are limited (or excused) by biological or developmental factors beyond their control. My analysis will focus on how sex/gender and maturity are understood as biologically determined factors that impede or facilitate the process of becoming responsible.

#### *9.1.1 Sexed/gendered notions of maturity as a requirement for responsibility*

While the conceptual distinction between sex and gender initially offered a challenge to gender stereotypes, the insistence that sex remains biological and the ‘real’ cause of behaviour, falls back into the trap of biological determinism (Butler, 1990; Davies, 1989, p.8). From a poststructuralist perspective, subjects are ‘a shifting nexus of possibilities’ (Davies, 1989, p.12) and sex is another cultural construction. According to Butler (1990),

“...gender is the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive,’ prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts” (Butler, 1990, p.7). However, such conceptualisations remain difficult to accept for many in the scientific community and society at large – to the point where “[a]lthough biologists have now found that genetic, hormonal and genital sex are not necessarily linked, there is still a lot of popular science around that not only links them together, but further links brain structure and behaviour in the everyday world” (Davies, 1989, p.8). For example, Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic (ENA) Theory (Ellis, 2011), Hemispheric Brain Dominance Theory (Mikkelsen et al., 2006; Vlachos & Bonit, 2006) and Empathizing-Systemizing (E-S) Theory (Baron-Cohen, 2005, p.23) continue to reinforce binaries of male/female in stereotypical ways.

In a class full of students – some of whom are described by their teacher as ‘strange’ characters (see Chapter 4) and ‘strong personalities’ – such gender stereotypes are particularly utilised in order to justify the distribution of effort grades in student reports:

I enter the Yr 6 classroom and Mrs. Jenkins is in the middle of a talk about maturity and the effort grades for reports and parent-teacher interviews. She says something along the lines of “Boys mature later than girls – physically, emotionally and also mentally.” Toby interjects with “So you can’t blame us then?” which the rest of the class laughs at while many turn to look at me and I smile back. Mrs. Jenkins replies “No – it’s up to you to make up the gap. Some of you have very strong personalities that you could be using to be good role-models – but sometimes you do the opposite. You could be Batman and Robin but end up being Penguin or the Joker... Know what I mean?” Most of the students make “Mm” noises in agreement. Mrs. Jenkins explains that in terms of effort, girls are way ahead of the boys in this class and that is why she has had to use a different scale for each gender (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 1 April 2011)

Similar views on the disparate maturity of male and female students are further expressed by Mrs. Jenkins during the course of her interview; as well as other teachers interviewed in a study conducted by Allard (2004). Such views reinscribe the normative belief that female students are more responsible for self and other than their male counterparts (Lewis, 2001; Romi, Lewis & Katz, 2009; Scales, et al., 2000). Mrs. Jenkins’ overall assumption that ‘boys mature later than girls’ draws on discourses informed by neurobiological sex differentiation that warrant further critique. Some argue that the

notion of sex differences of the brain originated in opposition to the women's suffrage movement (Fine, 2010). Others insist that it is based on 'unfounded assumptions' and 'premature leaps' (Jordan-Young, 2010, p.10) and is therefore a form of 'neurosexism' which reinforces cultural stereotypes (Fine, 2010, p.xxviii). Further, and contrary to the belief that cognition is biologically programmed or hard-wired (see Ellis, 2011); research has shown that the brain has plasticity, changes with each different activity it performs, and therefore shapes *and is shaped by* culture (Doidge, 2007). Thus, Toby's question 'So you can't blame us then?' is both understandable and challengeable. On the one hand, gender stereotypes purporting that girls *choose* to misbehave while "...boys are simply caught up in the tyranny of biology" (Allard, 2004, p.354) are deeply embedded in societal and educational contexts and may work to create immaturity on behalf of boys/males as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Pennycook, 2011, p.43). On the other hand, a biologically gendered 'gap' (Mrs. Jenkins) has not been reliably proven to exist and is therefore not a valid excuse for immaturity.

Nevertheless, neuroscientific notions of innately gendered brain difference as a determinant of responsibility are negotiated in the following all-male focus group with 4 of the most vocal and frequently chastised boys from Mrs. Jenkins' Yr 6 class:

**Aiden:** OK, boys' brain (indicates a small size with hands), girls' brain (indicates an exaggerated larger size with hands).  
**N:** OK – I don't think that's true...  
**Aiden:** And Mrs. Jenkins' is like um "Don't get distracted" and we're all just like laughing and laughing our heads off and yelling across the room and the girls are going "Shhh! Be quiet!" and then Mrs. Jenkins is like "The time is on" [minutes owed in lunchtime etc.]  
 ...  
**N:** Do you think it's really to do with brain size or...?  
**Some:** No...  
**N:** Something else?  
**Aiden:** It's the way we think about things.  
 (Everyone talking at once)  
 ...  
**Rory:** Coz sometimes, it doesn't matter what your brain-size is, it's just how you use your brain. Like, you could have a massive brain and have it like popping out your head  
**Scott:** Like Albert Eins  
**N:** Let him finish please Scott and then it's your turn.  
**Rory:** and you could be like really silly. And if you have a tiny brain like a two-year old, they could use it very well and be very sensible.  
 (Yr 6 focus group 2, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)



Aiden's assumption that girls' brains are bigger than boys' brains is not even supported by the neuroscientific research which asserts that boys' brains are 8-11% larger than girls' brains (Eliot, 2009). Nevertheless, he seems to be drawing on discourses that accept neurobiological explanations as 'truths' about the gendered subject. However, with further questioning, Aiden and Rory rethink this initial claim in order to suggest that it is rather 'the way we think about things' and 'how you use your brain' which determines responsibility. While it is unclear whether such processes are still assumed to be biologically programmed; the potential exists for understandings that are informed by discourses offering alternative explanations for the relationship between gender and responsible conduct. Such understandings may then work toward dismantling the gender stereotypes so deeply embedded in school contexts and society at large.

However, the current authority of these gender stereotypes and the teachers who perpetuate them means that they are more likely to be discursively taken up and reflected in students' own understandings of responsibility:

**Candice:** OK, well um, uh...sometimes boys are not responsible because boys tend to be – like what Mrs. Jenkins was saying the other day – they tend to mature later than girls. And so, the boys – it's often – when you see – like last night I was watching the news and like a person got cranky coz they were kicked out of a pub and then they like hurt someone, they put people on fire

...

**Candice:** And you don't – you don't often see the girls getting kicked – well they obviously get kicked out but you don't see them coming back and trying to get back in and being really aggressive.

**Toby:** (Laughing) My sister did that – she set off the fire escape alarm!  
(Everyone laughing and talking at the same time)

**Toby:** (Laughing) They went through the fire escape door

**All:** (Laugh)

...

**N:** Yeah so just one thing – do you think though – coz we were saying, coz some people were saying that boys generally aren't as responsible as girls because of their maturity. But do you think that's always the case?

**All:** No

(Everyone talking at once)

**Stephanie:** Not when they get older.

**Candice:** Not necessarily.

...

**Stephanie:** Because when they're older, um *men* are usually, um, able to  
(starts to laugh) chainsaw stuff and things that have to be disposed of...

(Yr 6 focus group 3, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

Here, Candice explicitly refers to the comments made by Mrs. Jenkins on the assumed disparate maturity of boys and girls. She also draws on media/news representations of pub violence to explain that males are more innately aggressive and are therefore less mature and responsible than females. A significant body of research demonstrates the extent to which discourses that essentialise violence as innately biological operate in educational settings to “...take the responsibility for violence away from the perpetrator” (Mills, 2001, p.57). Attitudes such as ‘boys will be boys’ (Allard, 2004, p.354; Dalley-Trim, 2006, 2007; Mills, 2001, p.65; Robinson, 2005, p.27) excuse rather than offer alternative expectations and consequences for boys’ aggression and violence in schools. As Mills (2001) points out, while “...the primary perpetrators of rape, ‘domestic’ violence, incest, war, environmental vandalism, and other crimes of violence have been men” (p.53); the link between violence and masculinity is not innately ‘natural’ but is rather “...a social and political project that has served to protect male interests” (Mills, 2001, p.58). This will be explored further in Section 9.4.2 in terms of the perceived inevitability of physical fights and self-defence amongst males.

While females are predominantly constructed by society as more vulnerable than males (Butler, 1999[1990], 2004; Renold, 2006; Youdell, 2005) and more prone to engage in ‘gossiping’ and ‘bitchiness’ (Gonick 2004; Ringrose 2006) than physical assault; men’s rights groups are “...beginning to argue that women can be just as violent as men” (Mills, 2001, p.63). The media has reported a rise in female violence where ‘girl power goes wrong’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2010) can result in ‘schoolgirls gone wild’ (Noone, 2010) and more recently ‘girls behaving badly’ (Jackson, 2011). Such sensationalist headlines (and the distortion and exaggeration of the stories that follow) work to perpetuate a rising ‘moral panic’ about contemporary versions of femininity in what could be described as a backlash against feminism (Barron & Lacombe, 2005; Luke, 2008). While such reports often draw on crime data and ‘expert’ testimony to legitimate the claims made within; statistics are often skewed through inflation, manipulation and uncritical application (Barron & Lacombe, 2005; Luke, 2008). In fact, many criminologists and/or researchers argue that the increase in female arrests for violent crimes is more reflective of changes in youth/criminal justice systems, practices and policies rather than actual changes in girls’ behaviour (Barron & Lacombe, 2005; Luke, 2008). For example, there has been a dramatic increase in females being arrested for defending themselves against domestic violence because such behaviours have been relabelled in laws and policies as assault

(Luke, 2008). In disrupting and shifting gender norms and the 'patriarchal social order,' alternative femininities become 'scapegoats' who are blamed for any feelings of anxiety or insecurity experienced by broader society in an unstable, changing world (Barron & Lancombe, 2005, pp.64, 65). So, while violence as an 'enactment' (Luke, 2008, p.47) of dominant masculinity is predominantly accepted as a social norm; the same cannot be said for females who are instead pathologised and sensationalised for similar behaviour.

Thus, there is a need to theorise violence beyond such a comfortably accepted alignment with masculinity (Luke, 2008); as predispositions towards violence (and irresponsibility) may 'not necessarily' (Candice) be determined by sex or gender. This is further supported by Toby (the only boy in this particular focus group) who explains that his sister – a female – has forcefully re-entered a pub through a fire escape door. When asked if it is always the case that girls are more responsible than boys; Candice and Stephanie revert to a different discourse of masculine strength whereby older, mature *men* undertake heavy/dangerous/unpleasant tasks which are not considered the domain of the feminine. Such comments imply a normative continuum in which immature aggression and violence are at times seen as a precursor to more mature/patriarchal/productive strength and prowess. The emphasis on hard physical labour as 'men's work' is particularly pronounced in places 'beyond the metropolis' where "...true blue' Aussie blokes" are said to reside (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody, 2006, pp.3, 66). Greenvale City is one such place where working on the land remains a key industry and it is not unusual to see men with sun-burned faces enjoying a beer and a laugh with their mates after a 'hard slog' that 'separates the men from the boys.' Meyer (2009) similarly notes how self-control and endurance (as perceived requirements of maturity) have historically separated men from boys in times of war. However, 'growing up and getting more mature' is also understood by students as necessary to the process of becoming responsible regardless of sex or gender.

#### *9.1.2 'Growing up and getting more mature': Aged notions of responsibility*

The idea that maturity and/or responsibility 'naturally' increase with age in a slow or stage-like process is supported by most cognitive-developmentalists including Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg (Allard, 2004, p.356; Rowe, 2006; Vlachos & Boniti, 2006). Kohlberg (1973, 1976), for example, proposes three levels of moral development: the 'pre-

conventional’ where the focus is on individual needs and avoiding punishment; the ‘conventional’ with an emphasis on fitting in with social norms; and the ‘post-conventional’ which is based on universal rules about right and wrong, self-sacrifice for the interests of society, and is only achieved by very few adults (as cited by Duffield & McCuen, 2000, p.80). Such notions of age-dependent maturity are also iterated by teachers in schooling contexts, as evident in the following example:

Mrs. Stephens introduces the PD/H/PE unit/lesson on ‘Growth and development.’ She reminds students that they have had a letter sent out to parents so that they know what is going to be covered in this unit each week. She warns students “You either approach these lessons as mature Yr 5 people or little kids. Hands up little kids?” No-one raises their hands, so she continues “Right, so we are all mature Yr 5 people.” She further asks, “Remember how we were talking about sex and how sex isn’t bad, but it can be bad if it is used in a bad way?” and asks students if they have discussed the content of the letter/note with their parents (Fieldnotes, Riverside School, 17 August 2010)

Given the threat of ridicule for being a ‘little kid,’ it is not surprising that none of the students in Mrs. Stephens’ class nominate themselves as such. Rather, it seems that students have no choice but to be ‘mature Yr 5 people’ – even though there may in fact be “...gaps or discrepancies among different aspects of maturity” (Galambos et al., 2003, p.253). According to behavioural development research, not only are there ‘interindividual’ differences between similarly aged students in levels of biological, social and psychological maturity; there are also ‘intraindividual’ variations in each student whereby biological and/or social maturity may ‘lag behind’ or exceed psychological maturity (Galambos et al., 2003, p.253). Nevertheless, students reflect age-based notions of maturity as a determining factor of ir/responsibility:

**Elizabeth:** Um, well responsible means you’re growing up and you’re getting more mature...  
**N:** Yeah...  
**Elizabeth:** And it also means that you’re (ready) to do stuff by yourself – so that, yeah, so you don’t have to do it with other people...  
(Yr 5 focus group 5, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Elizabeth suggests that an increase in age correlates with an increase in maturity and responsibility. In contrast, Galambos et al. (2003) have found that “...the relation of maturity status to biological, social, functional, and parental correlates is not dependent

on chronological age” (p.262). Rather, it is suggested that opportunities for students to ‘generate their own reasons for pro-social behaviour’ (Rowe, 2006, p.524) and ‘critique,’ ‘protest’ and ‘resist’ authority (Adorno – in Adorno & Becker, 1999, p.31) are more likely to encourage autonomy, maturity and responsibility – regardless of age. As discussed in Chapter 7, students are more likely to be given opportunities that comply with rather than challenge the often excessive imposition of authority. As a result, students are more likely to feel that they *have to* rather than *want to* be responsible.

## **9.2 ‘We just have to’ be responsible: Duties, obligations and rules**

As particularly noted in Chapter 5 through the analysis of Australian education policy, it is evident that neoliberal and neoconservative agendas foreground the duty students have as ‘active and informed’ and ‘responsible’ citizens (MCEETYA, 2008, pp.9-10) to “be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment” (DEST, 2005, p.4). Such expectations are mirrored in the student welfare/discipline policies and pedagogies of Northfield School, Riverside School and Fairview School. In these settings, upper-primary students not only have a duty to uphold school rules; they are also required to be positive role-models for younger students through leadership roles including Buddies, Captains and/or Student Representative Council (SRC) members. While most male and female students also mention the ‘chores’ they have at home as duties for which they are responsible, I will focus on the duties that students undertake in their schooling contexts. These duties carry with them a sense of obligation rather than ethical deliberation and ‘optional choice’ (Rowe, 2006, p.523 – drawing on the work of Haste, 2001).

According to Foucault (2002), such obligations stem from power relations where those who have power “act upon the action of others” and those who are acted upon have freedom to act but only within a constrained ‘field of possibilities’ (p.341). Pastoral power particularly involves social obligation whereby the individual educated subject is “...positioned as a member – as a body part – of the social matrix...desir[ing] what is best in terms of social wellbeing” (Fendler, 1998, p.58) and “...can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality [is] shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns” (Foucault, 2002, p. 334). Levinas (2006a) similarly acknowledges the

power of such universal and social laws. However, his main thesis is that ethical responsibility is not a choice, decision or initiative; rather, that “attention to the suffering of the other” is an “**inescapable obligation**” (emphasis added – Levinas, 2006a, p.81). While the subject has obligated responsibility for the other, s/he also has infinite free will (Levinas, 1999) in how to respond to such demands – whether to heed or ignore, help or hinder, judge or forgive the other (Levinas, 2006a). Yet this will is not entirely ‘free’ in that it is shaped and constrained by discourse and social norms (Foucault, 2002; Butler, 2005).

### *9.2.1 Obey the rules or face the consequences*

As discussed in Chapter 6 on ‘pedagogies of control,’ it is expected that students obey school rules (usually pre-determined) and class-rules (sometimes collaboratively listed and agreed upon) or face the ‘consequences’ (a popular euphemism for punishment). When asked whether we always have the choice to be responsible, some students answered:

**Kimberly:** No. Because sometimes we just have to do as we’re told. Like, coz when you’re a kid, you have rules – which really sucks... But sometimes they’re for safety reasons.

...

**Celeste:** ...Usually you’re mostly responsible at school, but not at home that much – like me (laughs). And

**N:** So why do you think that is? Why do you think there’s a difference between home and school? OK, we’ll let Celeste finish and then we’ll go around (the circle).

**Kimberly:** Because at school you get on PD [Personal Detention].

**N:** Shh...

**Celeste:** Coz there’s teachers there and teachers can call your parents and it’s like (gulps). And then um, like you can get on PD and like, they yell at you and it makes you feel all weird!

...

**Robyn:** But our punishment in 5/6W is you have to be quiet or you’re sent on the green seat.

**Kimberly:** The bench. Yeah, if you talk while Mr. Williams is talking you get (melodramatically) ‘Sat on the bench!’ (chuckles)

...

**Robyn:** And um...and the punishments aren’t as bad at home as it is at school. (Yr 5/6 focus group 1, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

The justification of some rules for ‘safety reasons’ is also made by teachers in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, the times where ‘we just have to do as we’re told’ in Kimberley’s words ‘really suck’ because they allow for little or no agency to make decisions without fear of punishment. Although this group contains a mixture of students who are more (Kimberley) or less (Celeste, Robyn) likely to disobey rules and get into trouble; they all seem to agree that ‘the punishments aren’t as bad at home as it is at school’ (Robyn) where teachers can ‘yell at you’ or ‘call your parents’ (Celeste) and put you on ‘PD [Personal Detention]’ (Kimberly, Celeste). While yelling is said to have the effect of ‘mak[ing] you feel weird!’ (Celeste); it appears that being ‘sat on the bench!’ (Kimberly) is not taken seriously or subverted as a means of coercing student compliance with class rules. As Kimberley is often sat on the bench for being vocal in class, it may be that she has become desensitised to its original punitive purpose.

Yet such punitive ‘technologies of control’ (Foucault, 2002) including ‘panoptic’ surveillance and discipline/punishment (Foucault, 1977) may also be understood by some students as an effective way to govern or enforce the responsible conduct of their peers:

**Nathan:** What I reckon we should do is – we’ve been talking about this for ages but it’s never happened because no one’s wanted to do it – but we have the Food-Scrap Police, where we have cap-guns and if they go to put the wrong things in then we go off with our cap-guns.  
**William:** Cap-guns are illegal at school.  
**Nathan:** They are? Oh damn!  
 (Everyone talking at once)  
**N:** That’s an interesting idea Nathan but I don’t think it’s gonna happen...  
**William:** I’ve also got another one –  
**N:** OK, hang on – (to boys fiddling with/turning the audio-recorder around to people speaking) – just be careful not to press the buttons on the top there...  
**William:** We were gonna have a video-camera to watch every day and see who was putting rubbish in the food scraps bin.  
**Nathan:** And then we could fine their class by taking away 20 class points.  
**William:** Yeah!...  
 (Everyone talking at once)  
**N:** But do you think that would be realistic though?  
 (Mixed response)  
 (I ask them to stop moving the audio-recorder around)  
**Nathan:** If we find out whose putting it in, we (could) have like sort of a detention centre somewhere, where if you’ve been putting it in – you have to go over there to eat your lunch and you have to dispose of your waste properly and you have to sit there for all of first half (of lunch)...  
 (Garbologists, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Of course, this is just one of many other ideas (most of which are not punitive) expressed by the student-initiated Garbologist group to encourage responsible disposal of rubbish at school. Nevertheless, the proposed use of ‘cap-guns,’ ‘video-camera,’ ‘fines’ and a ‘detention centre’ to deter students from putting the wrong rubbish in the wrong bin is reminiscent of the ‘technologies of control’ (Foucault, 2002) or ‘pedagogies of control’ applied by principals/teachers and discussed in Chapter 6. Students are therefore drawing on punitive notions of how to regulate and govern the other that are deeply engrained in Australian political, public and educational discourse. The reference to ‘detention centres’ is particularly telling in this regard. Christie & Sidhu (2006) consider how the exclusionist, repressive and even violent treatment of refugee/asylum-seeker children is normalised and rendered invisible in the Australian context despite international human rights obligations and the negative physical, psychological, emotional, social and educational impacts on refugees. Butler similarly engages with such issues when she notes that refugees often find themselves in a state of ‘non-belonging’ (2007, p.7) and detainees (particularly those considered a threat to national security) are rendered ‘faceless’ (2004, p.73). To be a recognisable ‘face’ requires compliance and conformity to norms which upper-primary students are expected to model to the rest of the student body.

### 9.2.2 *Helping Kindergartens to ‘blend in’: Becoming responsible role-models*

As noted in Chapter 7, students have been found to nominate their parents (McClean, 2004; Perry, Nixon, Duffy & Robison, 2005 – as cited in Perry & Nixon, 2005), pop-culture idols (Carrington & Skelton, 2003) or peers (Ashley & Lee, 2003) as the most influential role-models. The importance of peer role-modelling in the process of becoming responsible is particularly noted by upper-primary students in the following comments:

**Tanya:** I think responsibility means being a good role model and showing people what’s best and stuff. And pretty much exactly the same as Fleur’s.

...

**N:** ...OK, so we’ll move onto the next question, so, how do you think we know what is the most responsible thing to do?

...

**Tanya:** By watching other people and what they do. Like when you’re little kids (Anita makes noise and N tells her to shoosh)

**Tanya:** When you’re little kids and you see the school captain or something and they’re, I don’t know, picking up rubbish or something like that – you think “Oh that’s helping – I’ll do that as well.”



**N:** Yeah. And that links in with what you were saying about um, being role-models and stuff.

**Tanya:** Yeah.

...

**Tanya:** Coz in Yr 6, we're the leaders of the Junior School and people look up to us – like our Kinder buddies and people on our lunch table and stuff like that – if we're doing the right thing, like getting the cloth and...

(Everyone talking at once)

**Tanya:** And making sure there's no elbows on the table and yeah...

(Yr 6 focus group 1, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

For Tanya, being responsible is closely tied to 'being a good role model' and 'showing people what's best.' However, what is 'good' and 'best' is discursively constituted by those in positions of dominance or authority who determine "...what counts as true" (Foucault, 2002, p.132). The power behind such truth claims works to normalise them as standards or norms that condition the 'intelligibility' (Butler, 2004, p.45) of the subject. In other words, students will only be recognised as 'responsible' if they conform to socially accepted norms. The idea that students come to know what responsibility is 'by watching other people and what they do' implies an understanding of social learning beyond mere biological determinism (discussed previously). As Butler (2005) notes, "[o]ne enters into a communicative environment as an infant and child who is addressed and who learns certain ways of addressing in return" (p.63). Upper-primary students are therefore expected to 'responsibly' model normative modes of address for their peers through formal roles such as Buddies, Captains/Leadership Team, and the SRC. I will focus on how the formal role of 'Buddy' is understood and experienced as a responsible duty by upper-primary students.

Two out of the three participating schools have a formal Buddies system in place. The Buddies system at Riverside School involves a partnership between Yr 5 and Kindergarten students and is discussed retrospectively with students in Term 3 after its implementation in Terms 1 & 2. The Buddies system at Fairview School<sup>5</sup> involves a partnership between Yr 6 and Kindergarten students and is both observed and discussed with students during its implementation in Term 1. Although a formal Buddies system is absent at Northfield School, students still discuss responsibility in terms of being a role-model for the 'Kindies':

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<sup>5</sup> Fairview School also has a Peer Support program involving K-6 groups led by Yr 6 students. However, students had not yet experienced this program at the time of interview.

**Celeste:** Well, coz you're the leaders of the school, the Kindies think "Oh – look at the big girls helping that little kid" and...

**N:** Uhuh

**Kimberly:** Maybe we should be more like that.

**N:** Alright, thanks Celeste – so sort of being a role-model for the younger kids?

**Celeste:** Yeah.

**Robyn:** Yeah – I was going to say "be a role-model"

(Yr 5/6 focus group 1, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

The majority of students interviewed were keen to talk about their responsibilities as a 'Buddy.' Such responsibilities included helping Kindergarten students to make friends, comforting them, mediating fights/bullying and teaching them school rules and expectations:

**Mia:** We played with them all of the first week – when they came, because they didn't really know anybody and we had to introduce them to people...

...

**Mia:** Coz if we see them upset or something we run up to them and go "Oh, what's the matter?" and stuff...

...

**Mia:** ...And then like, we dealt with it and then at the end she said – Charlotte told her to go up to her and say "I'll invite you to my party but as long as we can be friends" and then they said that and then they hugged and when off and played...

(Yr 5 focus group 2, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

**William:** Well, with my buddy – coz James and I had paired up with Mike and I was away for half the term and James didn't look after him and Mike started to get in trouble a lot. And then when I turned up I was making sure he stuck with me so he knew what was right and wrong and that. And when I saw this other kid, who just left her buddy alone – I came up and said "Do you wanna stick around with me?" so she wasn't all alone and that...

**N:** Aw.

**William:** 'Til she made more friends.

(Yr 5 focus group 3, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

**Hayden:** Um, by teaching them good manners and teaching them not to be silly and crazy.

...

**Scott:** Um, well you have to be responsible to maintain your buddy and keep them in good order.

(Yr 6 focus group 2, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

As noted previously, teaching Kindergarten students ‘right and wrong’ (William) and ‘good manners’ (Hayden) is discursively shaped by social norms that may differ from culture to culture and context to context. Nevertheless, there is an expectation that upper-primary students know which norms they are required to uphold and how they are to do so. Of particular interest here is Scott’s understanding that it is his responsibility to ‘maintain’ his buddy and ‘keep them in good order.’ Such comments are reminiscent of the ‘pedagogies of control’ applied by educators to shape the conduct of students in particular ways (as discussed in Chapter 6). However, while Scott recognises the expectation placed on him to look after and keep his buddy under control; he does not seem to equate this with role-modelling self-control and conformity to school rules and norms through his own conduct. There are many instances where Scott actively resists such rules – whether this involves calling out in class, mock-throwing boulders at senior-school cross-country students, or standing on the table during his focus-group discussion in the library. As Adorno (in Adorno & Becker, 1999) notes, “...in the very concept of role itself, which is after all taken from the theatre, the individual’s non-identity with himself is maintained” (p.27). Therefore, Scott seems to find it difficult to continuously *act* as a ‘responsibly’ obedient and conforming role-model for his peers. For example, during ‘Buddy’ time one Friday afternoon in the Kindergarten classroom:

Caleb and Scott’s buddy stands up and flexes his muscles and Caleb encourages him by saying “Yeah – flex your muscles” etc. They ask their buddy if he’s watched The Wiggles and he hesitates but then says “A bit” then adds “I hate The Wiggles!” They then ask if their buddy has seen *The Exorcist* and he asks what that is but they say “Don’t worry about it.” At some point the Kindy tells Scott to “Stop being silly” (Fieldnotes, Fairview School, 4 March 2011)

In this role-reversal, it is the Kindergarten buddy who tells Scott to ‘stop being silly.’ On the one hand, this banter indicates a gendered power struggle over the social hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity (Mills, 2001; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Willis, 1977). This is also evident in the flexing of muscles and denouncement of infantilising shows like The Wiggles. On the other hand (and as discussed previously), it seems that age may not necessarily determine the social/psychological maturity required for responsibility and non-‘silly’ness.

Despite the potential for such power struggles, most upper-primary students describe buddying as an enjoyable experience where they feel needed and trusted to help their buddies acclimatise to the schooling environment:

**Fleur:** They come to you for help.  
**N:** Yeah? And so how does that make you feel?  
**Fleur:** Good coz...you know that they can trust you.  
(Yr 6 focus group 1, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

**Luke:** Yeah, um, well when I first got my buddy I was pretty happy that, you know, I had a bit of a responsibility and could help a Kindergarten, you know, start to blend in in this place. But, it didn't actually turn out to be that great because my buddy actually wanted someone else...  
(Focus group 4, Riverside School, Term 2010)

While Fleur feels 'good' about buddying because of the 'trust' that it confers; Luke is initially 'pretty happy' to have the responsibility to help his Buddy 'blend in' with the social norms of the school (despite the fact the he – like Scott – is frequently in trouble for not conforming to such expectations). The buddy programme is therefore not only about helping new Kindy students adjust to school; it also works to teach upper-primary students how to be responsible and sympathetic to the needs of others. Such programmes draw on 'pastoral power' (Foucault, 2002) through self-knowledge and 'techniques of self' (Foucault, 2000) in order to encourage individuals to govern themselves in ways conducive to 'social wellbeing' (Fendler, 1998, p.58). Upper-primary students are therefore expected to learn and practice responsibility in order to feel good about benefitting the school community. Nevertheless, Luke's initial enthusiasm for buddying becomes tainted by rejection. Other male students from this year group express similar difficulties, particularly with female buddies. In such cases, these buddies are apparently swapped around by the teacher – usually resulting in same-gendered pairs and the consequent maintenance of male/female duality (Connolly, 1998; Davies, 1989, 1993; Kehily, 2002; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills, 2001; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Youdell, 2006).

Regardless of whether or not there is a need to swap, there are times when the role of Buddy becomes less enjoyable and more of an obligation. For example, most students express that they often feel obliged to give up playing with their own friends in order to play with or look after their buddies:

**Luke:** And another thing is that if you have the responsibility with a buddy you also might not get a chance to play with your friends that often.  
**All:** Yeah!  
**James:** That's the big...!  
**N:** Yeah so that is a big thing?  
**All:** Yes, yeah etc...  
**Luke:** Yeah so you have to look after someone else, and yet, you might not even want to be with him or her.  
**N:** Mmhmm. So how would that make you feel then if you were kind of torn between your friends and looking after your buddy? What would you tend to choose anyway – between... well... what would you choose most of the time?  
**All:** Friends.  
**Luke:** Friends probably, but that's probably the hardest part of being responsible.  
**James:** Yeah it's choosing...  
**Luke:** Yeah and actually doing what you're meant to be doing and looking after the buddy.  
**N:** Mmm. Yeah that's very true...So you kind of have to make sacrifices  
**Luke:** Yeah – exac(tly)...  
 (Focus group 4, Riverside School, Term 2010)

According to Luke and James, the choice between playing with friends and looking after buddies is 'the hardest thing about being responsible.' So while upper-primary students have an 'inescapable obligation' (Levinas, 2006a, p. 81) to attend to their buddies; they also have infinite free will (Levinas, 1999) in how they choose to respond. However, as this will is shaped and constrained by discourse and social norms (Foucault, 2002; Butler, 2005); then upper-primary students may feel pressured to do what they are *meant to* be doing in terms of fulfilling their duties. This pressure or direction is often referred to as 'conscience.'

### **9.3 'Your conscience telling you': Knowing good from bad, right from wrong, and responsible from irresponsible**

According to Butler (2005), the Nietzschean notion of 'bad conscience' involves turning against, punishing or berating the self for assumed causal wrong-doing through the internalisation or inversion of the subject's rage, aggressive impulses and spontaneous will; in order to produce a reflexive, moralising, and negatively-narcissistic subject who "recoils from the other, from impressionability, susceptibility, and vulnerability" (pp.99-100). Butler (2005) further notes that Foucault and Levinas understand the emergence of

reflexivity or conscience in ways different to Nietzsche. For Foucault, subjects are constituted in relation to codes of morality or codes of conduct where “...reflexivity emerges in the act of taking up a relation to moral codes, but it does not rely on an account of internalization or of psychic life more generally, certainly not a reduction of morality to bad conscience” (Butler, 2005, p.16). As noted in my theoretical framework, ‘pastoral power’ as a form of governmentality “...implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault, 2002, p.333) particularly through ‘techniques of self’ whereby subjects are “...tied to [their] own identity by a conscience of self-knowledge” (Foucault, 2002, p.331). Furthermore, Foucault’s later work on ethics suggests that “[t]he self’s reflexivity is incited by an other, so that one person’s discourse leads another person into self-reflection. The self does not simply begin to examine itself through the forms of rationality at hand” (Butler, 2005, p.125). For Levinas, subjects are constituted by the address of the other and therefore “...responsibility does *not* emerge as a self-preoccupation or self-beratement, and it requires recourse to an understanding of the ethical relation to the Other that does not rely on causal links between doer and deed” (Butler, 2005, p.85). Thus, these theorists understand reflexivity or conscience as incited by the other.

When asked ‘how do we know whether we’re being responsible or not?’ some students nominated their ‘conscience’ as something that ‘tells’ them what is the good or bad, right or wrong, responsible or irresponsible thing to do:

<p><b>N:</b> ...So, how do we know whether we’re being responsible or not?  <b>William:</b> Well, you can sorta tell with your conscience telling you sort of, and...  <b>Nathan:</b> (Or will-power...?)  <b>William:</b> Yeah, like Aaron – he – whenever like he and someone else gets a lolly, everyone just gobbles it up straight away but he...  <b>Ryan:</b> Saves it.  <b>William:</b> ...saves them for later...  <b>Ryan:</b> He’s got a bag full of them  (Focus group 3, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)</p>
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William’s explanation that we know ir/responsibility through ‘your conscience telling you’ implies that the conscience belongs to the subject. However, it is unclear whether this conscience is perceived to exist within the subject as an inner voice or outside the subject as an external influence. Both internal and external influences are discussed by students as informing their understandings of responsibility.

Although most students do not use the terminology of 'conscience' they still describe rational thought, feelings and memories of past experiences as internal signposts that guide their decisions and actions:

**N:** Mm, yeah. Well they're some really good examples, thanks Bradley. But I guess my – a further question to do with that would be: how do we know what's the difference between right and wrong?

**Bradley:** Wrong is kind of like bad and you can kind of figure it out. Like chucking your friend with a broken arm into a bin is kinda bad!  
(Laughing in background)

**N:** Why bad though? Shh – let him finish please.

**Bradley:** (Giggling throughout) Because the first thing – they've got a broken arm. And the second thing – they'll starve to death. And the third thing is they'll...get dehydrated to death. And the fourth thing is if, if they don't get out in time, they'll get chopped up by the garbage truck (laughs)...

(Yr 5 focus group 3, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

Bradley suggests that 'you can kinda figure out' the difference between right and wrong and rationalises that 'chucking your friend with a broken arm into a bin is kinda bad' due to a number of possible (though extreme) consequences which he then proceeds to list. However, the highly unlikely example Bradley provides combined with his giggling throughout suggests that he is in fact subverting the rationalist discourse rather than reiterating it as a valid way to know the difference between right and wrong. 'Transgress[ing]' (Foucault, 1984a, p.45) the limits of such deeply engrained discourses can enable a consideration of different and/or alternative possibilities and perspectives. For example, other students describe affective responses and memories of past experiences (rather than rational thought) as cues for what they should do:

**Celeste:** Um...when you do something wrong, you kind of get a feeling like a butterfly and – in your butt (giggles). Well that's what I get.

**N:** OK, well there you go...

**Nicole:** In your butt?!

**All:** (laugh)

**Celeste:** A little 'zing' in my butt – like "Oh, I'm gonna get in trouble..."

**N:** Oh OK...

**Kimberly:** My butt hurts so I did something wrong.

**All:** (laugh)

**N:** I'm sure it's different for everyone – or similar...

**Celeste:** And um, so...You might not – sometimes you might not think you're doing something wrong but you actually do – like you don't know that you're actually doing it wrong. So, you just keep doing it coz you don't know that it's wrong.

**N:** Yeah, that's right, that's right. And so how would you find out that it was wrong?

**Celeste:** Um, that you get in trouble. So it's a lesson learnt.  
(Focus group 1, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Similar to some of the previous comments made about 'gobbling' lollies (William) or dying from starvation, thirst or being shredded by garbage trucks (Bradley); Celeste's discussion of knowing right from wrong through feeling a 'butterfly' or a 'little zing in my butt' suggests that upper-primary students experience ir/responsibility in embodied ways. For these students, responsibility is not just about making rational choices (as advocated by their teachers, school discipline policies and dominant neoliberal discourses); it is more to do with an embodied sense of doing things that they *feel* to be right or wrong. From a Levinasian (2006a) perspective, the subject embodies the *a priori* or preontological call to respond to and thereby take responsibility for the other. As Butler (2009) notes, this "...responsiveness – and thus, ultimately, responsibility – is located in the affective responses to a sustaining and impinging world" (p.34). In other words, affective responses enable responsibility. However, "[o]ur affect is never merely our own: affect is, from the start, communicated from elsewhere" (Butler, 2009, p.50). Such 'elsewhere' or external influences on student understandings and experiences of responsibility include mandated norms and systems of reward/punishment that seek to encourage compliance (as discussed in Chapter 6) and/or reinforce what students may in fact already know about responsibility as embodied subjects. Celeste indicates an awareness of such external influences when she states that getting into trouble (by an adult) is 'a lesson learnt'.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, students negotiate competing understandings and discursive constructs of responsibility as either an internal, embodied knowing to which one responds; or as conforming to external pressures or norms. Such norms are understood by students as mandated by God or violated by the devil (or those who listen to the devil's incitements to do wrong) and/or as enforced by disciplinary practices and procedures.

Spiritual guidance on right and wrong is mentioned in two of the focus group discussions. Here, some students from the Independent School (with a Christian ethos,

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<sup>6</sup> Other students interviewed for this study also mentioned 'learning from mistakes' as a necessary part of becoming responsible.



weekly Chapel services and Scripture lessons) explain that God and/or Jesus would do the right thing and that the devil would do the wrong thing:

**N:** Right... OK, alright, thanks guys. Uh, Isaac and Aiden, did you have anything to add? So how do we know what responsibility is and how do we know what's right and wrong?  
**Isaac:** What would God do?  
**N:** Yeah, OK...  
**Aiden:** What would the devil do? He would go  
**Isaac:** He would do the wrong thing, so  
**Aiden:** (indicating to his shoulders) And God - so I have Jesus here and the devil here (inaudible)...  
**Isaac:** Follow God's path or something like that.  
(Yr 6 focus group 2, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

According to Isaac, we should ask 'what would God do?' and 'follow God's path or something like that' in order to do the right thing. Aiden draws on the popular depiction of the angel and devil sitting on either shoulder offering people good or bad advice (see Turner & Edgely, 1974). Similar beliefs are also expressed by another group in terms of avoiding the temptation of the devil:

**Blake:** Well if – you can tell the difference coz you, you know you're going to do bad but you really want to coz you know – something's tempting you...  
**N:** Yeah? Yeah...  
**Blake:** The devil!  
**N:** The devil – right...  
**Belinda:** Satan.  
**Blake:** The devil – he is evil! (starts whispering 'the devil is here' in a scary voice into the audio-recorder until I tell him to 'shoosh')  
**N:** (Laughing) OK, thanks Blake.  
...  
**Blake:** And then – yeah and irresponsible people don't think before they do. So like (in 'evil voice') they're Satan's little minions...  
(Yr 5 focus group 3, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

It seems important to add that throughout this interview, Blake frequently and gleefully recounts giving in to the temptation of pulling the heads off his sister's Barbie dolls regardless of her feelings and his eventual punishment by their parents. Further, his theatrics in the excerpt above suggest that he finds the whole idea quite amusing rather than serious. Nevertheless, his assertion that 'irresponsible people don't think before they do' and are therefore 'Satan's little minions,' requires serious consideration. The

need for responsible people to ‘think’ alludes to the postmodernist/poststructuralist need for critical thinking or ‘critique’ (Foucault, 1997, 2001, 2002; Butler, 1997, 2005, 2009) in order to avoid mindless/blind obedience to dogma. As history has shown, dogma may be (mis)appropriated to excuse or punish irresponsible behaviour; such as acts supposedly committed via temptation/possession by ‘the devil’ (Ballard, 1990; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003); or religious warfare ‘in the name of God,’ including the Nazi persecution of Jews, or the more recent suicide bombings by Islamic extremists and the consequent war against ‘terror’ in general and ‘against Islam’ (Butler, 2009, pp.27, 153) in particular. Here, the normative frames through which we perceive others as un/grievable may be used to justify the preservation of some lives at the expense of others (Butler, 2004) while failing to recognise our interdependence and ‘shared precariousness’ (Butler, 2009, p.43). However, such abstract justifications may prove to be more difficult in a ‘face to face’ (Levinas, 2006a, p.9) relation with the other who stands before us in all their vulnerability and demands a non-violent response.

Therefore, student knowledge of right and wrong is also said to be shaped by interactions with beings of a more immediate and physical nature including elders, parents and teachers. In the school context, teachers are often considered authorities on such matters:

**N:** ...So how do you think we know what is the responsible thing to do?

**Chris:** Well, because, like the teacher or someone’s told you ‘Don’t do that coz that’s the wrong thing’ so that’s the wrong thing.

(Focus group 4, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Here, it seems that Chris either accepts the teacher’s word as unquestionably accurate; or alternatively alludes to the power behind such ‘truth claims’ (Foucault, 2002) where those in positions of authority determine what counts as right and wrong. As noted in Chapters 6-7 on pedagogies of control, agency and alterity; teacher views on ir/responsible conduct are sometimes hypocritical, often idiosyncratic, and usually aligned to the rules of the school and society at large. Such rules are also said to inform our conscience or sense of right and wrong:

**Jodie:** Well I have a couple of reasons why. Firstly, there's um, there's rules made for that purpose – to, like – if we know the rules, we know what's wrong and right...

**N:** Yep...

**Jodie:** But, um, and sometimes there isn't rules. But then, say if you do something, you sort of, if you're already older you know what's right because you've sort of – it's just coz you're responsible at that age. And also, you sorta feel good when you do something good and you feel bad when you do something bad. So you sorta know and things like that...

(Yr 5 focus group 2, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

Similar to Chris' comment on teacher authority, Jodie's assumption that 'if we know the rules, we know what's wrong and right' implies an unproblematic alignment between rules and ethics. As particularly noted in Chapters 6-7, some rules are excessively controlling and therefore diminish the agency required for ethical responsibility. However, Jodie also suggests that 'sometimes there isn't rules' and that in such instances age/maturity and feeling good or bad play a greater role in knowing right from wrong. Clearly evident here is the tension between a rational, externally imposed responsibility involving adherence to rules; and an internal, embodied responsibility involving affective responses to the preontological call of the other.

As rules are socially constructed, then sometimes it is not so much a matter of having no rules at all, but that these rules differ from context to context in ways that make determining the difference between right and wrong and ir/responsibility more complex:

**Rory:** But you don't really know what's right and wrong

**Scott:** Yeah, other people think

**Rory:** because there is no right and wrong.

**Hayden:** Yes there is!

**Aiden:** That's what you – yeah there is...

**Rory:** There is but...

**Hayden:** No, *some* people (looking pointedly at Scott) don't *choose* the right thing!

**N:** (laughs)

**Rory:** Straight line. There's no actual mark where there's – between wrong and right.

**N:** OK...

(Aiden: Well there is! Say this is right and)

**N:** And why isn't it though. So if that's what you're saying, why isn't there though?

**Rory:** Because, um...no-one's bothered to

**Aiden:** make that line.

**Rory:** Make that line, yeah.  
**N:** OK, alright, fair enough...  
**Rory:** That didn't make sense did it?  
**N:** No [it did], so you're saying – so Hayden's saying that, that  
**Scott:** Coz why stay on that side of the line if someone's watching?  
**Hayden:** Scott – shut up!  
**N:** Shh...so Hayden's saying that we know what's right and wrong kind of by our conscience, but also Scott and Rory are saying that it might also depend on the context and the culture that you're in at the time. Is that what you're saying?  
**Aiden:** Like the Indonesian Government and all of the people who have to wear the stuff [burqa etc.] on their head.  
 (Yr 6 focus group 2, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

Given the conflicting messages on responsibility students often receive at school, it is not surprising that Rory particularly feels that the 'line' between right and wrong is not very clear. This is further complicated by cultural difference for which Aiden provides an example in the form of 'the Indonesian Government and all of the people who have to wear the stuff on their head.' On the other hand, Scott's comment 'why stay on that side of the line if someone's watching?' suggests that the line is still visible enough for one's position on either side to be under 'surveillance' (Foucault, 1977). In fact, Hayden maintains that right and wrong do exist but that '*some* people don't *choose* the right thing!' However, students are more likely to experience 'pseudochoice' (Kohn, 2006[1996], p.48) where choices must align with teacher/school expectations or else result in punishment. Nevertheless, when complicated by contextual factors and ethical dilemmas, such choices may not always be so easy.

#### **9.4 'Getting into trouble either way': Navigating ethical dilemmas and making choices**

As outlined in my theoretical framework, the attribution of power has, over time, shifted from God and monarch to rational individuals capable of governing themselves (Biesta, 2008; Deacon, 2002; Fendler, 1998; Raffoul, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003; Youdell, 2006a). In today's neoliberal context, the subject is increasingly designated power of choice, particularly in terms of market consumption (Rose, 1999). In fact, individuals are "...obliged to construe a life in terms of its choices, its powers, and its values" (Rose, 1999, p. 231). In the field of education, students and teachers continue to be depicted in modernist or liberal humanist terms as "autonomous individuals with varying degrees of

freedom to choose what kind of person to be” (Davies, 2006, p.425). Yet this freedom of choice is actually a constrained ‘contract for freedom’ (Rose, 1999a, p.261) as the onus is shifted from the state onto individuals who are expected to take responsibility for themselves by making choices that align with social goals and values – particularly those of the multiple communities to which they belong (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). Thus, power of choice is frequently an illusion in the normative classroom where unequal power relations between student and teacher coercively shape the choices students can actually make.

According to Foucault (2002), productive power or governmentality works to delimit rather than determine the subject’s actions and choices. Power relations, embedded “...deep in the social nexus, not a supplementary structure over and above ‘society’” (Foucault, 2002, p. 343), involve those empowered to “act upon the action of others” (Foucault, 2002, p. 341) and those who are acted upon. Those who are acted upon (namely students) do have the freedom to act but only within a constrained ‘field of possibilities’ (Foucault, 2002, p. 341). From a Levinasian perspective, while the subject has obligated responsibility for the other/s, they also have infinite free will (Levinas, 1999) in choosing whether to heed or ignore, help or hinder (Levinas, 2006a) the other in all their vulnerability. Similar to the Foucauldian (2002) subject’s struggle against ‘subjection’ and ‘imposition’ by others and social norms (pp.331, 336); the Levinasian (2006a) subject may struggle between taking responsibility for the other or refusing this responsibility – the “suffering of compassion” (p.92) and any anxiety arising from it – in favour of ‘self-preservation’ or ‘self-defense’ (Butler, 2005, pp.92, 95; 2009, p.43). Like Levinas, Butler depicts this relation to the other as an ethical ambivalence or struggle between heeding and ignoring the call of the other (Butler, 2004; Thiem, 2008). Any difficulties that arise in taking ethical or moral responsibility are often referred to as ethical or moral dilemmas. In such situations, choices may be limited and unable to completely satisfy the needs of self and other (Clark Miller, 2011) – as noted in the following excerpt:

**N:** ...So...do we, do we always have the choice to be responsible?

**All:** Yes!

**N:** Do we?

**All:** Uh/Aw...

**William:** No sometimes you don’t!

**Nathan:** Sometimes not.

...

**Nathan:** Sometimes...to be responsible and irresponsible, I've got two – like in the thing [scenario] you gave us before to spark our minds and that...about Phil and the orchard and that. I reckon he didn't have a choice but he would've been responsible whichever one he chose – coz he'd be doing one thing right and then the other thing wrong.

**Matthew:** He'd be doing both things wrong...

**N:** But you were saying before that it'd be better to walk home alone than go – than trespass...

**Nathan:** Yes, but some – like if you – depends what type of person he was...He could've chose to walk alone and not go in the orchard like you said, or he could go in the orchard with his friends – either way, he'd be going with his friends and not walking home alone or he could be walking home alone and not trespassing. So, he has a choice to do the right or the wrong thing so either way he's responsible or irresponsible.

**N:** Yeah OK, fair enough...

**Blake:** But he's still going to get into trouble (either way)...

(Focus group 3, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Although students initially agree that 'we all have the choice to be responsible,' with further questioning they begin to consider that 'sometimes you don't.' In the excerpt above, Nathan explicitly refers to one of the fictional scenarios I created/read about a boy named Phil who has to choose between taking a detour with his friends through an orchard with a 'trespassers will be prosecuted' sign or walking home alone against his parents wishes. As Nathan notes 'either way he's responsible or irresponsible' and in Blake's words 'he's still going to get into trouble either way.' As the researcher shapes the research context, data and analysis (Youdell, 2006); then it is important to acknowledge that the scenario I provided may have led students to conclude that either choice Phil made was going to be a wrong choice. Nevertheless, a wide range of other ethical dilemmas are brought up by students themselves in order to further explain how and why becoming responsible is not necessarily a straightforward process. Some of these dilemmas have already been discussed in terms of choosing between playing with friends or looking after Kindergarten 'buddies;' and resisting or giving in to temptation. Other dilemmas raised by students include choosing between: effort and laziness; fun and boredom; developing resilience or giving up; giving into fear/blackmail or being courageous. The students' discussions of peer pressure and self-defence provide particularly interesting examples of what they see as ethical dilemmas impacting on 'responsible' choices.

9.4.1 'Everybody else was doing it – would they join in or would they not?':

*Peer pressure to be ir/responsible*

During fieldwork at Riverside School, the participating Yr 5 class began a PD/H/PE unit on 'peer pressure.' While I observed one or two lessons on this topic, I was absent for one of the more memorable activities explained in the following way:

**Ava:** Yesterday at school we sort of had a little like, test – coz some people went to the Welsh Choir and Mrs. Stephens told us to um, like she would turn around and write something on the blackboard and we would have to pull faces behind her...And a couple of people joined in, and a couple of people didn't join in...and it was all about responsibility and feelings of who...  
**Charlotte:** Yeah that was about...peer pressure...  
**Ava:** Yeah peer pressure. Like...everybody else was doing it – would they join in or would they not?  
**Olivia:** We just thought it was an activity and that it was fun...  
**All:** Yeah etc.  
**Mia:** Yeah and me and William just stopped and didn't do anything...and we were just like...  
**Ava:** And then Mia told Mrs. Stephens what we were doing.  
**N:** Yeah, so why didn't you want to participate in that kind of thing?  
**Mia:** Uh, because I knew it was wrong and um, I saw everybody else getting up and jumping around and stuff and we don't usually do that so I knew that it wasn't really an activity or anything because everyone was getting up, jumping around, pulling faces and stuff...  
**Olivia:** And when she turned around, we all just sat down.  
**Ava:** Yeah and then she (Mia)...  
**Mia:** Yeah and then I'm just like "Mrs. Stephens, why are they doing that?" and she's like "Doing what?" Then I just went "They're pulling faces" and she went "What faces?" and then I said "They're going like that and stuff" – coz they were going like this (pulls a face) and stuff...  
**N:** OK – so did you have an idea that you thought something was a bit strange and...  
**Mia:** Yeah kinda – coz everybody was doing it...For a minute I thought Rebecca might have set it up because she usually does funny things...  
(Focus group 2, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Although Olivia explains that 'we just thought it was an activity and that it was fun,' Mia and William apparently decide not to participate. Mia explains that she 'knew it was wrong' and therefore took responsibility to ask/inform Mrs. Stephens about what was going on behind her back. While this 'test' appears to be for the educational purposes of illustrating the power of peer pressure; students are still coerced into conducting an experiment on their Welsh Choir counterparts (without their consent). In the process, students are required to negotiate contradictory messages and double-standards on

ir/responsibility. On the one hand, students are expected to *responsibly* follow teacher orders in order to participate in an activity where the aim is to behave *irresponsibly* and pressure their peers to do the same. On the other hand, those who succumb to this peer pressure risk public embarrassment and censure as exemplars of irresponsibility – even though such conduct is authorised and encouraged by the teacher for experimental purposes in the first place.

Alternatively, students may feel embarrassed when they resist peer pressure in order to ‘do the responsible thing’:

**Blake:** Well sometimes when I do the responsible thing I feel like embarrassed...  
**N:** Mmm...  
**All:** Why? etc...  
**Blake:** Because...  
**Matthew:** Because your friends are watching.  
**Blake:** ...say I’m like, picking up papers, picking up papers and sometimes some people don’t and like...  
**N:** Or do they look or something – look at you strangely?  
**Blake:** Well sometimes they do and then (they say) “Oh no” and because, coz I might be – I’m doing the right thing they’re like [rolls eyes] and all that...  
...  
**Matthew:** Yeah and he was calling me a ‘Goody two-shoes’  
(Focus group 3, Riverside School, Term 3 2010)

Blake explains that he sometimes experiences peer derision for ‘doing the right thing’ and/or ‘picking up papers’ on the playground. His apparent conformity to school expectations of neatness means that he risks being perceived as a ‘goody two-shoes’ (in ways similar to Matthew’s experience of conforming to parental expectations of doing chores before playing with his brother). As most young men and women continue to define themselves in opposition to each other and along heterosexual lines (Connolly, 1998; Davies, 1989, 1993; Kehily, 2002; Mac An Ghail, 1994; Mills, 2001; Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Thorne, 1993; Youdell, 2006); then normative, dualistic good-girl/bad-boy stereotypes work to discursively inscribe good deeds as the domain of the feminine and therefore as “potentially emasculating experiences” (Kehily, 2002, p.208). Instead, dominant constructions of masculinity emphasise power and dominance over public space, femininity, and alternative versions of masculinity (Davies, 1989) – often through violence, sexual harassment, misogyny and homophobia (Mac An Ghail, 1994; Mills, 2001; Walkerdine, 1990). Thus, males may feel



pressured to prove their masculinity through 'showing off,' being 'all tough and buff,' and getting into 'fights':

**Jennifer:** Like all the Yr 5 boys – coz they show off and they think they're all tough and buff  
**All:** (laugh)  
**Kimberly:** They do though – they think they're so tough coz they're  
**Jennifer:** Coz they can play footy and soccer in front of all the girls and that.  
**N:** So this is Yr 5 boys – not so much the Yr 6 boys?  
**Jennifer:** Yr 6 boys are actually more responsible  
**Kimberly:** No, I reckon the Yr 5 boys are – coz the Yr 6 boys are always in fights.  
**Jennifer:** Yeah – so are the Yr 5's  
(Focus group 1, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Like the secondary school girls interviewed by Mac an Ghaill (1994), Jennifer and Kimberly are particularly aware and critical of the 'hyper-masculinity' (p.135) displayed by the boys at their school. Such views are similarly expressed across all three schools. Nevertheless, it seems that peer validation and fear of failure and subordination are major incentives for 'performing' such hegemonic masculinity (Robinson, 2005, p.22 – drawing on Butler, 1994) – particularly as the status it confers is fragile and requires constant signification (Mills, 2001). Those who fail to continuously prove this masculinity through violent, misogynistic or homophobic means are likely to experience 'boundary policing' (Mills, 2001, p.4), 'category-maintenance work' (Davies, 1989) or 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993) in order to pull them back into line. This peer pressure can involve teasing or more serious forms of verbal/physical intimidation and is likely to occur in informal sites, such as playgrounds, which often serve as 'battlegrounds' for gaining or defending reputations (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p.127). Such battles and the ethical dilemmas they entail can make becoming 'responsible' an ever confusing and challenging task.

#### *9.4.2 Fighting back or being a 'wimp': Self-defence, retaliation and revenge*

According to Kenway et al. (2006) "...one of the main sources of anxious pleasure for young males is the fighting that goes on between cool and other packs" (p.166). Some of the same Yr 5/6 boys referred to by Jennifer and Kimberly in the excerpt above are particularly interested in discussing the apparent inevitability of fights and the need for self-defence:

**Mason:** Like when you're on the playground and like people are teasing you, or like hitting you – do you like hit or tease them back or do you tell the teacher?

**N:** Mm, mm...

**Jared:** Bit hard if you can't stop them...

**N:** So how do you decide then? What to do?

**Mason:** Well deciding is hard. But, if you want to stand up for yourself, you're probably gonna get in trouble. And if you tell the teacher, then they're [other students] gonna think you're like a wimp or something.

...

**Jared:** I don't care what the teachers say, if you tell on people, you're the one always getting on PD [Personal Detention] and not them – even though they started the fight! If you don't tell, you can just bash the crap out of them and not get in trouble and then they do. So, either way it's a win or lose.

...

**Jared:** And the teachers always say "Why don't you come to me earlier?" Well it's a bit bloody hard when they're doing this (demonstrates being held down) to ya!

**All:** (laugh and join in)

**Jared:** It's a bit hard to say "Oh – can you please stop for a sec. I'll tell the teacher and then I'll come back to this position and you can continue. And then we'll both get on PD or you might even get a chance to get off. Wanna do that?" "Oh yeah – sure!" (further demonstration of continuing the fight)

**All:** (laugh and join in)

**N:** Alright, good examples. Shh...

(Everyone talking at once)

**Jared:** That's all that happens though. I shouldn't probably be interrupting but like, if you're fighting someone – like no-one really deserves it – but if they're doing it to you, you've got your right to self-defence

**Evan:** Yeah

**Jared:** To do it back to 'em.

(Yr 5/6 focus group 3, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Martino (2003) particularly notes how some boys deliberately provoke or 'fire up' other boys to the point of reactive/defensive violence. For Mason, the first choice to be made is whether to: 1) 'stand up for yourself' and risk getting in trouble by the teacher; or 2) 'tell the teacher' and risk getting called a 'wimp or something' by peers. In such situations it seems that being 'macho' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p.56; Martino, 2003, p.164) by engaging in fights is preferable to being called a 'wimp' (Mason) for not doing so. Jared further adds that telling the teacher still involves the risk of 'getting on PD [Personal Detention].' According to these students, either decision is likely to result in teacher punishment so 'either way it's a win or lose.' Students are therefore receiving contradictory messages about handling fights in a 'responsible' manner. Jared goes on to explain that sometimes it seems as if there is no choice but to exercise 'your right to self-defence.' Nevertheless,

'bash[ing] the crap out of' an adversary seems like an excessively violent way to end a fight. As Butler (2005) notes "[m]any atrocities are committed under the sign of a 'self-defense' that, precisely because it achieves a permanent moral justification for retaliation, knows no end and can have no end" (pp.100-101).

According to Sommers (2009), "[r]etaliatio[n] cannot undo the harm committed by the offense and it often comes with a significant cost or risk. Yet every known culture features retribution in some form, as well as norms and beliefs that govern and justify retributive behaviour" (p.37). For example, 'honour cultures' such as mafia and gangs place normative pressure on the wronged individual to personally avenge themselves in order to save their reputation and deter future offences (Sommers, 2009, p.39). In such cultures, retaliation or revenge may not only be aimed at the offender but also their relatives and associates (Sommers, 2009, p.42). On the other hand, 'institutionalised cultures' place a normative focus on the offender who is 'culpable' and consequently 'deserves' to be punished (usually by a third-party) in order to deter future transgressions (Sommers, 2009, pp.40, 42). In other words, "[h]onor cultures have a diminished notion of deservingness, and what appears to be a vastly stripped down control condition, which institutionalized cultures consider to be the very essence of moral responsibility" (Sommers, 2009, p.48). Some male students appear to be a part of honour cultures with an emphasis on power in numbers and physical intimidation to even 'proactively' (Mills, 2001, p.52) scare off enemies and defend reputations:

**Evan:** That's what happens in football. Say like – say I get in a fight and then like, people on your team come in and like you could get your whole team sent off. And then, but, I reckon it's better off to do it because like, if you beat the crap out of them, then um, they'll get scared of ya and they'll tell all their friends and then they won't want to like try and verse us and then I might have to give them a bit of the power (flexes his muscles)

**All:** (laugh, giggle etc.)

...

**Jared:** They got all their friends to gang up on us when there was only three of us and we were playing our own little game. And that just means that you're a weak little bugger and you need your friends!

(Yr 5/6 focus group 3, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

According to Evan and Jared, male team-members or friends 'gang up on' opposing sides in order to 'beat the crap out of them' and make them 'scared of ya' so that 'they won't want to like try and verse us.' While Jared suggests that ganging up on people 'means that

you're a weak little bugger'; Evan sees such situations as an opportunity to 'give them a bit of the power' and thereby prove his masculinity. Sport, or more specifically football, works to valorise the status of this 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995) by glorifying physical strength, speed, aggression, violence and domination (Bhana, 2008; Keddle, Mills & Mills, 2008; Kenway et al., 2006; Martino, 2003; Mills, 2001; Robinson, 2005). This is especially relevant for males like Evan who live 'beyond the metropolis,' as "[t]he kudos associated with sport, and football in particular, in non-city localities makes it an important social structuring device" (Kenway et al., 2006, p.181).

Nevertheless, other students from the same focus group suggested that violence through self-defence or retaliation is not the only option for a 'strong man':

**Kyle:** I think that you should do the safe and trustworthy thing. If you're in a fight there are three options instead of two. There's either: you get beaten up, or fight back, or you just walk away.  
**N:** Mm, mm...  
**Kyle:** But, I think walk away is best because it's the most safe and responsible thing.  
 ...  
**N:** So just wait – coz I have a follow-up question to that. So, do you think violence...  
**Jared:** Solves everything? No.  
 ...  
**Xavier:** If you are responsible, you care about others.  
**N:** Mm...  
**Xavier:** And there's a saying, um..."A strong man stands up for himself but a stronger man stands up for himself and others."  
 (Yr 5/6 focus group 3, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Kyle (a studious and relatively quiet boy) suggests that 'there are three options instead of two' with 'walking away' being the 'most safe and responsible' choice. According to Mills (2001), "[a] boy who is not prepared to engage in physical violence in order to stand up for himself is a popular target for abuse in schools" (p.69). While I did not observe such abuse directed at Kyle (perhaps due to his authority as one of the school leaders); this may not be the case for other students. Those who experience abuse for walking away may find that "...it is most difficult when in a state of pain to stay responsive to the equal claim of the other for shelter, for conditions of livability and grievability" (Butler, 2009, p.184). Therefore, walking away from a fight may actually be the 'harder' (Martino, 2003, p.166) or more 'brave' thing to do "...in the context of hegemonic cultures and the pack

logic of school cool” (Kenway et. al., 2006, p.169). Such constructions may work to encourage and support alternative, non-violent versions of masculinity (Martino, 2003; Robinson, 2005). While Jared seems to pre-emptively agree that violence does not ‘solve everything,’ the eventual reiteration of his argument for violent self-defence suggests that his comment is more of a rhetorical acknowledgement of the expected moralistic discourse. Xavier (a popular, polite, all-rounder) proposes that being a responsible, ‘stronger man’ means that ‘you care about others’ and stand up for others as well as yourself. While ‘standing up for’ may involve defending a cause, the emphasis on ‘care’ for the other implies that such a defence need not be violent. Drawing on Levinasian theory, Butler (2005) notes that:

Violence is neither a just punishment we suffer nor a just revenge for what we suffer. It delineates a physical vulnerability from which we cannot slip away, which we cannot finally resolve in the name of the subject, but which can provide a way to understand that none of us is fully bounded, utterly separate, but, rather, we are in our skins, given over, in each other’s hands, at each other’s mercy. This is a situation we do not choose. It forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility (p.101)

Xavier’s construction of responsible masculinity as a protective force suggests that ‘slipping away’ (in Butler’s words) from the vulnerability of others is simply not an option. Instead, a ‘strong man’ must be strong enough to remain open to caring for others (victims as well as perpetrators) even when “...responding to the ‘face’ of the other feels horrible, impossible, and where the desire for murderous revenge feels overwhelming” (Butler, 2005, p.92). In order to respond ethically to the vulnerability of the other, the subject must “let the other live” (Butler, 2005, p.43) by “giving the other priority over oneself” (Levinas, 2006a, p.93). It is to this prioritisation of other that I now turn in terms of student understandings of responsibility.

### 9.5 'Responsibility is like being selfless': Welcoming, listening to, and forgiving the other

As noted in Chapter 3, Foucault's (1993) later work on the 'hermeneutics of the subject' goes on to acknowledge an ethical dependence of the self on the other who 'incites' (Butler, 2005, pp.125, 127-129) self-examination, confession and critique. Foucault (1993) describes confession-to-the-other as a form of 'sacrificing' (pp.220-221) or substituting the particular/inward self through movement into the social/outer sphere. Such an outward movement allows the self to 'test' the accuracy and understandability of their account in dialogue with the other and social norms (Foucault, 2001, p.101; Butler, 2005, p.131). The possibility to test, resist or 'transgress' (Foucault, 1984a, p.45) the limits of self and normalising discourse can enable a non-indifferent and non-reductive encounter with otherness – including marginalised otherness often brought about through binaries and categories (Hofmeyr, 2005). Both Foucault and Levinas insist on maintaining alterity or otherness 'as other' without reducing it to the sameness of the self (Levinas, 2006a, p.150; Hofmeyr, 2005, p.247). For Levinas (2006a), the subject is open, exposed and vulnerable to the 'astonishing alterity' (p.87) or 'infinite...unassimilable otherness' (p.50) of the other. Ethically responding to the other's unique experience and 'suffering' (Levinas, 2006b, p. 63) works to overwhelm and interrupt the self-centeredness of the subject to the point of substitution for the other (Levinas, 2006a, 2006b). Ethical responsibility as a matter beyond the self is understood by students in the following way:

**Xavier:** Um well summing up what I've learnt is that responsibility is basically based on trust. Um, and being irresponsible means you're selfish and that you care about yourself and not others.

...

**Kyle:** I think responsibility is like being selfless. Not being selfish like you do what you want and not what other people want. You have to be what other people want you to be.

**N:** Mmhm, mm...

**Kyle:** And being irresponsible is caring only about yourself and no-one else (Focus group 3, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

According to Xavier and Kyle, being responsible entails being 'selfless' rather than being 'selfish.' Being selfless is predominantly described by these students as caring for others. However, by further suggesting that selflessness involves doing what other people want and being what other people want you to be; Kyle alludes to self-sacrifice (Foucault,

1993) or substitution (Levinas, 2006a, 2006b) for the other. As noted previously, the words ‘have to’ signal a sense of obligatory responsibility for the other that is not without ethical ambivalence or struggle. Nevertheless, the entrance of the other “...ruptures a sense of unified being” and “...break[s] the solitude of being for the self” (Todd, 2003, pp.30, 36). The self then becomes open to moving beyond a relation of responsibility for self to a relation of responsibility for others. Similar to student *experiences* of ‘pedagogies of alterity’ discussed in Chapter 8, students also *understand* responsibility as welcoming, listening to and forgiving the other ‘as other.’

#### 9.5.1 Welcoming and listening beyond comprehension

A relation of ethical responsibility for others requires “welcom[ing] the unexpected and unknown” (Chinnery & Bai, 2008, p.239). Such a welcome involves accepting the uniqueness and humanity of each individual (Ruiz, 2004) and ‘learning *from*’ the other (original emphasis – Todd, 2008, p.171) who “...comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain” (Levinas, 2004, p.51). Being “absolutely different to myself” (Todd, 2003, p.15), this other cannot be completely recognised, known or empathised with (Jagodzinski, 2002; Todd, 2003) and therefore requires listening “beyond language, meaning, and comprehension” (Todd, 2003, p.130).

Two students at Northfield School are particularly mentioned in focus group discussions as others who are often teased about their personal hygiene (Michelle) or intellectual/physical differences (Jeffrey). The comments made about Jeffrey poignantly pertain to the importance of listening beyond comprehension in order to take responsibility for the ‘suffering of the other’ (Levinas, 2006b, p.63):

**Brett:** Yeah coz if he, like, if he yells – he doesn’t like yelling – coz it hurts his head. And he goes like this (demonstrates) and just covers his head and coz it stings. And like everyone just keeps talking when he tells them to be quiet, but no-one will just listen. So that’s when Mr. Williams comes in and snaps at everyone but they still don’t listen to Mr. Williams.

**N:** Mm...Why do you think they don’t listen?

**Brett:** Well because

**Tiffany:** Because they think Jeffrey’s really weird

**Joe:** A complete odd ball.

**Gavin:** Yeah coz they got attitude.

(Focus group 2, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Here, Brett describes the usual reaction of peers when Jeffrey attempts to teach them a new game. When ‘no-one will just listen’ (Brett) because they think Jeffrey’s ‘really weird’ (Tiffany) and ‘a complete odd-ball’ (Joe), Jeffrey apparently ‘yells’ in order to be heard – even though ‘it hurts his head’ (Brett). In such instances it seems that Jeffrey’s vulnerability and suffering are being ignored rather than heeded, and hindered rather than helped (Levinas, 2006a). Nevertheless, other peers may responsibly ‘listen’ to Jeffrey – even if what he says is beyond their comprehension:

**Celeste:** The other day when we were walking into class, Jeffrey said to me “Hey Celeste, do you want to hear something from my book that I’m reading?” and I said “Yeah, sure.” And me and Danielle were listening and it actually sounded like – in class we’re doing similes and all that poem stuff and it was one of them. And like, he’s really smart, but then he doesn’t look that well and  
**Danielle:** You can’t really hear him that well  
**Celeste:** He can’t run but he participates as much as he can and  
**Kimberly:** Yeah and like Mr. Williams said that he’s got a “You all know that he’s got something in his leg.” And at the athletics carnival, he was running – he didn’t stop – he kept running.  
**N:** He was trying his best. Good on him – yeah...  
**Jennifer:** He has autism so...  
**Kimberly:** Yeah – that’s it.  
**Jennifer:** He’s autistic.  
(Focus group 1, Northfield School, Term 2 2011)

Celeste and Danielle share that they have listened to Jeffrey read to them even though ‘you can’t really hear him that well.’ It is assumed that this incomprehensibility has something to do with Jeffrey being ‘autistic’ (Jennifer). Nevertheless, as Levinas (1996) explains, “[o]ur relation with the other (*autrui*) certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him, but this relation overflows comprehension...” (p.6). In other words, listening to the other ‘as other’ resists the violence of reducing the other to the same (Hofmeyr, 2005; Levinas, 2006a; Todd, 2003) by assuming to know or understand them in their entirety. As Butler (2005) notes, such knowledge of self and other is instead partial and opaque.

#### *9.5.2 Opacity, humility and forgiveness*

As noted in my theoretical framework, the ambiguity of responding to the other is further complicated through opacity of the self or “...that in me and of me for which I can give no account” (Butler, 2005, p.40) including idiosyncrasies, actions, unconscious associations,



attachments and desires which are never entirely in our control (Butler, 2005; Thiem, 2008; Todd, 2008). Such limitations are also understood by upper-primary students:

**Bradley:** You can, you can always be responsible and you always have the chance to be responsible. But there, there would be completely no-one in this world that would be responsible for everything they do, because sometimes you just wanna have some fun and it ends up with you being irresponsible, but you didn't see that in the first place so you did it.

**N:** Yeah.

**Bradley:** And, and you can't always be responsible but you always have the chance to be responsible.

**N:** Mmhm...

**Bradley:** So, really, the answer is 'yes' but in a way it's kinda 'no' because

**N:** Sometimes it's out of your control?

**Bradley:** Yeah, sometimes you don't really know until you've actually done it. So then you don't – you didn't really have the chance to be responsible when really you did. So it's kinda a 'yes and no' answer.

...

**Bradley:** Um, well like you should be responsible for the environment and you can't always be responsible for the environment because you're not always there to, to do it. Like, like you can't help it if like, if you're only one little kid and like, they're wooding [logging] like forests and stuff where animals live – you can't help the environment for that

(Yr 5 focus group 3, Fairview School, Term 1 2011)

Bradley's point that 'you should be responsible for the environment and you can't always' suggests a 'strangely innocent' (Butler, 1997b, p.108) guilt as the self is already 'late' and 'wanting' (Levinas, 1991, pp.87, 91) in its response to the other. So while Bradley may want to be responsible for the environment, he recognises that he is limited by a range of factors that are largely beyond his awareness or control. Such opacity is not only a "predicament of the human community" (Butler, 2005, p.83) but also effects "...relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life, broadly considered" (Butler, 2009, p.19). Humility and generosity are therefore necessary as "...I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are also constituted in partial opacity to themselves" (Butler, 2005, p.42).

Bradley's comments get right to the heart of the struggle students face in becoming responsible subjects – wanting to be responsible, not always wanting to be responsible, not always realising what would have been responsible until they do something irresponsible, wanting to act, realising that from the subject position of child

they may not be able to act even if they want to or think they should, and importantly, their optimism in recognising that there is always a chance to be responsible. Such understandings beautifully illustrate the tangle of what responsibility might mean for any of us given the contradictory discourses we negotiate in our everyday lives.

### **9.6 Concluding comments**

Engagement with focus group interview data suggests that upper primary students' understandings of responsibility are shaped through the negotiation of contradictory discourses including biological determinism, duty/obligation, conscience, choice, and alterity. Such understandings complicate the process of becoming responsible in ways that impact on student identity construction, orientations to learning, conduct and peer relations.

For example, students often echo the same sex/gender stereotypes voiced by educators and accepted by dominant society by claiming that females are more mature and responsible for self and other than males. Similarly, the notion that maturity and responsibility increase with biological age is also frequently mentioned. The continuation of such gender and age-based stereotypes particularly work to limit the possibilities of responsible identity construction and conduct. However, it is encouraging to note that upon further questioning and reflection, some students negotiate and resist such stereotypes by acknowledging that they are 'not necessarily' true. Such critical insights may empower students to take responsibility for self and other in ways not limited or excused by stereotypes.

Students also understand responsibility as involving a sense of duty or obligation where they *have to* uphold school rules and be positive role-models for younger peers – particularly in terms of conduct. While some students indicate that some rules allow for little or no agency to make decisions without fear of punishment; others suggest that the appropriation of pedagogies of control may enable them to help other students conform to school expectations. Although students predominantly enjoy undertaking the role of Buddy, there are times when they feel obligated to give up personal playtime in order to look after Kindergarten students. Nevertheless, such roles provide upper-primary students with opportunities to practice responsibility for others and construct themselves as 'responsible' subjects.

The pressure some students feel to do what they are *meant to* be doing is often referred to as 'conscience.' Students understand conscience as internally embodied and/or externally imposed. Rather than simply involving rational choices, responsibility is understood by students as an embodied sense of doing things that they *feel* to be right or wrong. Externally imposed norms and systems of reward/punishment seem to disregard such embodied responsibility by encouraging mere compliance and conformity. Nevertheless, internal and external influences are said to guide student differentiation between right and wrong and ir/responsible decision-making. However, some students believe that the 'line' between right and wrong is not always clear and can be further complicated by cultural difference and contextual factors that may make the navigation of ethical dilemmas and choices more difficult.

Peer pressure and self-defence are especially referred to by students as ethical dilemmas impacting on 'responsible' choices. Navigating such dilemmas is made even more challenging when students receive contradictory messages on what constitutes ir/responsibility from their teachers – for example, the authorisation of irresponsible conduct for experimental purposes. Male students are particularly concerned with how peers deride their efforts to be responsible and/or pressure them to prove their masculinity through physical fights. Alternatively, some suggest that it takes more strength to walk away from fights or to care and stand up for others. Avoiding violence and responding ethically to the vulnerability of the other therefore involves a selfless orientation.

Such an orientation allows the self to remain unconditionally open or responsive to alterity by welcoming, listening to and forgiving the other as other. Welcoming and listening to the other without comprehension or judgement is further complicated by the opacity of self or our idiosyncrasies, actions, unconscious associations, attachments and desires that are never entirely in our control and for which we may need to be forgiven. Thus, although students may at times feel overwhelmed and ill-equipped to be responsible subjects (particularly in light of the contradictory discourses they are required to negotiate); their hope and optimism that there is always a chance to be responsible may be supported by opportunities to practice such responsibility in the first place.

## **CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION**

‘Responsibility’ is a deceptively simple term which is readily taken up in a myriad of discourses. Many of these discourses align responsibility with obedience and conformity to rules and norms. For example, legal discourses define responsibility in terms of adherence to laws while political discourses stress citizenship and civic duty. However, some discourses of responsibility focus less on obedience and conformity and more on ethical deliberation. For example, ethical, environmental and social justice discourses emphasise the interconnectedness of all life and the necessity to *respond* to the needs of self and other in ways that minimise harm and avoid domination. Such responsibility requires the negotiation of a diverse and complex interplay of contextual factors – particularly in situations of dilemma where the ‘right’ decision may be ambiguous, opaque and unable to completely satisfy the needs of self and other.

Such ethical dilemmas are evident in the field of education where students engage with contradictory discourses on how and why they should be responsible. On the one hand, students are expected to demonstrate their responsibility by unquestionably obeying rules and teacher directions. On the other hand, students are expected to have the agency to take responsibility for themselves and to be open to taking responsibility for others. While students are sometimes given formal and informal opportunities to take up such positions of agency and alterity, these attempts are often thwarted by the deeply embedded threat and continued application of discourses/pedagogies of control. Such a threat is not only directed at students – educators also face institutional pressures to shape their pedagogies in ways that encourage conformity and control. Nevertheless, students must negotiate these contradictory discourses of responsibility so evident in education policy and practice, in order to work towards becoming ‘responsible’ subjects.

As analysed and discussed in Chapter 5, responsibility is conceptualised in contradictory ways within Australian education policy documents at the national, state and school level. There are constant tensions between or attempts to balance such binaries as: unity and diversity; conformity and freedom; responsibility for the other (including the community and environment) and responsibility for the self; obligation and altruism. While such policies attempt to incorporate notions of individual and collective responsibility in a meaningful way – particularly through an emphasis on ‘care’ for others and the environment – they problematically continue to align responsibility with

neoliberal discourses of productivity and accountability that depend largely on economic validation; and neoconservative discourses emphasising standardisation, conformity, discipline and docility through self-governance. While such policies shape the field of possibilities in terms of how 'responsibility' is to be defined, in everyday educational practice such definitions tend to be mediated through the pedagogies applied by principals and teachers in their respective educational institutions. The 'pedagogies of responsibility' applied in each of the three participating schools for this study include pedagogies of control, pedagogies of agency and pedagogies of alterity.

Pedagogies of control are the foci of Chapter 6, where the analysis of ethnographic observation and principal/teacher interview data from three school sites indicates that students are overwhelmingly expected to demonstrate responsibility by following in/formal rules and teacher directions. Whether student conduct is seen by principals and teachers as 'responsible' is largely determined through the monitoring of student attendance, location, behaviour, appearance and completion of work. Such surveillance takes different forms including spatial, embodied and disciplinary – although they often occur simultaneously. While most students shape themselves in ways that conform to teacher expectations and social norms (for which they are usually rewarded), there are times when some students resist this surveillance (despite the threat of punishment). Punishments and rewards are fundamentally similar in their conditional and coercive aim to manipulate and control behaviour and are prolifically applied in educational settings for such purposes. While educators themselves face pressures to keep their classes under control and therefore justify the application of such pedagogies as a means of providing a safe, supportive, and fair learning environment for their students; the controlling nature of such pedagogies actually works to undermine intrinsic or unconditional motivation and fails to provide the agency required for ethically responding to the needs of self and other.

Although pedagogies of control remain a predominant practice in primary school contexts, some teachers and principals also attempt to apply pedagogies of agency. As discussed in Chapter 7, such pedagogies aim to *work with* and empower students through negotiation/choice, positive role-modelling, humour, encouragement and opportunity. While the establishment of class rules and expectations at the beginning of the year may seemingly draw on student input through democratic means, the process remains somewhat conditional and coercive when teachers have the final say – rather than

allowing students to meaningfully create, define, justify, question, debate and negotiate the necessity and inclusivity of such rules and expectations. While most principals and teachers acknowledge the importance of role-modelling 'responsible' behaviour, their representations of role-modelling contain some degree of direct or indirect inculcation. Further, in practice the role-modelling offered to students is not always positive or responsible. For example, teachers may role-model (and therefore authorise) the humiliation of others through destructive humour. Tensions also exist between the encouragement and coercion of 'responsible' student dispositions and giving or withholding trust and opportunities for students to be responsible. So, while teachers and principals appear to be moving towards pedagogies of agency, any progress is often limited or hindered by the continuation of pedagogies of control. Furthermore, pedagogies of agency are not enough to support ethical responsibility which involves a relation with the other or alterity.

As noted in Chapter 8, ethical responsibility requires maintaining alterity or otherness 'as other' without reducing it to the sameness of the self. Pedagogies of alterity seek to welcome and accept the uniqueness and humanity of each individual student in order to learn from them. The responsibility to welcome and learn from the other 'as other' may require emotional labour (including love, care and guilt) and open dialogue (through confession, listening and critique). Emotional labour and open dialogue are necessary for creating and sustaining relationships and such relationships between self and other are necessary for ethical responsibility to be possible. Whether teachers refer to emotional labour as 'emotional intelligence,' or passion and commitment to 'care-for' others and 'give back' to the community, it seems difficult for educators to maintain unconditional relationships with students without expecting some conformity in return, as they also face institutional, collegial and community pressures to maintain control over their classes. Such expectations of conformity do not support the open discussion or negotiation required for ethical deliberation and responsibility. While there is a notable absence of formal class meetings in all three schooling contexts, more informal instances of open-dialogue are evident when teachers unconditionally listen to student confessions and critical discussion. However, such instances are rare and while ethical considerations of the other are often rhetorically acknowledged by educators – in practice, this is often constrained by expectations of conformity that reduce the other to the same. The

resulting tensions, contradictions or mixed-messages make it difficult for students to determine and navigate their 'responsible' subjectivities in meaningful ways.

In Chapter 9, through the analysis of student focus-group discussions, it is apparent that students' understandings of responsibility are shaped through the negotiation of contradictory discourses including biological determinism, duty/obligation, conscience, choice, and alterity. Students often echo the same sex/gender stereotypes voiced by educators and accepted by dominant society by claiming that females are more mature and responsible for self and other than males. Similarly, the notion that maturity and responsibility increase with biological age is also frequently mentioned. However, upon further questioning and reflection, some students negotiate and resist such stereotypes and acknowledge that they are not necessarily true. Students also understand responsibility as involving a sense of duty or obligation where they *have to* uphold school rules and be positive role-models for younger peers. Such duties may involve the appropriation of pedagogies of control in order to help other students to conform or may require giving up personal playtime in order to look after younger students. The pressure some students feel to do what they are *meant to* be doing is often referred to as conscience. Students understand conscience as internally embodied and/or externally imposed influences that help them differentiate between right and wrong and guide their ir/responsible decision-making. However, some students believe that the 'line' between right and wrong is not always clear and can be further complicated by cultural difference and contextual factors that may make the navigation of ethical dilemmas and choices more difficult. Peer pressure and self-defence are especially referred to by students as ethical dilemmas impacting on 'responsible' choices. Male students particularly describe how peers deride their efforts to be responsible and/or pressure them to prove their masculinity through physical fights. However, some suggest that a 'stronger man' cares about and stands up for others in ways that prioritise the other over the self. Such an orientation is required for remaining unconditionally open or responsive to alterity by welcoming, listening to and forgiving the other as other. In dialogue with such discourses, students continuously work towards becoming 'responsible' subjects.

The main limitation of this study is one of scope. While providing an overview of US and UK education policy pertaining to responsibility, my analysis centres on the discourses of responsibility evident in Australian education policy and school contexts. A more in-depth engagement with international discourses of responsibility – including UN

Human Rights policy – could prove an interesting area for future research. Another issue of scope involves the selection of schools based on school system, year-level and geographic position. On the one hand, while data is generated in a state school, an independent school and a Catholic school in order to develop a broad picture of the diverse ways in which primary school students learn about responsibility for self and other; such breadth does not allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how responsibility is understood and experienced by students in schools from the same sector. On the other hand, the selection of students from the same upper-primary year-levels does not take into account how responsibility is understood and experienced by students from a broader range of age-groups. Further, the selection of schools from the same regional setting does not allow for the exploration of how responsibility is understood and experienced in rural and metropolitan contexts. Therefore, focusing further research on one sector and/or a range of age-groups and geographic settings would provide further insights on how responsibility is understood and experienced in education. Another limitation of this study involves the method of ethnography. As noted in my methodology chapter, whatever the ethnographer writes about/for others is only ever a representation and is therefore inevitably partial, constructed and non-neutral. Further, the selection of excerpts from an extensive corpus of data is inevitably shaped by the subjective processes, political orientations and research interests of the ethnographer. Therefore, throughout my methodology and analysis chapters I make a conscious effort to contextualise participants' words/actions and reflexively acknowledge how my own presence may have shaped the interactions recorded and analysed.

The implication of this study for the field of education is that there is an urgent need for policy-makers, educators and students to engage in critical thinking and open dialogue about responsibility in ways that unconditionally *welcome* and *learn from* others and their diverse array of perspectives. As Ladwig (2010) notes, “[t]he question is not whether or not schools will use and make power but in what ways and for whom” (p.137). Policy-makers need to critique how the neoliberal discourses of productivity/accountability and neoconservative discourses of standardisation/conformity embedded in education policies do little to encourage altruistic or unconditional forms of responsibility but rather work to reinforce the expectation that teachers have ‘control’ over their students. Educators especially need to critique the pedagogies of control that they continue to apply in schools and classrooms



in ways that undermine opportunities of agency required for students to take responsibility for themselves and others. Educators also need to find ways of contesting the constraints that institutional and policy pressures bring to bear on their everyday pedagogies, in order to create possible alternatives that are more conducive to student responsibility in its fullest sense. Students need to be provided with meaningful opportunities to critique some of the gendered misconceptions about responsibility being more 'natural' for females so that violence and irresponsibility do not continue to be excused as 'naturally' masculine traits. Engagement in such critique at all levels may encourage a deeper awareness and commitment to positive change in the name of social justice.

Recommendations for further research therefore include: the analysis of international education policies involving responsibility in order to support a more nuanced understanding of the global context; conducting ethnographic fieldwork in schools from one school sector (i.e. state, Catholic and independent) and/or expanding the scope to include a wider range of age-groups and geographic settings; purposefully selecting schools that are well-known for programs encouraging student responsibility for self, other and environment; and working with educators and students to create, implement and critically reflect on the effects of such programs in schools (similar to Mills, 2001).

If students are not provided with the agency and support they need in order to take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment; then they are at risk of becoming dependent on the validation of authority figures and discourses that emphasise obedience and conformity. While students negotiate and often resist such discourses in their everyday schooling experiences – this is often done subversively in order to avoid punishment. Instead, students need to be provided with genuine opportunities to engage in critical and open dialogue so they can feel confident that their voices will be unconditionally welcomed, listened to and respected.

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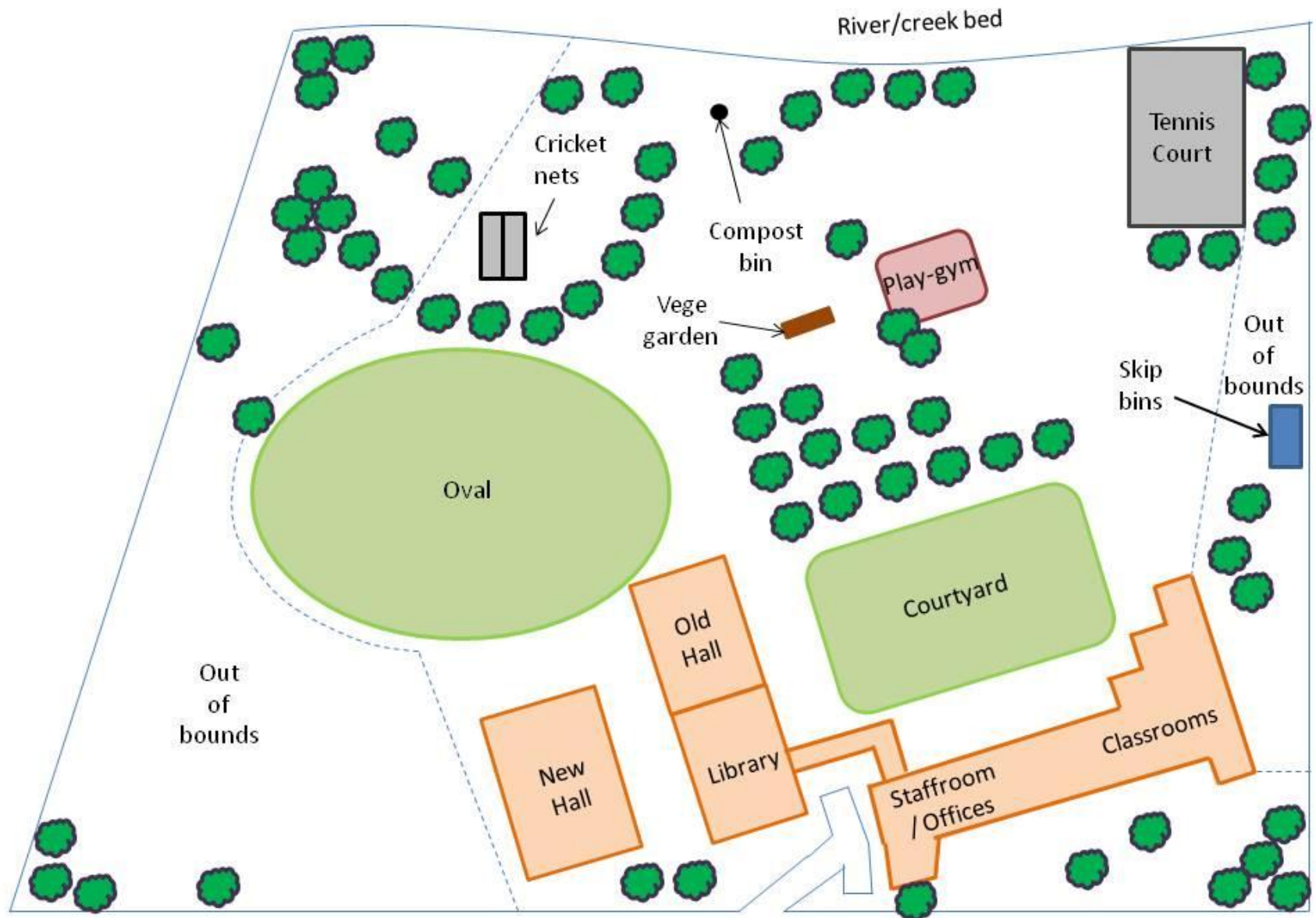
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## **Appendix 1: Map of Riverside School**

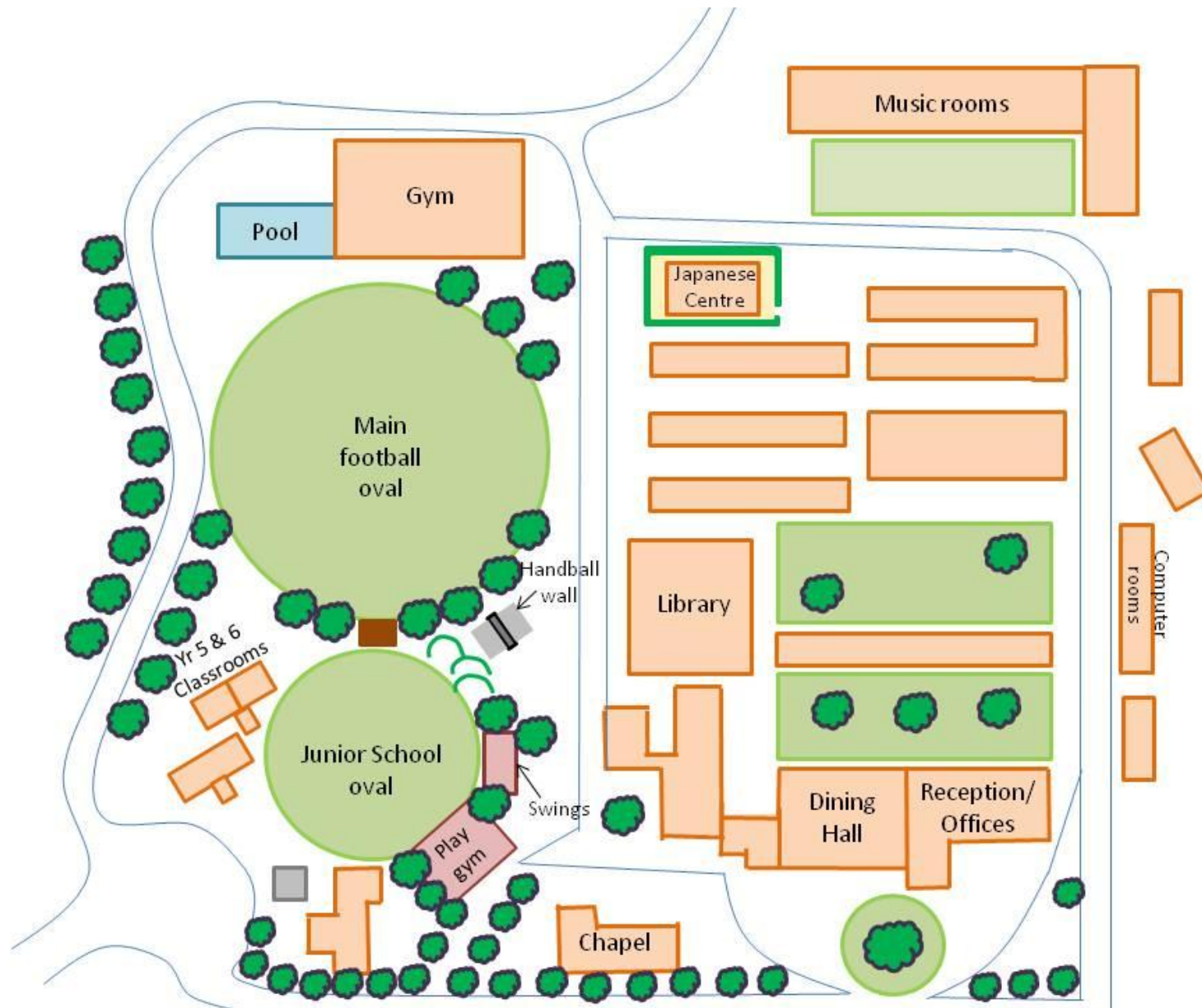


## **Appendix 2: Map of Fairview School**

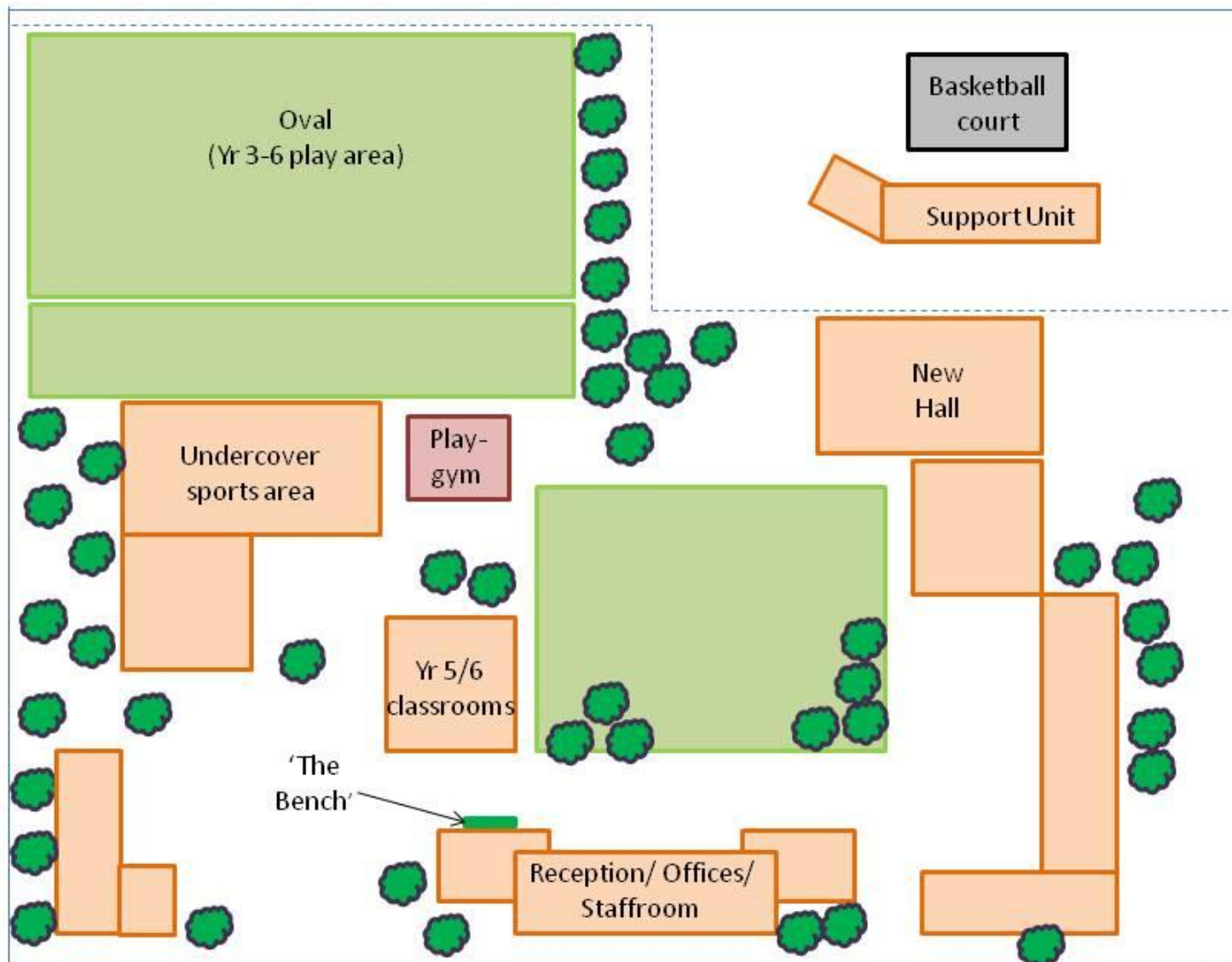


Tennis courts

Netball courts



### **Appendix 3: Map of Northfield School**



#### **Appendix 4: Ethics approval forms**

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh Sydney Campus

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Ms Natasha Wardman Sydney Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Australian primary school students' understandings and experiences of responsibility:  
Impacts on identity construction, orientation to learning, behaviour, and peer relations. (Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting)

**for the period:** 24 June 2010 to 31 December 2010

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** N2010 28

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed: ..... Date: 24 June 2010  
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh Sydney Campus

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Ms Natasha Wardman Sydney Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Australian primary school students' understandings and experiences of responsibility:  
Impacts on identity construction, orientation to learning, behaviour, and peer relations. (Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting)

**for the period:** 24 June 2010 to 31 December 2010 (Extended to 31 December 2011)

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** N2010 28

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed: ..... Date: 11 February 2011  
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

www.catholic.edu.au



**Education  
& Training**

Miss Natasha Wardman  
[REDACTED]

DOC 10/106150

Dear Miss Wardman

**SERAP NUMBER 2010087**

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *"Australian primary school students' understandings and experiences of responsibility: Impacts on identity construction, orientation to learning, behaviour and peer relations"*. I am pleased to advise that it has been approved and that the approval remains valid until 31 December 2010.

You may now contact the principals of the nominated NSW government schools to seek their participation. It is recommended that you include a copy of this letter with the documents you send.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Natasha Wardman	31-12-2010

The following requirements also apply:

- principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought
- the privacy of the school and the students is to be protected
- the participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and at the school's convenience; and
- any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed, please forward your report to the Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

Dr Max Smith  
Senior Manager,  
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation  
19 July 2010



**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND  
PROGRAM EVALUATION BUREAU**



Miss Natasha Wardman  
[REDACTED]

Dear Miss Wardman

SERAP Number 2010087

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled *Australian primary school students' understandings and experiences of responsibility: Impacts on identity construction, orientation to learning, behaviour and peer relations*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

This approval will remain valid until 31/12/2011.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Natasha Wardman	31/12/2011

**You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Stevens".

Dr Robert Stevens  
**Manager Schooling Research  
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation**  
24 February 2011

Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau  
NSW Department of Education and Training  
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300  
Telephone: 02 9244 5619– Fax: 02 9266 8233 – Email: [serap@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:serap@det.nsw.edu.au)

**Appendix 5: Information letters for all schools and consent forms for Catholic and Independent schools**

INFORMATION LETTER TO PRINCIPALS  
(For access to school as case-study site)

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in a study on how upper-primary (i.e. Yr 5/6) students' understandings and experiences of responsibility impact on their identity, learning, behaviour and relationships with others. The ethnographic data collection methods applied will be: observation (in the classroom and playground); interviews with teachers and principals; focus group discussions with students; and document archiving of, for example, school policies, prospectuses, newsletters.

I (Natasha Wardman) consider the focus of the study to be positive – i.e. the opportunity to discuss and celebrate understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect, and contribute to broader understandings of responsibility in the educational context. However, I also recognise that some participants may potentially experience distress if their experience of responsibility in schooling has involved a perceived deficit (e.g., if they recall instances of being 'irresponsible'), or perceived inequality (e.g., if they feel they have been denied opportunities to demonstrate responsibility). In order to address these potential risks, participants will:

1. Have the right to refuse consent altogether and/or withdraw from the study at any time, without having to justify their decision and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades;
2. Have their right not to answer particular questions or withdraw comments containing sensitive/embarrassing information respected;
3. Have their contributions acknowledged and respected by the interviewer; and
4. Be given pseudonyms as a means of confidentiality.

The demands to be made on participants include: any distraction or intrusion that my presence may cause when I am observing classroom and playground (and potentially other important school events) 1-2 days a week (depending on principal/teacher preference) for a whole school term; any out-of-class time (i.e. 30 min - 1 hr) that may be required for the student focus group interview/s; and the time required for individual interviews (i.e. 30min – 1 hr each) with teachers and yourself; access to relevant documents including school policies, prospectuses, newsletters.

The potential benefits of the research to individual participants include the opportunity to discuss (and indeed celebrate) their understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect. The research process and results may also contribute to broader understandings of responsibility and its impact on peer relations and school experiences. In general, I aim to contribute new knowledge, understandings and experiences of responsibility in the current primary school context, which may potentially inform educational practice and policy – particularly in relation to the MCEETYA (now MCEEDYA) 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The social justice goals underpinning this study aim to foster deeper understandings and respect among participants and society at large.

Possible outcomes of the research include publication of de-identified/pseudonymed results/analysis in academic journals, book chapters in edited books, and/or an individual book. Participants will be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study. Participating schools will also receive a copy of the published and publicly available doctorate thesis.

In order to protect confidentiality during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it; while there is a minimal risk that descriptive data may unintentionally lead to recognition of the participants or schools by participants or others with insider knowledge; this risk is minimal and will be minimised in the following ways:

1. Raw/primary data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Supervisor's office at ACU;
2. I will personally transcribe all focus-group interviews and delete digital audio files (after the required minimum of 5 years storage time);
3. Names and other identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms during and after analysis of data and store de-identified data in password protected files on my home computer. These pseudonyms will be maintained in resulting publications and reporting of results (including doctorate thesis, journal articles, book chapters and individual book);
4. The identities of participants will not be disclosed to any other parties.

**Again, it must be emphasised that participants are free to refuse consent altogether or withdraw consent and discontinue participation without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades.**

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)



Natasha Wardman c/o Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University and the relevant governing bodies (including the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the relevant Catholic Education Office).

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Supervisor or Student Researcher.

.....  
Principal Supervisor

.....  
Student Researcher

---

INFORMATION LETTER TO PRINCIPALS  
(Invitation for participation in interview on responsibility)

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Philosophy (Education)

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in an individual interview on how upper-primary (i.e. Yr 5/6) students' understandings and experiences of responsibility impact on their identity, learning, behaviour and relationships with others. Data will also be collected via: observation (in the classroom and playground); interviews with teachers (and principals from other schools); focus group discussions with students; and document archiving of, for example, school policies, prospectuses and newsletters.

I (Natasha Wardman) consider the focus of the study to be positive – i.e. the opportunity to discuss and celebrate understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect and contribute to broader understandings of responsibility in the educational context. However, I also recognise that some participants may potentially experience distress if their experience of responsibility in schooling has involved a perceived deficit (e.g., if they recall instances of being 'irresponsible'), or perceived inequality (e.g., if they feel they have been denied opportunities to demonstrate responsibility). In order to address these potential risks, participants will:

1. Have the right to refuse consent altogether and/or withdraw from the study at any time, without having to justify their decision and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades;
2. Have their right not to answer particular questions or withdraw comments containing sensitive/embarrassing information respected;
3. Have their contributions acknowledged and respected by the interviewer; and
4. Be given pseudonyms as a means of confidentiality.

The main demand to be made on you as an interview participant is the time required for an individual interview (i.e. 30min – 1 hr). We can negotiate a time that suits you during or before/after school on the school premises.

The potential benefits of the research to individual participants include the opportunity to discuss (and indeed celebrate) their understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect. The research process and results may also contribute to

broadier understandings of responsibility and its impact on peer relations and school experiences. In general, I aim to contribute new knowledge, understandings and experiences of responsibility in the current primary school context, which may potentially inform educational practice and policy – particularly in relation to the MCEETYA (now MCEEDYA) 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The social justice goals underpinning this study aim to foster deeper understandings and respect among participants and society at large.

Possible outcomes of the research include publication of de-identified/pseudonymed results/analysis in academic journals, book chapters in edited books, and/or an individual book. Participants will be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study. Participating schools will also receive a copy of the published and publicly available doctorate thesis.

In order to protect confidentiality during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it; while there is a minimal risk that descriptive data may unintentionally lead to recognition of the participants or schools by participants or others with insider knowledge; this risk is minimal and will be minimised in the following ways:

1. Raw/primary data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Supervisor's office at ACU;
2. I will personally transcribe all focus-group interviews and delete digital audio files (after the required minimum of 5 years storage time);
3. Names and other identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms during and after analysis of data and I will store de-identified data in password protected files on my home computer. These pseudonyms will be maintained in resulting publications and reporting of results (including doctorate thesis, journal articles, book chapters and individual book);
4. The identities of participants will not be disclosed to any other parties.

**Again, it must be emphasised that participants are free to refuse consent altogether or withdraw consent and discontinue participation without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades.**

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

Natasha Wardman c/o Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)



This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University and the relevant governing bodies (including the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the relevant Catholic Education Office).

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

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Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Supervisor or Student Researcher.

.....

Principal Supervisor

.....

Student Researcher

---



## INFORMATION LETTER TO TEACHERS

**TITLE OF PROJECT:** Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

**PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:** Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh

**STUDENT RESEARCHER:** Natasha Wardman

**PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED:** Doctorate of Philosophy (Education)

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in an individual interview on how upper-primary (i.e. Yr 5/6) students' understandings and experiences of responsibility impact on their identity, learning, behaviour and relationships with others. Data will also be collected via: observation (in the classroom and playground); interviews with principals and other Yr 5/6 teachers; focus group discussions with students; and document archiving of, for example, school policies, prospectuses and newsletters.

I (Natasha Wardman) consider the focus of the study to be positive – i.e. the opportunity to discuss and celebrate understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect and contribute to broader understandings of responsibility in the educational context. However, I also recognise that some participants may potentially experience distress if their experience of responsibility in schooling has involved a perceived deficit (e.g., if they recall instances of being 'irresponsible'), or perceived inequality (e.g., if they feel they have been denied opportunities to demonstrate responsibility). In order to address these potential risks, participants will:

1. Have the right to refuse consent altogether and/or withdraw from the study at any time, without having to justify their decision and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades;
2. Have their right not to answer particular questions or withdraw comments containing sensitive/embarrassing information respected;
3. Have their contributions acknowledged and respected by the interviewer;
- and
4. Be given pseudonyms as a means of confidentiality.

The main demand to be made on you as an interview participant is the time required for your individual interview (i.e. 30min – 1 hr). We can negotiate a time that suits you during or before/after school on the school premises.

The potential benefits of the research to individual participants include the opportunity to discuss (and indeed celebrate) their understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect. The research process and results may also contribute to broader understandings of responsibility and its impact on peer relations and school

experiences. In general, I aim to contribute new knowledge, understandings and experiences of responsibility in the current primary school context, which may potentially inform educational practice and policy – particularly in relation to the MCEETYA (now MCEEDYA) 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The social justice goals underpinning this study aim to foster deeper understandings and respect among participants and society at large.

Possible outcomes of the research include publication of de-identified/pseudonymed results/analysis in academic journals, book chapters in edited books, and/or an individual book. Participants will be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study. Participating schools will also receive a copy of the final/published doctorate thesis.

In order to protect confidentiality during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it; while there is a minimal risk that descriptive data may unintentionally lead to recognition of the participants or schools by participants or others with insider knowledge; this risk is minimal and will be minimised in the following ways:

1. Raw/primary data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Supervisor's office at ACU;
2. I will personally transcribe all focus-group interviews and delete digital audio files (after the required minimum of 5 years storage time);
3. Names and other identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms during and after analysis of data and I will store de-identified data in password protected files on my home computer. These pseudonyms will be maintained in resulting publications and reporting of results (including doctorate thesis, journal articles, book chapters and individual book);
4. The identities of participants will not be disclosed to any other parties

**Again, it must be emphasised that participants are free to refuse consent altogether or withdraw consent and discontinue participation without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades.**

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

Natasha Wardman c/o Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University and the relevant governing bodies (including the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the relevant Catholic Education Office).



In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Supervisor or Student Researcher.

.....

Principal Supervisor

.....

Student Researcher

## INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Philosophy (Education)

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Your child is invited to take part in a study that is being conducted by Natasha Wardman. This study is part of a Doctorate of Philosophy (Education), being supervised by Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh.

I (Natasha Wardman) am therefore asking you if it is okay for your child to take part in this project.

I am trying to find out how upper-primary (i.e. Yr 5/6) students' understandings and experiences of responsibility impact on their identity, learning, behaviour and relationships with others. The ethnographic data collection methods applied will be: observation (in the classroom and playground); interviews with teachers and principals; focus group discussions with students; and document archiving of school policies, codes of conduct, prospectuses and newsletters.

The information from the study will be used to contribute to broader understandings of responsibility and its impact on peer relations and school experiences in the current primary school context. This information may potentially inform educational practice and policy – particularly in relation to the MCEETYA (now MCEEDYA) 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The social justice goals underpinning this study aim to foster deeper understandings and respect among participants and society at large. We will report the de-identified/pseudonymed results/analysis in the published and publicly available doctorate thesis, academic journals, book chapters in edited books, and/or a individual book. Participants will also be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study.

I will ask your child to discuss their understandings and experiences of responsibility in a focus-group discussion/interview with 6-12 peers. This discussion/interview will take about

30 minutes to 1 hour and will be digitally audio-recorded. This focus-group discussion/interview will occur on school premises during a time (within school hours) to be negotiated with classroom teachers. The reason why I will be conducting a focus-group discussion is because students may feel more comfortable in a group setting rather than an individual interview.

I consider the focus of the study to be positive – i.e. the opportunity to discuss and celebrate understandings and experiences of responsibility in an environment of respect and contribute to broader understandings of responsibility in the educational context. However, we also recognise that some participants may potentially experience distress if their experience of responsibility in schooling has involved a perceived deficit (e.g., if they recall instances of being ‘irresponsible’), or perceived inequality (e.g., if they feel they have been denied opportunities to demonstrate responsibility). In order to address these potential risks, participants will:

1. Have the right to refuse consent altogether and/or withdraw from the study at any time, without having to justify their decision and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades;
2. Have their right not to answer particular questions or withdraw comments containing sensitive/embarrassing information respected;
3. Have their contributions acknowledged and respected by the interviewer; and
4. Be given pseudonyms as a means of confidentiality.

My *Duty of care* (NSW DET, 2010) and *Child protection* (NSW DET, 2010) responsibilities mean that I have to report to the school principal if any child/student is at risk of harm or involved in criminal activity. Interviews will be concluded immediately should a participant show signs of distress, and a subsequent referral to the school counsellor will be offered.

If you or your child change your minds about taking part, even after the study has started, just let the researcher know and any information already collected about your child will be destroyed. You can withdraw your child from the study by contacting the researcher (Natasha Wardman) via phone, email or signed letter.

While students in the focus-group may identify their own and each other's comments, to minimise the risk of identification and protect the confidentiality of participants and the personal information they may provide:

1. Raw/primary data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Supervisor's office at ACU;
2. I will personally transcribe all focus-group interviews and delete digital audio files (after the required minimum of 5 years storage time);
3. Names and other identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms during and after analysis of data and I will store de-identified data in password protected files on my home computer. These pseudonyms will be maintained in resulting

- publications and reporting of results (including doctorate thesis, journal articles, book chapters and individual book);
4. The identities of participants will not be disclosed to any other parties.

**Again, it must be emphasised that participants are free to refuse consent altogether or withdraw consent and discontinue participation without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, removal of privileges or (for students) negative impacts on grades.**

Participants (principals, teachers, students and their parents) will be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study. Participating schools will also receive a copy of the published and publicly available doctorate thesis.

When you have read this information, I will be available to answer any questions you may have at any stage:

Natasha Wardman c/o Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

You may also contact my Principal Supervisor:

Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University and the relevant governing bodies (including the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the relevant Catholic Education Office).

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002



STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Supervisor or Student Researcher.

.....

Principal Supervisor

.....

Student Researcher

**This information sheet is for you to keep. Your child has also been given information about this project.**

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## INFORMATION LETTER TO STUDENTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Philosophy (Education)

Dear Student,

The students in your school's Yr 5/6 classes have been invited to participate in a study on how upper-primary students' understandings and experiences of responsibility impact on their identity, learning, behaviour and relationships with others.

Data will be collected through observation (in the classroom and playground); interviews with teachers and principals; focus group discussions with students; and school policies, prospectuses, newsletters.

The purpose of this letter is to invite any interested Yr 5/6 students to participate in a focus-group discussion (with around 6-12 peers) on responsibility. The reason why I (Natasha Wardman) have chosen a focus-group discussion is because students may feel more comfortable in a group setting rather than an individual interview. This focus group discussion will take about 30 minutes to 1 hour during school time and on the school premises. The time that this focus-group discussion will take place will be decided by your teacher.

The information collected will hopefully be very useful to students, teachers, principals and parents.

You do not have to participate in the focus-group discussion/ interview, and you will not be punished in any way if you refuse. If you do decide to join in, you:

1. Must have parent/caregiver permission;
2. Can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason and without any punishment;
3. Have the right not to answer particular questions or withdraw comments containing sensitive/embarrassing information;
4. Will have your contributions acknowledged and respected by the interviewer; and
5. Be given pseudonyms (or fake names) for confidentiality reasons.

My *Duty of care* (NSW DET, 2010) and *Child protection* (NSW DET, 2010) responsibilities mean that I have to report to the school principal if any child/student is at risk of harm or



involved in criminal activity. Interviews will end immediately if any child/student shows signs of distress, and they will be referred to the school counsellor.

If you or your parent/caregiver change your minds about taking part, even after the study has started, just get your parent/caregiver to let the researcher know and any information already collected about you will be destroyed. Your parent/caregiver can withdraw you from the study by contacting me (Natasha Wardman) via phone, email or signed letter.

All data will be stored in a safe place and only the researcher will be able to access it.

**Again, please remember that you are free to refuse consent altogether or stop participating in the focus-group discussion without having to give a reason, and without any form of punishment.**

Participants (principals, teachers, students - as well as their parents/caregivers) will be offered the opportunity to attend a school seminar on some of the key findings for the overall study.

When you have read this information, and if you are interested in participating, please discuss this with your parent/caregiver.

If you and your parent/caregiver agree on your participation for this project, you should both sign each of the copies of the Consent Form. Keep one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Supervisor or Student Researcher.

.....

Principal Supervisor

.....

Student Researcher

**This information sheet is for you to keep. Your parent/caregiver has also been given information about this project.**

CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS  
*Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

I ..... (*the participant*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this individual interview which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded; realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, or removal of privileges. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.



NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: .....DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....DATE.....

---

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM  
*Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

I.....(*the parent/guardian*) agree that my child....., may participate in the focus-group discussion with other students, which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. I have read the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researchers.
2. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project.
4. I understand that that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time without any negative consequence.
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity. However, I also understand that students in the focus-group may identify their own and each other's comments, though steps will be taken to minimise risk of identification in the broader social context. Additionally, I am also aware of the researcher's *Duty of care* (NSW DET, 2010) and *Child protection* (NSW DET, 2010) responsibilities whereby any indications or disclosures that a child is at risk of harm or involved in criminal activity must be reported to the principal.

6. I understand that digital audio recordings will be made of the focus-group discussion/ interview on the school premises and during school hours at a time negotiated with the classroom teacher.

7. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN: .....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE:.....

NAME OF CHILD .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: .....DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....  
DATE.....

**ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS**

I ..... (*the participant aged under 18 years*) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in the focus group discussion with other students which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded, realising that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18: .....

SIGNATURE:..... DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: .....DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....DATE.....

**Appendix 6: Consent forms for the State school (according to specific NSW DET requirements)**

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CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS  
*Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

I ..... (*the participant*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to:

**a)** The observation of my Yr 5 class including myself for 1 day each week over the whole school term (*please tick*):

YES ☐      NO ☐

**b)** Participate in an individual interview which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded (*please tick*):

YES ☐      NO ☐

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time without having to justify that decision, and without any negative consequence, including differential treatment, or removal of privileges. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: ..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ..... DATE .....





In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

---

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM  
*Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Understandings and experiences of responsibility in the primary school setting

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Sue Saltmarsh  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au](mailto:sue.saltmarsh@acu.edu.au)

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Wardman  
School of Education  
ACU, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW, 2135  
[S00107865@myacu.edu.au](mailto:S00107865@myacu.edu.au)

I.....(the parent/guardian) agree that my child....., may participate in:

**a)** Observations of their Yr 5/6 class (including themselves) in the classroom, playground and other important school events for one day each week over the whole school term (*please tick*):

YES ☐ NO ☐

**b)** A focus-group discussion with other students, which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded (*please tick*):

YES ☐ NO ☐

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. I have read the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researchers.
2. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project.
4. I understand that that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time without any negative consequence.
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity. However, I also

understand that students in the focus-group may identify their own and each other's comments, though steps will be taken to minimise risk of identification in the broader social context. Additionally, I am also aware of the researcher's *Duty of care* (NSW DET, 2010) and *Child protection* (NSW DET, 2010) responsibilities whereby any indications or disclosures that a child is at risk of harm or involved in criminal activity must be reported to the principal.

6. I understand that digital audio recordings will be made of the focus-group discussion/ interview on the school premises and during school hours at a time negotiated with the classroom teacher.

7. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN: .....

SIGNATURE .....DATE .....

NAME OF CHILD .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR .....

DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ..... DATE

.....

## ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I ..... (*the participant aged under 18 years*) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to participate in:

**a)** Observations of my Yr 5/6 class (including yourself) in the classroom, playground and other important school events for one day each week over the whole school term (*please tick*):

**YES** ☐      **NO** ☐

**b)** A focus-group discussion with other students, which will be approximately 30 minutes – 1 hour in duration and will be audio-recorded (*please tick*):

**YES** ☐      **NO** ☐

I realise that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18: .....

SIGNATURE..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR .....DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER.....DATE:.....

## **Appendix 7: Semi-structured interview questions**

**Guiding questions for individual interviews with principals and teachers:**

- 1) What does responsibility mean to you?
- 2) Do we always have the choice to be responsible?
- 3) What do you see as the key things that students need to learn about responsibility? Why do you see these as important?
- 4) How do you communicate ideas about responsibility to students in your class?
- 5) Can you think of examples where a student has taken responsibility for something or someone in a way that's surprised you?
- 6) What do you see as the main challenges in fostering student responsibility? What strategies do you have for addressing those challenges?

**Guiding questions for focus group discussions with students:**

- 1) What do you think the word responsibility means?
- 2) How do you think we know what is the responsible thing to do?
- 3) What do you think people should be responsible for? What do you think teachers should be responsible for? Do you agree? Why/why not?
- 4) How can you tell if someone is being responsible? What might responsible people think/say/do/feel? What are some activities they might participate in?
- 5) Do you feel responsible sometimes? What kinds of responsibilities do you have? How do you know they're responsibilities? What is the hardest thing about being responsible for xyz? What is the best thing about being responsible for xyz?
- 6) Who is/can be responsible and why? Who isn't/can't be responsible and why?
- 7) We've talked about what it means to be responsible. What does it mean to be irresponsible? Can you think of some examples? Do you think people know when they're not being responsible? How would they know that? Why do you think people are irresponsible sometimes?
- 8) How would other people that you know describe responsibility?

- 9) What if we think we're being responsible but other people don't see it that way at all? Why do you think people see it so differently sometimes?
- 10) If you had a really responsible teacher, what would they do:
- In the classroom
  - In the playground
  - On excursions?
- 11) Who does society or the people of the world think is responsible and why? Who does society consider is not responsible and why?
- 12) Should we be responsible for the environment? Why/why not? Can we always be responsible for the environment? Why/why not? What could people do if they wanted to be responsible for the environment? What could people do if they didn't want to be responsible for the environment?
- 13) Do we always have the choice to be responsible?
- 14) Are there any groups in the school that are known for taking on certain responsibilities? Are any of you members of these groups? Why did you join? What do you do? How/why?

**15) Scenario 1: In/genuine apologies**

- a. **Nick rushes past Melanie and bumps into her on purpose – hurting her leg.**

- How could Melanie respond? How do you think she is most likely to respond? Why?
- What do you think would be a responsible way to respond? Why? How do you know that this is the responsible thing to do?

**Melanie and some of her friends end up telling the teacher. The teacher asks Nick to apologise to Melanie.**

- What might Nick be thinking or feeling after he has been told to apologise?
- What might Melanie be thinking or feeling when Nick comes over to apologise to her after he has been told to by the teacher?
- What if Nick had bumped into Melanie by accident – what might he think/feel then? Why?
- What if Nick had bumped into a boy instead of Melanie?

- b. **Out on the playground, Jenny's friend Lucy keeps avoiding her. Jenny doesn't understand why and becomes very upset.**

- How might Jenny respond? How do you think she will most likely respond? Why?

- What do you think would be a responsible way to respond? Why? How do you know that this is a responsible thing to do?

**Jenny ends up telling the teacher who then asks Lucy to apologise.**

- What might Lucy be thinking or feeling after she has been told to apologise?
- What might Jenny be thinking when Lucy comes over to apologise to her after she has been told to by the teacher?
- What if this scenario involved boys instead of girls?

## **16) Scenario 2: Choosing between self and other**

**a. Mike sees Joe being bullied by some of the bigger Yr. 6 students.**

- What might Mike do?
- What do you think he will most likely do and why?
- What do you think would be a responsible thing to do and why? How do you know that this is a responsible thing to do?

**Mike decides to go up to the bullies and tell them to leave Mike alone. The bullies tell him that if he doesn't mind his own business and if he tells the teacher, then he will be bullied by them as well.**

- What might Mike do now?
- What do you think he will most likely do and why?
- What do you think would be a responsible thing to do and why? How do you know that this is a responsible thing to do?

**b. During pack-up time, Jake accidentally knocks his pen off his desk. He asks Sally (who is sitting in front of him – and is closer to the pen) if she can pick it up and pass it back to him. As she is reaching down to pick the pen up, the teacher asks students to sit up straight and face the front.**

- What might Sally do now?
- What do you think she will most likely do and why?
- What do you think would be a responsible thing to do and why? How do you know that this is a responsible thing to do?
- What if Mitchell and Sally were best friends – would this change anything? Why/why not?
- What if the teacher said that people would be rewarded for sitting up straight or punished for not sitting up straight?

## **17) Scenario 3: Trouble vs. Trouble**

**a) On the weekend, Phil and some of his friends are walking home. As they are walking, one of Phil's friends dares him to take a detour through Mr. Watson's orchard so that they can grab a piece of ripe fruit each. Phil knows that Mr. Watson has a 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' sign on his front gate and doesn't want to get in trouble. But his parents have told him that it is**



**not safe to walk home by himself and once his friends take the detour, he will have to take the other path alone.**

- What do you think Phil would be thinking or feeling?
- What might Phil do?
- What do you think would be a responsible thing to do in this situation and why? How do you know that it is a responsible thing to do?

**18) Scenario 4: The environment**

**a) Hannah is sitting under the tree eating lunch with her friends. As the bell goes for playtime, she and her friends get up to go. Kate leaves her rubbish on the ground on purpose and Hannah notices.**

- What might Hannah do now?
- What do you think she will most likely do and why?
- What do you think would be a responsible thing to do and why? How do you know that this is a responsible thing to do?

**19) Is there anything else that you would like to add before we finish?**