

Pedagogy, Subjectivity and Counter Politics in the Primary School: an ethnography of a teacher's practices

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnography of my teaching practices over the course of a year I spend teaching a class of six and seven year old students at Greenfield Infant School. It theorises my enactments of counter politics which attempt to disrupt normative schooling practices, producing educational inequalities at this site. Judith Butler's work on the performative constitution of the subject conceptually frames this study alongside Michel Foucault's theorisation of the operation of disciplinary power. The thesis puts forward several lines of argument that extend understanding of what it means to be a teacher practicing in ways that are counter political within the current educational system in the UK. Firstly, I suggest that there is a paradox in the very idea of enacting counter politics in school because, as a teacher, I am constituted via the very discourses I attempt to disrupt. This impacts on the kinds of political action I can take whilst remaining legible as a teacher. I go on to theorise the politics of different kinds of pedagogical interventions, from changing the content of the curriculum to acknowledging the emotions of seemingly 'disruptive' students, arguing that the foregrounding of relationality is key to the development of politics that includes the students. I conclude by arguing that the discursive agency I assume when enacting counter politics at Greenfield Infant School is not mine alone. The spaces I find for counter politics are often opened up for me by the students I teach or the possibilities for resistance are developed collectively within the class. The thesis concludes with an exploration of different forms of collective resistance that are currently unfolding from inside and outside the education system.

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Declarations

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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1. Educational in/equalities and counter politics: an introduction

This thesis emerges from my year spent teaching at Greenfield Infants. I take up my post in September 2011 when the school is state funded and run by the local authority and by the time I leave in July 2012, arrangements have been made for the school to become part of a chain of schools in an academy federation, operating outside the control of the local authority. This is a school in flux, and I become swept up in the turbulence that ensues as the head and deputy depart at the end of the spring term and are replaced by new management in the summer term. My time at Greenfield Infants coincides with a very specific moment in the school's history and the pedagogic politics I pursue at this site are unavoidably shot through with the chaos and complicated relationships between the school and the local authority as well as between different members of staff working at the school and the broader politics of education playing out nationally and internationally. My politics are also informed by different traditions of critical pedagogy as well as engaging more directly with performative politics in the classroom. I begin this opening chapter with Greenfield Infants, however, because it is at this site that I try to answer the questions concerning the enactment of counter politics in the primary school classroom that I began conceptualising before my arrival at the school. My accounts of such enactments, and their failures and limitations, are specific to Greenfield Infants yet I hope that my theorisations of my pedagogic interventions here offer useful insights that contribute to understanding of educational counter politics beyond this site.

In this beginning chapter, I will situate my work within various traditions of educational counter politics that have inspired and informed me. I start with an account of my arrival at this topic and my research questions before a more in depth exploration of different forms of critical and radical pedagogies. Along the way, I consider educational inequality in the UK and recent manifestations of neo-liberal education policy in schools. I also engage with psychoanalytically informed discussions of teaching and learning as these speak in interesting ways to political pedagogies aiming to disrupt the production of educational inequalities and this scholarship influences how I understand my classroom pedagogy. I will end the chapter with a discussion of relationality and affect in the classroom and recent engagements with these concepts within the sociology of education.

The No Outsiders Project: Political tactics and tensions

My participation as a teacher researcher on the 'No Outsiders' project immediately precedes this doctoral research. Whilst my commitment to issues of educational equality reaches back further than this, to my own schooling experiences, it is during this project that I begin forming the questions I attempt to work through in this thesis. The 'No Outsiders' Project (Atkinson and DePalma 2006 - 2009) aimed to address sexualities equality in primary schools through the creation of 'a research-based community of practice where positive strategies can be shared, explored and developed, then disseminated to the wider teaching and research community through the creation of teaching ideas and resources' (ESRC). As a teacher researcher on this project, I kept a research journal related to the pedagogy and practices in my classroom concerning gender and sexuality. I made observational notes of what I noticed happening and on particular pedagogic interventions I developed. The process of doing this and discussing my observations and pedagogy with the research community within the project led to me becoming increasingly interested in the politics of equality work in schools and, eventually, led to the development of this doctoral research project. Youdell (2011) describes the conceptual tensions in the 'No Outsiders' project's aims and objectives, noting how the project website both claimed to work towards equality for multiply positioned gendered and sexual subjects and to deconstruct these very identities that it claimed to be campaigning for (p.61). Indeed, at particular moments over the course of the project, some project members (including myself) took up queer theory to trouble existing categories of gender and sexuality yet simultaneously other project members focussed on representing gay and lesbian families. Much of the work that went on in classrooms as part of this project was facilitated by the use of picture books such as 'And Tango Makes Three' (Richardson and Parnell 2007) , a book telling the, apparently true, story of two male penguins raising a chick in New York Zoo, 'Space Girl Pukes' (Watson and Carter 2006) a tale about two North London lesbian mums and their space girl daughter who gets sick, and 'King and King' (De Haan and Nijland 2002), in which a gay prince rejects princess after princess before finding another prince whom he eventually marries. These books are colourful, safe and normative in their focus on monogamous unions and parenting. Youdell (2011, pp.66-70) provides a much more detailed deconstruction of these texts

and a nuanced account of the ways in which their use can both 'be seen as a powerful practice of troubling simply in speaking the legitimacy of same-sex relationships and parenting' and as being 'implicated in the further inscription of heteronormativity, idealized family forms, Whiteness and elite Western forms of culture' (p. 69). The relationships in these texts are presented as being 'just like' the heterosexual family set ups already familiar to school children and staff, even if not always reflective of their actual family situations. Thus, the norm of white, middle class, heterosexual monogamy is shored up in the insistence on similarity to this norm.

The request for particular marginalised identities to be allowed admittance into the established norm (as in the recent, successful, campaign for equal marriage for same sex couples in the USA) often means that a particular norm (in this case, state sanctioned, monogamous union) is extended and strengthened. The norm itself is not called into question in the focus on rights for a particular group. Such an approach to educational inequality mobilises around categories of identity (for instance, race, class, gender, disability, ethnicity and sexuality) that are seen to be stable and abiding in order to understand the difficulties faced by different social groups that fall into these categories. The work of such politics often takes the form of campaigning for recognition and rights for particular marginalised groups. However, the act of doing this further shores up the identity categories themselves and forces lines to be drawn between who is 'in' and who is 'out' of the category in question. Whilst the different critical pedagogies, which I will go on to discuss, may foreground particular aspects of identity, their critical approach means that the normative centre is interrogated and deconstructed: these pedagogies do not ask for marginalised groups to be granted permission to partake in education or for difference from the norm to be tolerated. Indeed, identity politics in education have been critiqued from scholars working from both critical and poststructuralist perspectives (see, for instance, Youdell 2006, Gillborn 2008, Youdell 2011). However, such an approach to inequality is often the easiest to enact in schools because it tends not to trouble existing neo-liberal discourses. Instead, the focus is on the inclusion of previously excluded or marginalised groups into the existing situation.

In the case of 'No Outsiders', a liberal pluralism is foregrounded in the request for inclusion of non-straight identities, which refuses an analysis of the operation of power in its insistence of 'same yet different' in relation to LGBTQ* people. Female

princesses in school plays are replaced with princes, gay and lesbian teachers announce their weddings to students and staff, and the remit of diversity weeks expands to include non-straight people alongside people of 'different' cultures and beliefs. The conflation of different marginalised positions, a result of the absence of an analysis of power, is problematic in that it potentially leads to a situation in which the rights of one group are being pitted against the rights of another. An obvious example of this was when Somali parents of children in a school in Bristol, which participated in 'No Outsiders', began to question the purposes of the project in relation to their children's education (Youdell 2011). However, despite the difficulties encountered, liberal pluralism often seemed the safest approach to take in school in terms of quickly winning over governors and parents to the project.

Indeed, during my time as a teacher-researcher on the project I often drew on a discourse of rights and equalities when discussing the project with colleagues as it made the work more immediately comprehensible and, seemingly, safe for school managers and other school staff to engage with. This does not mean that such an approach is without its risks but its presentation of abiding yet marginalised subjects seems ready made for PSHE lessons and literacy lessons alike. Behind this smokescreen of equality and diversity, however, I was exploring how queer pedagogy might be used to disrupt heteronormativity in the classrooms in which I worked (see, Cullen and Teague 2008, Cullen and Sandy 2009, Teague 2010). These initial attempts at enacting performative politics, conceptually informed by the work of Judith Butler, led me to the questions I ask in this thesis, explored more thoroughly in Chapter 3, concerning the possibilities and limitations of performative politics to disrupt the production of inequalities in the everyday moments of teaching and learning in a primary school classroom.

Whilst there are conceptual differences between identity politics, the politics of critical pedagogy and poststructuralist politics that are crucial to understanding the effects of different political action in education, these categories themselves are unstable and, in practice, overlap or are used, tactically, at different moments and for different purposes. Indeed, in their text *Dispossession: the performative in the political*, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) argue that making demands for inclusion and representation within dominant discourses can, in itself, unsettle these discourses. Sometimes such action is the only available to us at a given moment and should not

be dismissed as doing no other work than to always reinforce the existing norms. As this thesis progresses, I will explore the ways in which the take up of particular discourses at particular moments can become subversive where they would not necessarily be in other moments. Similarly, I want to hold this idea in mind as I work through different ways of conceptualising and enacting counter politics in this chapter.

Inequality in Education

Before considering examples of pedagogical counter politics, I will briefly engage with scholarship that explores the manifestation of educational inequalities as the pedagogies I will proceed to discuss later in the chapter often attempt to challenge, trouble, overcome or subvert such inequality. Since the mid twentieth century, scholars within the sociology of education have demonstrated the ways in which schools actively produce the inequalities and social injustice seen in other institutions and aspects of society. This scholarship has not only looked at differences in outcomes for different groups of students based on the ways in which they are streamed and taught in school (see, for instance, Boaler, William et al. 2000, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Hallam, Ireson et al. 2004, Bradbury 2013) but has also sought to understand the educational experiences of different groups of students. This literature has been extensively mapped within the field of educational sociology (see, for instance, Ball 2004, Apple, Ball et al. 2010) and it is not my intention here to provide a detailed discussion of it. Although educational inequality is often perceived to act upon or operate through particular axes of identity such as class, race, gender, sexuality and disability as well as ethnicity and poverty, there is a movement within the sociology of education, corresponding to the wider, so-called, poststructuralist turn within the arts and humanities, towards deconstructing the normative status quo in relation to these identities and their minoritization¹ within educational institutions.

Diane Reay (see, for instance, 2001, 2004, 2006) has written extensively about how class is silenced within discussions of identity and inequality in education. She

¹ I am following David Gillborn (2010) in my use of the term minoritization here. He argues that this term indicates the wider process that occurs when groups become minorities in a given situation rather than the term, for instance, minority ethnic which situates the minority status inside the individual described.

has not only explored the responses of working class students to their educational experience but also the ways in which stereotyping influences teachers' responses to these students (Reay 2006). Whilst early studies of race in education took up a similar agenda (see, for example, Troyna 1987, 1995), more recently, scholars have turned their attention to the normative operation of Whiteness and how it works to marginalise other raced identities. Critical Race Theory (CRT) significantly influences conceptualisations of race and racism in education and has repeatedly demonstrated the ways in which institutional racism operates to produce inequality for black and minoritized students in terms of outcomes and experiences (Ladson-Billings 1998, Lee-Allen 2005, Leonardo 2005, Gillborn 2008, Leonardo 2009, Gillborn 2010). Whilst the gendered identities and achievements, or otherwise, of students have long been of interest to educational sociologists, more recently, scholars have turned their attentions to the way in which normative gender roles influence gendered relations in classrooms (in regard to students and teachers) and work in different ways to limit the possibility for students to perform their gender differently to the norm (Walkerdine 1998, Braun 2006, Skelton, Carrington et al. 2009, Ringrose and Renold 2010). Over the last decade, educational sociologists have begun to look at gender and its relations to sexuality in education. Drawing upon Butlerian notions of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Butler 1990), this scholarship has explored the way in which normative gender binaries relate to heteronormativity (Blaise 2005, Rasmussen 2005, Renold 2005, Youdell 2005, Rasmussen 2006) and discuss what this means for students' educational experiences and the ways in which they are taught. Again, within disability studies there has been a move away from thinking about individual disabled students and their schooling and towards an exploration and deconstruction of ablest norms that govern educational policy and practice. Slee (2001, 2011), for instance, questions the mainstream/ special school binary in relation to inclusive education and Graham and Slee (2008) argue that discourses of inclusivity often shore up the privileged positions of those inviting the excluded other to be included (p. 283). Meanwhile, Harwood (2006) deconstructs discourses surrounding so called 'disorderly' or 'emotionally disturbed' students, interrogating how these discursive constitutions operate to situate the problem inside the student rather than interrogating the educational system that labels students in these ways.

My brief and partial overview here of this, mostly recent, literature concerned with identity and educational inequality is a prelude to my more in depth exploration of counter politics which attempt to, in some way, address these issues of inequality. Myriad approaches have been taken to counter politics in education by scholars and activists. The practices and the conceptual politics that underpin them converge and diverge, overlap and separate in their aims and effects in the classroom and beyond. As I explore the literature of counter politics and schooling, I am aware of the complexity of the pedagogies I write about and whilst I might group particular approaches for the purpose of organisation, I hope not to present these approaches as entirely separate from one another as this is not always the case.

Radical politics in education: some examples of current practice

There is an established body of scholarship anchored in a history of critical Marxist theory which centres a dialogic approach to pedagogy as a way of addressing class struggle in education. The work of Brazilian educator and scholar Paulo Freire is seminal to this dialogic approach but many educators have taken up the concept of critical dialogue in order to develop pedagogies to address issues of race (Leonardo 2005) and gender (Macdonald and Sanchez-Casal 2002, Lewis 2011) as well as to interrogate issues of colonialism and geo-politics in the classroom (Grande 2004). Freire (1970) famously critiques what he terms the 'banking model' of education whereby the pedagogue transmits curriculum knowledge to the student (who begins as an 'empty vessel'). Instead, he proposes a dialogic pedagogy based in mutual respect between student and pedagogue and a commitment to developing understanding by engaging in the process of conversation with one another. The notion of praxis, the bringing together of theory and practice, is key to several approaches informed by Freire's work. Indeed, whilst Freire is critiqued for focusing too much on formal educational settings and for not being nuanced enough in his conceptualisations of politics and social change (see, Apple, Au et al. 2009), other scholarship has developed which uses the idea of dialogue differently. Such literature is situated on the political left and often continues to be an important voice countering current neo-liberal education policy discourse. Michael Apple writes extensively on critical pedagogy. He cautions against the romanticism he perceives exists in some writing on critical pedagogy and argues that a more strategic and tactical approach is

needed in the current political climate (2006). Many pedagogies have emerged since the publication of Freire's work and although they may have moved away from Freire's ideas about emancipation and the removal of 'false consciousness', they have retained a critical and questioning stance in relation to the issue of teaching and learning.

Practice and scholarship from the US features prominently in accounts of critical pedagogies and it is difficult not to replicate this in the production of this literature review. In order to attempt to counter this to some extent, I want to turn my attention now to current practice in the UK. Higher education classrooms are often the focus of scholarship exploring critical pedagogic praxis because these spaces are not subject to the same degree of surveillance and curriculum constraint as state primary and secondary schools. However, there are teachers and educators who are engaged in counter political work with primary and secondary school aged students. Some of this work occurs as part of official learning and teaching time in classrooms whilst other examples take place within the space of the school but at lunchtimes or after school. The groups and projects I will briefly explore here are not the only examples of critical pedagogic practice occurring in the UK: they are examples I have heard about through word of mouth and/ or the internet. It is not easy to track down individual teachers engaged in counter politics in their classrooms, especially if they do not write about their practice in a form that is available to others. Even groups of educators are not easy to locate for the same reasons. I write about the work I have come across over the course of writing this thesis in order to provide some indication of the innovative and creative practice that is occurring despite circumstances that often seem impossible.

The 'Radical Education Forum' is a group of educators that meet in person once a month in East London. I attended group meetings from 2011 to 2012 and, during my time there, members included Early Years teachers, primary and secondary teachers as well as museum educators and youth workers. Meetings usually centre around a particular reading, for instance Rancier's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Opressed* (1979) are examples of two focus texts used when I attended meetings. On their website, the group state that they are 'the staffroom we wish we all had' and, indeed, the group seems to play an important role in facilitating the members to support each other's pedagogical work. It is a space to

discuss the isolation and burn out from engaging in counter political pedagogy as well as a space to explore praxis and to learn from other members. Members of the group have collectively produced *The Radical Education Workbook* (2012) which is a free resource detailing different kinds of counter political pedagogic work. The resource focuses on practice and, alongside different theoretical ideas discussed, for instance, the decolonising of the curriculum, examples are given of different pedagogical approaches. This text is particularly interesting because it details the practice of educators currently working in London who are not necessarily involved in wider academic scholarship or research projects.

Darren Chetty runs an after school hip-hop club at the primary school where he used to work. He posts about the work the students produce in the club on his blog 'Rap Classroom' and on 'Powertothe pupils' on tumblr. His explorations of hip-hop as a potentially emancipatory tool are part of wider work going on within the field of 'hip-hop education' (Akom 2009). I mention Chetty's work here because of its focus on primary school aged children (much of the focus within hip-hop education is on older students). In the after school sessions, the students explore issues that are important to them through dialogic discussion, facilitated by Chetty. The themes and questions raised in these discussions form the basis of the hip-hop music produced and performed by the students. The active foregrounding of the students' voices and opinions in these sessions is something difficult to achieve in the official times of teaching and learning in the classroom yet the fact that the sessions take place on school premises and amongst students who attend the school means that the implications of the work they do reach beyond the sessions themselves. Indeed, such work has the potential to trouble the assumptions inscribed in the organisation and delivery of the school curriculum around the centrality of the teacher in the decision making and transmission of knowledge.

The final project I want to mention here, 'Illuminate', was designed and run by Anna Carlile at Goldsmiths University. It involves the training of students to become researchers and to raise questions about the school and their educational experience that matter to them. They then feedback their findings to school management. The way that the process unfolds differs from school to school but the work is often embedded within the official curricula and occurs within the school day. Similar to Chetty's work, there is an emphasis on a dialogic and collaborative practice which

actively foregrounds students' views and abilities as active researchers in a way that challenges traditional decision making processes in schools, which typically do not involve students.

I write about these examples here to indicate the counter political work that is occurring in the UK. I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive list of activity but, rather, I use the examples to show that whilst I practice and research at Greenfield Infants, in what often feels like isolation, there are other teachers, youth workers and educators in other parts of London who are also exploring alternative forms of pedagogy.

Poststructural politics, inequality and the everyday

As I have already mentioned, there are significant tensions between identity politics and poststructuralist politics yet categories of identity are central to both approaches. Broadly speaking, poststructuralist politics, deriving from the work of Foucault and Butler, aim to deconstruct categories of identity. Rather than understanding identity categories as descriptive of pre-existing subjects, poststructuralist approaches conceptualise identity categories as productive of the kinds of subjects they describe (Youdell 2006, 2006a). To give an example from education, prior to the introduction of the category 'gifted and talented' (2001) such students did not exist in schools. During my year at Greenfield Infants, I was informed that 10% of students are 'gifted and talented' and I am expected to find 10% of students from my own teaching cohort to fulfil this criteria. These students are not inherently gifted and talented, the category produced them as this, within its terms. Such categorisations are never neutral; they do important and powerful political work within the education system. I will continue to refer to the example of the category of 'gifted and talented' to illustrate this point. Whilst making it on to the gifted and talented register might gain a student particular privileges such as specialised teaching in the particular area they are deemed to excel in, opportunities to be taught with other students across the local authority and additional resources to support their progress (for example specialist PE or art equipment) the register itself and the categorisation of students within it can be highly problematic. Names of students are not simply added to the G&T register, they are added with the area/s they are gifted or talented in. Thus stereotypes are reinforced between the links made between students' minds and

bodies, particularly in relation to intersecting gendered and racial categories and the subject areas of schooling they are deemed to excel in. The information I have for Greenfield Infant School is for one year only and is, therefore, not a statistically significant sample. Nonetheless, differences in gender and race are notable in the data. For instance, the group of students deemed to be gifted and talented in mathematics is overwhelmingly male whilst more girls are labelled gifted and talented in literacy. Furthermore, black Caribbean boys were disproportionately represented in athletics whilst black Caribbean and African girls dominated the list for dance and music. Making it on to the G&T list at school may bring welcome challenge and additional resources to particular students yet, in so doing, it denies such privileges to other students and also reinforces particular stereotypes regarding gendered and raced bodies and their physical and academic abilities. This brief sketch of one category that is used day in and day out in primary schools begins to reveal the power of categorisation and persuades me of the need to look beyond identity politics for strategies to deconstruct and challenge the ways in which categories are created and used in schooling to produce particular kinds of subjects.

Indeed, since the pioneering work of Bronwyn Davies in the 1980s and 90s, scholars have been exploring different forms of poststructural politics in education. Davies' early work makes use of queer theory and the Butlerian notion of performativity to challenge normative enactments and conceptualisations of gender amongst young children. Davies and the research assistants with whom she worked opened up conversations about normative gender and heteronormativity via children's literature as well as through joining in children's play and conducting more formal interviews with children. Davies demonstrates both how young children can be engaged in practices of deconstruction in relation to gender politics and how attached they are to normative gendered practices. As Davies explains:

'Poststructuralist theory opens up the possibility of making [gender] visible. But making it visible to the children in the study groups was accompanied by repeated (re)turnings to the dominant discourses through which they knew themselves, through which they achieved the (pleasurable) sense of themselves as competent members of the social world' (2004, p.201).

Here we see the back and forth movement, discussed in more detail in chapter 2, of troubling and recuperation; the possibilities poststructuralist theory holds out for seeing and being differently yet the, often, painful, losses that doing so entails. Davies' work is significant in opening the door for further exploration of poststructuralist politics in education. Indeed, Blaise (2005) discusses some of the issues highlighted in the work of Davies. She uses Butler's (1990) notion of the 'heterosexual matrix' to research gender and heteronormativity with a teacher and class of kindergarten students in the US. Mac Naughton (2005) also focuses on students at the beginning of their school lives and explores, ethnographically, the role of power, truth and dominant discourse in their classrooms. She also works alongside practitioners working in different locations across Australia in a project that facilitates their use of poststructuralist theory in their settings. Her book uses their accounts of their practices in addition to classroom observations carried out by Mac Naughton herself. The work of Davies, Blaise and Mac Naughton, alongside the ethnographic work of Youdell (2006), Renold (2005) and Rasmussen (2006), inspired my early attempts at using queer theory to inform my pedagogic practice (during my time as a teacher-researcher on the 'No Outsiders' project which also coincided with the beginning of my teaching career).

These texts take an anti-developmental stance in relation to young children and indicate the way in which poststructuralist theory can be used to understand relations in classrooms and directly with students to provide them with the conceptual tools to be able to deconstruct their social worlds. It is interesting that all of these texts, bar *Shards of Glass* (Davies 2004), focus on kindergarten or early years classrooms. Whilst these are spaces that are often neglected within mainstream sociology of education texts, they become key sites of action within this literature. The emphasis on free play and the more flexible curriculum means that there is more opportunity to chat with the children in less formal situations and for teachers to have more autonomy over the development of the curriculum. There is also an argument made by both Blaise and Davies regarding the need to understand how normative gender and heterosexuality are enacted by very young children and are not only issues that become relevant once children are older. The pioneering nature of these texts also means that they can tend to glide over the difficulties of taking up performative politics in education and the contradictions in the practices of themselves and the teachers

with whom they work. Such difficulties, failures, contradictions and undesired outcomes are part of pedagogic practice in any classroom. In all of these studies the practitioners and researchers are caught up in myriad, often conflicting, discourses (as am I when I teach and research) and cannot simply eliminate particular discourses through which they are constituted in order to only enact pedagogy informed by poststructuralist theory. This absence of further theorisation around what it means to bring performative politics into the classroom is an area I hope to address in my discussion of my own pedagogic practice in this thesis.

A point of difficulty, for me, regarding the texts I discuss above is their unwavering stories of the 'success' of queer and/ or poststructuralist theory in the classroom. Deborah Britzman (1998) picks up on this point in relation to the broader field of education studies, via a footnote of Freud's in his text *Civilisation and its Discontents* (2002). She discusses Freud's reference to education as a 'false psychological orientation', arguing that this phrasing 'can be read as a critique of education's disavowal of the complexities and treacherous conflicts of "civilisation"' (p.79). Seemingly contrary to some of the narratives found in the texts I discuss above, Britzman suggests that queer pedagogy is deeply unsettling and impossible to sum up in neat stories of student and teacher success. She particularly focuses on the question of how we might attempt to know the other through issues of identity, empathy and representations of the self. Arguing against the kind of identity politics emerging from the agenda of neo-liberalism, she suggests that it is the ability to remain with the uncomfortable notion of difference in relation to the other that might open up further possibilities for finding spaces where the non-normative can live. Britzman suggests that when we lose sight of the historicity of affect we risk projecting ourselves onto the other in our attempts to empathise (1998, p. 81). 'Can pedagogy move beyond the production of rigid subject positions,' asks Britzman, 'and ponder, the fashioning of the self that occurs when attention is given to the performativity of the subject in queer relationality?' (ibid.). Britzman's theorisation of relations between self and other here echo Butler's discussion of similar issues, discussed in chapters 2 and 6, but with a specific focus on pedagogy. I find Britzman's questions here useful in helping me to think about the issue of relationality in pedagogical politics. There are no straightforward narratives of challenging normativity here and no comfortable closure

to the questions she poses. This is a point to which I shall return later in this chapter, and, indeed, throughout the chapters of this thesis.

Whilst the studies I have mentioned so far from Davies, Blaise and MacNaughton are primarily focused on practice, other ethnographic work offers more nuanced theoretical analysis of everyday politics. Through my explorations of questions around counter politics in this thesis, I hope to produce in depth theoretical engagements with practice in an attempt to challenge the hierarchical binary relationship that often exists between theory and practice (Grainger, 2011). Indeed, if we are to take seriously the potential of practice to disrupt the everyday normative, business-as-usual, discourses that produce educational inequalities, we need nuanced and rigorous conceptualisations of this practice and its effects. I hope that this thesis begins to demonstrate some of the ways in which this is possible and productive. The notion that inequalities are produced in the everyday practices of teaching and learning is crucial to my understandings of the political. Indeed, I particularly draw on Youdell's applications of the work of Butler to educational contexts, to inform my understanding of the importance of the everyday.

I am going to turn my attention now to neo-liberalism and its impact on educational policy and practice. Whilst my primary concern in this thesis is not the operation of neo-liberalism, I do discuss what it means to enact counter politics as a teaching subject produced and made legible, to myself and others, in neo-liberal discourses. I am, therefore, going to spend some time discussing literature that engages with neo-liberalism in education as the theoretical work done by this literature informs the way in which I conceptualise the operations of this ideology at Greenfield Infants.

Neo-liberalism and post neo-liberalism in the classroom

Apple (2000) argues that within discourses of neo-liberalism, education is seen 'as a product to be evaluated for its economic utility and as a commodity to be bought and sold like anything else in the 'free market'' (p.111). Since the Thatcher government came to power in the late 1970s, the UK has seen a series of education reforms which have shifted the responsibility of the provision of education from the state on to other, often private sector or charitable, organisations (Ball 2012b). The retreat of the state

has, non-coincidentally, coincided with an increasingly market driven approach to all aspects of education. Whilst the current Conservative government and the previous Coalition government are stepping back in order to allow the market to step forward, the previous New Labour government opted for the so called 'Third Way' approach which incorporated the market into its regulation of educational institutions. Ball (2012b) argues that the education policies of New Labour were the policies of the previous Conservative governments, but enacted differently and, likewise, the Coalition government took up the policies of New Labour but, again, carried out these policies in a different way to their predecessors (p.95). In this section, I will provide a brief overview of research regarding neo-liberalism and education, particularly focusing on the impact on pedagogy and curriculum in the UK. I hope that this will provide some background for the later discussions in this thesis regarding the kind of pedagogical counter politics that might be possible or impossible to enact in such a climate. There is a significant and important body of scholarship which engages critically with the impacts of neo-liberal education policy (in all its different guises, globally and locally), and it is far beyond the scope of this study to discuss it fully here (see, for example, Apple 2000, Torres 2002, Apple 2006). However, whilst my discussion here purposely focuses on the situation in the UK, I am aware that education policy is not produced in isolation and the global trends in education policy need to be kept in mind when discussing the more local context.

Neo-liberalism, teacher subjectivity and pedagogy

Professional values and standards in education slip away as emphasis is placed on market values and competition (Ball and Youdell 2007, p.51). Such shifts not only alter educational practices but fundamentally change teacher and student subjectivity (Ball 2003, Ball and Youdell 2007). According to Ball (2003), these changes are brought about through the mobilisation of 'policy technologies' which operate to align the public sector with the private sector through a focus on marketisation, managerialism and performativity. In theory, educational standards are raised by such an approach as schools compete with one another to rise in publicly published league tables and to attract the best teaching staff. Ball and Youdell (2007), however, argue that whilst standards in education, based on external performance indicators, overall might rise in such a system, the gap between the most socio-

economically deprived groups of students and the least, is increasing as is the gap in attainment between different racial and ethnic groups of students. In such a system, there are also relational shifts between teachers as collegiality is replaced with competition and comparison. A culture of accountability, so familiar in the world of business and commerce, means that teachers are held individually accountable for the progress their students make and are subject to an array of surveillance measures intended to review their performance. Following Lyotard (1984), Ball (2003) terms the effects of such processes 'terrors of performativity'. The term performativity is used here to denote a mode of neo-liberal policy regulation whereby the performances of individuals (and schools) serve as measures of productivity and, therefore, value.

In such a climate of judgement induced fear, an emphasis is placed on appearance over more authentic engagement with students, pedagogy and the curriculum. Over the past two decades, student assessment has become an increasingly more central aspect of UK education from foundation stage to key stage 5. League tables of student assessment data are published in national newspapers and are the main sources of information parents receive, alongside publicly available Ofsted reports, to help them select a school for their child. This system is part of the marketisation of education and as well as increasing competition amongst schools, it also increases competition amongst teaching staff who are judged by how much progress their students have made. This is not only problematic in that what is assessed is so narrow but, as Stobart (2008), argues, high stakes testing often results in a reduction in the breadth of curricula and a focus on 'teaching to the test' in schools. Student assessments are not simply a stressful 'add on' at the end of a school term or year, they are now woven into the very fabric of teaching and learning in schools, never far from the minds of teaching staff, and fundamentally altering what is taught and how.

Assessment

So, one aspect of neo-liberal performativity is the assessment of teachers via their students' test results. In UK schools, students are assessed through a practice termed 'levelling'. In the mid 1990s a form of statutory assessment testing (SATs) was introduced for students at the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 in Literacy, Numeracy and Science. Student results, or levels, based on test performance are

published annually although since 2011, key stage 1 SATs have not been compulsory (but many schools do continue to opt in). For primary school students between the ages of 5 and 11, the expected level range is between 1C and 5A, each level being divided into three 'sub levels' (a, b and c). The levels themselves continue upwards to level 10A which is the equivalent to an A* at GCSE, supposedly providing a standardised and universal means by which to track student progress from early years through to the end of key stage 4. Whilst only the results of particular year groups are published, the pressure on schools to prepare students for SATs and at secondary level, GCSEs, to ensure they achieve the best possible grades means that levelling is a standard practice in all primary year groups and is done through a combination of student testing, student class work and teacher observation. Class teachers receive the previous test results of their class at the beginning of the school year and all students are expected to make at least two sub levels progress by the end of the year (so, for instance, if a year 2 student began the year on a level 2C for writing, it is expected that by the end of the academic year they would be on a 2A). Teachers are held accountable for the progress their students make and schools often hold 'tracking' meetings with teachers and senior leaders throughout the year to check whether students are on target to make the required two sub levels progress.

However, whilst the two sub level leap is the stated aim for all students, in reality, it is more of an aim for some than others. For each year group, there is a benchmark level (operating similarly to the grade 'C' GCSE in secondary education) that students are pushed to reach. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) argue that a system of educational triage operates in secondary schools, whereby the students deemed to be able to move from a D grade to a C grade GCSE are given additional teaching support to achieve this whilst other students who teachers decide are not likely to reach grade C are put in lower ability groups and made to sit exam papers where the highest grade they can achieve is a D. Stobart (2008) documents the ways in which resources are disproportionately allocated to primary school students likely to make the benchmark level 4 in the end of Key Stage 2 SATs tests. He describes how government funded 'booster groups', taking place before and after school, are offered to those students thought to be capable of achieving the benchmark level, rather than those students who are most in need of additional learning support (p.127). Within this context of high stakes testing, school data about other aspects of student identity

become crucial. For instance, numbers of students on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and the gifted and talented register are not simply important with regards to funding, although it is undoubtedly crucial for schools to have the registers correctly updated for these purposes, but also because there is a 'reason' for students on the SEN register to not make the expected progress. Thus schools can claim, when for instance questioned by Ofsted or the Local Authority, the reason some students do not make the expected progress is due to their additional learning needs rather than the quality of provision at the school.

Ofsted

Ofsted inspections, the actual events and their spectres, form another part of neo-liberal performativity in primary schools. As mentioned above, a school's assessment data is part of what is being assessed when Ofsted inspect a school but the inspectors also judge other areas of the school's performance. Ofsted sets out, as follows, its remit in terms of the specific areas it reports:

'7. Inspectors are required to report on the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover:

the achievement of pupils at the school

the quality of teaching in the school

the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

the quality of leadership in and management of the school

8. When reporting, inspectors must also consider:

the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school

the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.' (Ofsted 2014)

Prior to 2005, schools were inspected every six years and were given two months notice of an inspection. Inspections lasted one week and the subsequent reports, publicly available, were intended to provide parents with an 'objective and expert' opinion of the standard of the school in order that an informed decision regarding school choice can be made by parents (Elliot 2012). In 2005 the inspection framework changed: Inspections now happen more frequently (every 3 years), the inspection visits are shorter (lasting 2 or 3 days) and school senior leadership teams are expected to keep updated the school's online self evaluation form (SEF). As Elliot (2012) explains, the SEF is frozen online when Ofsted announce their visit so that no last minute alterations can be made. Ofsted framework changes since 2012 have stripped back some regulation for schools judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding', allowing them a five year reprieve between inspections but have increased the pressure on those schools deemed not to be making satisfactory progress. For such schools, inspections happen more frequently and with less notice. The judgements have also been altered, as of September 2012, so that where, previously, a school might have been graded 'satisfactory', it would now be graded as 'requires improvement' and is expected to make the necessary improvements to move out of this category before facing closure.

Drawing on Foucault's (1991) work concerning panoptic power, Perryman (2006, 2007) argues that school inspection regimes engender, what she terms, 'panoptic performativity'. According to Perryman (2007), 'panoptic performativity describes a regime in which frequency of inspection and the sense of being perpetually under surveillance leads to teachers performing in ways dictated by the discourse of inspection in order to escape the regime' (p.173). Such performances occur not only during inspections but at all times, thus, as Ball (2003) also argues, altering the subjectivity of teachers. In her study of the emotional impact of Ofsted on teachers in two secondary schools, Perryman (2007) found that one of the predominant feelings amongst teachers post inspection (regardless of how well the inspection goes) is disaffection (p.187). Prior to inspections, according to Perryman's research, teachers often experience overwhelming feelings of fear and exhaustion from overwork but, overall, despite initial relief and even elation following a successful inspection, the effects of the inspection regime are to distance and alienate teachers from their work.

Post neo-liberalism

The emphasis in education on high stakes testing, accountability and technocratic approaches to teaching, learning and the curriculum continue to form the cornerstones of education policy and practice in the UK. It is important to note, however, that the last decade has seen alterations in practices of governance which enables neo-liberalism to operate in different ways, making new connections and networks across public, private and charitable sectors, globally and locally. These changes are happening bewilderingly quickly and are difficult to keep apace of. Ball (2012) describes these new connections and partnerships as 'networks' and develops ways to analyse the new education policy emerging from these networks. Whilst this 'policy network analysis' is not my focus in this study, I mention it here because this gear change in neo-liberalism, that Ball attempts to capture, impacts upon Greenfield Infants during my fieldwork there. This gear change might, more properly, be referred to as 'post neo-liberalism'. There is debate between policy sociologists regarding whether the term 'post' should be ascribed to the neo-liberalism practiced under New Labour, and by subsequent governments since, or to the practices of the coalition government alone (Ball 2012). These debates regarding where neo-liberalism ends and post neo-liberalism begins are not of foremost concern to me here as I perceive a merging of practices and approaches, not incompatible with one another. However, the recent increase in privatisation and decrease of state regulation, under the Conservative/ Liberal-Democrat coalition government and subsequent Conservative government, has seen further changes to education policy and practice and holds interest for me as my fieldwork year at Greenfield (2011-2012) coincides with the Coalition government's second year of office.

Academies

Ball (2012) suggests that 2010 marks the 'beginning of the end of state education' (p. 89). Indeed, whilst the Academies programme began under New Labour, it has accelerated since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010. This is a move which sees the state stepping back to allow business investors and private companies to take the reins and schools become accountable to Whitehall as opposed to the Local Authority. Ball argues that 'while Labour sought after 1997 to reform education by regulation and through centralised programmes the Coalition

Government in 2010 (following the conservative election manifestoes) intend to achieve change by reducing and stripping out regulation, and giving schools and head teachers more autonomy, and allowing ever greater diversity (of some sorts) and a much greater emphasis on consumerism' (p.95). As Junemann and Ball (2013) argue, 'there are now new actors and voices within policy conversations and new conduits through which alternative policy discourses enter policy thinking which have the effect of increasingly blurring the demarcation lines between state and market, public and private, government, business and third sector, and producing a convergence of methods, values and forms of organisation across sectors' (p. 424). Education for profit is becoming a new norm (although not yet in terms of individual schools) and it is, indeed, big business. The increased flexibility for education brings a change in the conditions for teachers and schools. Poor performance can lead to dismissal as schools are given increased autonomy over staff and their pay. Similarly, poorly performing schools can be shut down or taken over in a climate which is influenced by market forces as opposed to the quasi market systems of state controlled schooling. Indeed, as I mention above and elsewhere in this thesis, the issue of academisation of schools is particularly relevant to Greenfield Infants as the school became an academy just after I left in the summer term of 2012 due to, what the Local Authority, deemed to be increasingly unsatisfactory assessment results.

Discomfort, silence, difficulty and mistakes

Neo-liberalism insidiously alters what it means to teach and learn as education systems are marketised by national and international league tables and student performance (judged by very specific and measurable criteria) becomes the priority. Holding on to hope in such a context is very hard and the desire to share narratives of success is great. This is something I discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to some scholars' early explorations of performative pedagogy. Narratives of alternative political practices that feel hopeful, where norms that perpetuate inequalities are challenged and where students become unstuck from the stories of themselves as 'impossible' or 'undesirable' learners (Youdell 2006) are important to share. Indeed, within a context where educational counter politics feels very difficult to enact, I want to suggest that the sharing of narratives of hope is, in itself, a political act in that they refuse the, often, seemingly totalising power of neo-liberalism. However, whilst I am

committed to producing narratives concerning the moments of hope and transformation (however small) that unfold over the year I spend as part-time class teacher to Oak Class, I want to also include the complexity and difficulty of endeavouring to enact counter politics conceptually framed by notions of performative subjectivity. Earlier in the chapter I discussed the emerging body of psychoanalytically informed education literature that drew me to, and gave me a language to think about, relationality in the classroom. Whilst this project is situated conceptually in poststructuralist understandings of subjectivity, it is via these psychoanalytic texts that I began to think about teaching as an 'impossible profession' (Bibby 2011), and started to question how the difficulties of pedagogy more generally intersect with the enactment of counter politics in the classroom.

Granger's *Silent Moments in Education* (2011) is a text that speaks to just these places of difficulty and the feelings of being stuck in regard to the practice of pedagogy. Her work on enactments of silence in education is significant in mapping how power operates to privilege particular knowledges whilst further obscuring others. It also prompts me to reflect upon the students and perspectives I privilege here in this thesis and to consider who and what gets left out and why. Of course, there are bound to be students I write about more than others and events that I analyse in detail whilst others, in fact the majority of classroom interactions across the year, remain unwritten about, even in the form of observation notes. For me, the interest and importance of noticing this, however, is to see how the stories I produce here further contribute to the marginalisation of particular students. Finding a way to acknowledge what feels difficult to write about and telling some of the stories from my fieldwork that are hard to tell helps me to hold onto the ambivalence and uncertainty around the counter politics I explore through my pedagogic practice. In her text, *Education – an 'Impossible Profession'?* Bibby (2011) argues that learning is always a challenging endeavour, regardless of the learner or when they are learning. Rather than teachers trying and trying again to get teaching 'right' the focus should be shifted on to being 'good enough' by accepting that failure is inevitable but that one can, perhaps, 'fail better' (pp.135-139). This text and those of Britzman, help me to stay with the complexity of the narratives I tell in this thesis. They caution me against setting up a dichotomy between neo-liberalism and performative politics and help me to see that

no pedagogic intervention I explore is going to 'fix' the difficulties of education or successfully 'transform' the teaching and learning in my classroom.

Britzman and Pitt's (1996) paper argues that the past of learning is always in the present of teaching. The authors suggest that the students that we, as teachers, are drawn to and want to see succeed are those who most remind us of a part of our younger, learning, selves. Drawing on the work of Anna Freud (1979), Britzman and Pitt wonder what happens to the students who do not remind the teacher of themselves. This question resonates with me as I look back upon the data I have generated and notice that particular students feature again and again whilst others I taught remain absent. Whilst it seems, to me, reductive to attribute the pull we feel towards particular students only to issues of transference, without acknowledgment of the politics of, for instance, gender, race and class which are also always in play, the way our own psychic lives compel us to focus on particular students is important to note with regard to issues of inequality in schools.

My own psychic history is entangled within the neo-liberal discourses through which I am made recognisable as a teacher. There are no straightforward stories of transformation to be told from my year in the field, attempting to explore counter politics in the classroom. The classroom in which I worked in the academic year 2011 to 2012, was, for many reasons which I shall discuss, a chaotic place and the pressures on me and the students I taught were immense. This did not stop me from exploring the potential of performative politics and other political approaches to counter some of the ways in which inequalities were made in the everyday tasks of teaching and learning at this site. However, I often found myself in places of ambivalence, confusion and frustration and maintaining the momentum to continue to try to practice counter pedagogy and to hold on to hope was hard.

Affect, politics and pedagogy

Education scholars are becoming increasingly interested in affect and its relationship to the political. As Hickey-Moody and Crowley (2010) point out, much work around affect is influenced by the writings of Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari and is not used to denote feeling or emotion but, instead, refers to a 'force and capacity' (Watkins 2006, p.269). Whilst feeling is involved in this conceptualisation of affect, it is not the nameable feelings of individuals but rather, the embodied experience of

feeling. Affect does not belong to an individual but occurs in the collective space of the in-between and registers not in the order of the symbolic but on a different terrain. Youdell and Armstrong (2011) argue that this 'step away from the affectivities of individuated subject towards those of a collectivity that is an amalgam rather than a collection of individuals, suggests new ways of thinking about emotional geographies that might offer a move beyond the recognitions and reinscriptions of a Butlerian performative politics' (p.145). Whilst this thesis very much explores the potential of pedagogy based in performative politics to disrupt the mundane, everyday ways in which inequalities are produced in classrooms, I also acknowledge and seek to understand the political work enacted on levels of being which are not discursive. It is not a matter of focusing on a politics of affect *or* on a politics of performative reinscription but rather a case of how *both* these political approaches can inform understanding of how normative schooling discourses and practices might be disrupted in the classroom.

Indeed, this is an area that sociologists of education are beginning to explore. Youdell's (2011) ethnographic study of a school for boys with 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties', argues that the effects of the affective intensities, produced collectively, of boys' bodies 'shaking, shuddering, rolling, calling, connecting, colliding' (p.108) becomes political in the ways in which these bodies refuse to act their place in the educational discourse of the school. These collective bodily practices and the affects from which they emerge and which emerge from them exceed the terrain of the discursive. Similarly, Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2007), drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, pose the question 'what can bodies do?' in relation to classroom pedagogy and politics. They argue that affect in classrooms is political and an essential aspect of being that needs to be engaged with when considering social change. Focusing on the classroom and what lies beyond it, they write:

'Affect doubly articulates what happens inside the classroom with larger cultural and social struggles, and it does so without reducing those struggles to questions of identity. The vocabulary and concept of affect encourage recognition that bodies don't always (or necessarily) respond as men, women, young, old, heterosexual, homosexual, teacher, student and so on.' (Albrecht-Crane and Slack 2007, p.105).

Albrecht-Crane and Slack, here, are suggesting the possibility contained in the conceptual move from a focus on discursive categories of identity to the affective desires and flows of the body. Whilst I maintain throughout this thesis the ethical necessity of engaging with the operation of identity categories in education, I also acknowledge the limitations of a performative politics of reinscription that works to disrupt identity categories. I therefore seek to explore the politics of affect in the classroom alongside performative reinscription in relation to challenging inequalities.

Conclusions and Organisation of the thesis

In this opening chapter I have introduced my thesis and have situated it within different bodies of academic scholarship. I have provided a background to current neo-liberal policies and practices in education and have engaged with some different ways of understanding educational inequalities. As I have explored, there are many ways in which to consider critical pedagogy and pedagogic interventions that attempt to disrupt these inequalities. Whilst the pedagogical approaches I have discussed can seem conceptually disparate, they share a common ground in terms of their questioning and critical approach to addressing inequality in education. Critical pedagogies of race and gender tend to present an educational subject who is fairly stable and enduring but we find less knowable subjects in the literature on pedagogy from psychoanalytic scholars such as Deborah Britzman (1996, 1998, 2003) and Tamara Bibby (2009, 2011). This work speaks in interesting ways to some writing about critical pedagogy and poststructuralist pedagogy which can present narratives of simple transformation and social justice which can, albeit unintentionally, serve to obscure the everyday difficulties of teaching and learning. Poststructuralist pedagogies based in Butlerian performativity focus on a discursively constituted subject whose identity is contingent and open to reinscription whilst pedagogies of affect and desire, drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari conceptualise the body and the collective practices of bodies as sites for political change. As I move through the arguments in this thesis, I will explore the ways in which I take up different political approaches tactically at different points across the academic year and also how I, less knowingly, find my politics developing in response to the particular politics of the institution of Greenfield Infants.

In chapter 2, I explore some of the conceptual issues with which I engage throughout this thesis regarding subjectivity, recognisability and agency in relation to

politics. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach I adopt in the field and my analysis and explains the way in which this methodology is informed by my conceptual framing of my work. In Chapter 4, I give an account of Greenfield Infants, my place of work, and fieldwork site for a year, in order to explore what it means to do counter political work here. The discussion in chapter 5 focuses on the possibilities for counter politics in the official spaces of teaching and learning via the curriculum taught whilst chapter 6 engages with the idea of relationality in the enactment of performative politics. Prior to considering future possibilities for collaboration and collectivity in counter politics, chapter 7 details the potential of spatial-temporal liminality to disrupt the teacher/ student binary. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, exploring developing forms of collective political action in education which might help to sustain the micro politics of the classroom I engage with in this thesis.

2. Conceptual understandings of counter politics in education: questions and tensions

As I outlined in the previous chapter, Judith Butler's theory of performativity has informed much work within the sociology of education concerning pedagogic politics. My intention in this chapter is to explore more fully some of the problematics I outlined in the previous chapter regarding performative politics, recognisability and subjectivity. As I have already mentioned, even in poststructuralist accounts of the classroom, the pedagogue is often produced as a subject able to effect change in some way. There seems, to me, a tension between this notion of the pedagogue and the subject of Butler's work which is non-unitary and whose individual agency is questionable. One of the primary concerns of this thesis is the extent to which the teaching subject (in this case, myself) produced by power and constrained by power, can instigate political transformation of some kind through pedagogic intervention in the classroom. If so, what form can this transformation take and what kind of subject is produced in such a situation? What kind of intervention emerges in the tension produced by my need to remain recognisable whilst simultaneously disrupting particular normative schooling practices? These questions and tensions play themselves out in my classroom practice on a daily basis. I will not attempt to resolve them here, indeed, they are not always resolvable, but I hope that this conceptual engagement will further highlight the points of contradiction and reveal their productive potential in terms of my development of pedagogic politics. Butler's theories of the subject, subjectivation and performativity have been taken up by education scholars concerned with issues of identity and inequality in education (Davies 1989, Davies 2004, Blaise 2005, Rasmussen 2005, Renold 2005, Rasmussen 2006, Youdell 2006, Youdell 2006a, Youdell 2011). Of particular interest to these scholars is often the potential for political action to emerge through the performative function of subjectivation. Youdell (2006) suggests that acknowledgement of the ways in which subjects are constituted discursively might open up possibilities for alternative constitutions. She argues that educators 'might engage with deconstructive thinking to expose how their own practices act to entangle and/ or conflate social, biographical, sub-cultural and school identity categories' (p.182). Given my focus in this thesis relates to pedagogic politics and, more specifically, how I might be able to disrupt some of the everyday practices producing

inequality in the classroom, I want to focus on Butler's notion of discursive agency in relation to the Foucauldian conceptions of power that inform her analysis in order to explore how it might open up space for political action in the classroom.

I am particularly interested in the possibility offered by the paradox inherent in subjectivation: the process contains the potential for alternative subjectivities, yet, simultaneously, and necessarily, insists on these being recognisable within existing discourses. My commitment to Butler, and her theorizations of power which build on the work of Foucault, is based in my pedagogic practice in the classroom which brings me back again and again to my own subjectivity as teacher and the political possibilities and restraints produced by this category. As I shall explore in more detail later in this thesis, in my role as teacher, I am legally required to call up particular categories of identity in relation to my students; subjectivating them in particular ways over and over again as part of my day to day practice. As I shall later discuss in more detail, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) argue, citing Gayatri Spivak, this neo-liberal recognition is something that we cannot not want (Spivak 1993, pp.45-6 cited in , Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p.76).

I continue this chapter with a discussion of Foucault's arguments concerning power and resistance as these ideas are key to Butler's theories and, for me, are key to understanding relations of power in education. As Youdell states, when considering counter politics and schooling, it is essential to understand 'power and its operations – we need to know as clearly as possible what it is that we are up against' (2011, p.138). From here I move to a consideration of Butler's conceptualisation of the subject and the process of subjectivation as these concepts are so central to performative politics. I follow this with a consideration of the issue of agency as this is, for me, an important consideration in relation to political pedagogy and the extent to which the individual teacher can determine the action they pursue. Also important to my discussion, and practice, of political pedagogy are issues of recognisability and ethical responsibility and it is to these concerns that I turn my focus in the latter part of this chapter.

Power and resistance

Central to the accounts of politics and pedagogy discussed in the previous chapter is a commitment to decentring power and its constitutive effects on the

subjects of education. Foucauldian conceptions of power and discourse have long informed the work of scholars within the sociology of education (Ball 2003, Mac Naughton 2005, Perryman 2007, Ball 2013). Foucault's theories of power are an important departure point for my discussion here given their centrality to Butler's analysis of performativity and discursive agency. Foucault's conceptualisation of power is often understood to be totalising as it is everywhere and is the force which both bears down upon the subject and which is constitutive of the subject. Power is not something that can be possessed, rather, it is ever present and operates relationally. The subject never stands outside of power but always acts from within its constraints. Yet resistance does not emerge through individual subjects exercising their agency. Foucault conceptualises it as existing alongside power, a force that pushes back much like the way in which magnetic forces operate. 'Where there is power,' argues Foucault, 'there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (p.95). Resistance here is symbiotically related to power, and, therefore, never external to it.

Foucault demonstrates the way in which power and resistance co-exist both textually as well as through the content of what he writes. 'Power,' explains Foucault in 'The Will to Knowledge', 'must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation' (p.92). Resistance is implicit in the idea of 'force relations'. In physics, resistance is always present when force is exerted on mass. Foucault seems to present resistance as a given here. It is not something that actively opposes power but, rather, it is present at the site of the enactment of power. This raises an interesting point about the relationship between power and resistance in Foucault's work. Indeed, it is not always clear whether power exists in an a-priori relationship to resistance, whether they are always simultaneous or whether it is, in fact, resistance that carries power in its wake. In the opening pages of chapter two of 'Will to Knowledge', these three different conceptualisations of resistance emerge. 'Where there is power, there is resistance', states Foucault in an assertion that positions resistance as secondary to power. Power and resistance seem to exist simultaneously in his conception of 'force relations', yet, later, he seems to suggest that resistance is constitutive of power:

'Power's conditions of possibility, or in any case the viewpoint which permits one to understand its exercise, even in its more 'peripheral' effects, and which also makes it possible to use its mechanisms as a grid of intelligibility of the social order, must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable' (p.93).

As before, I interpret resistance in the unequal force relations here which makes sense if we understand Foucault to be using a metaphor from physics. It is worth giving some more consideration to this understanding. In physics there is always resistance when a force is exerted, even if the resistance is lesser than the force itself. Foucault seems to imply here that resistance is a necessary condition for power itself. Indeed, somewhat paradoxically, he suggests that if resistance is absent, there is no need for power. He expands on this point later in the chapter. Referring to the 'relational character of power relationships', he explains 'their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance' (p.95). This is a more explicit acknowledgement of the primacy of resistance in the constitution of power.

In this theory, Foucault prepares the ground for his explanation of 'a plurality of resistances' as opposed to a 'single locus of great Refusal' (p.96). The picture Foucault is beginning to build of resistance is one in which it is wholly linked to power in the way that it provides the very conditions for power. This completely reverses more traditional, rational, understandings of power and resistance whereby power is something oppressive to be actively opposed by resistance. In Foucault's understanding, resistance happens as a matter of course and, because it is constitutive of power, it cannot exist outside of it. Indeed, it seems that this is not how Foucault is theorising resistance here.

The operation of totalizing power is depicted by Foucault through his use of the metaphor of the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's infamous prison watch tower from which prison guards can see inside any cell at any moment. The panopticon generates a power that is disciplinary, and ultimately results in self-discipline amongst the

prisoners who are unable to tell whether the guards are watching their cell at any given moment.

Foucault calls into question the notion of resistance as a singular movement or uni-directional opposition to power. There is no hint of any kind of epiphany moment or breakthrough in a momentous struggle. Yet this is not to say that there is no possibility for power to be disrupted at all. Indeed, for Foucault, resistance is an inevitable precondition for power. It is plural and its sites are multiple. It has to operate on the terms of power, it cannot escape, but, nonetheless, it does intervene in power. Foucault's discussion of discourse serves to demonstrate this point:

'[D]iscourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (p.101).

This quotation demonstrates Foucault's view that power and discourse are inextricably intertwined. They operate at the very same site of discourse, both facilitating and disrupting each other in a constant struggle. Foucault suggests here the interminable nature of this struggle; the impossibility of resolution, yet, simultaneously he hints at the possibility created in his notion of resistance. Indeed, he reminds us that discourse 'reinforces' power but states that it 'also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (p.101). This seems an optimistic understanding of resistance. In this section of the chapter, Foucault frequently writes about power and resistance in the same sentence, linking them in textual proximity and demonstrating their interdependence. It is resistance's proximity to power in Foucault's theory that gives it its potential to disrupt. Foucault further indicates this in his example of gay rights movements. He suggests that various discourses and institutions 'made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity,"' yet he goes on to point out that these very discourses and institutions 'made possible a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy [...] be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified' (p.101). Resistance here takes on the terms given by power, yet, in doing this, these terms are shifted slightly or troubled; they cannot remain as they were.

A question arises then as to the status of the subject within such a conception of power and resistance. The subject, produced by power and on the terms of power, seems insignificant in the shifting reconfigurations of power and resistance. What then for the individual teaching subject attempting to enact particular pedagogic politics to effect change? Is such a subject, conceptualised in this way as having agency of some kind, even possible? Whilst acknowledging that we are never external to power nor does agency derive solely from the individual subject, Judith Butler makes a case for, what she terms, 'discursive agency'. Indeed, as I mentioned above, the notion of a performative politics, developed by Butler and taken up by some pedagogues, emerges from the possibilities opened up by the idea of discursive agency.

Subjectivated subjects, performativity and discursive agency

Subjectivation, the process by which subjects are produced as intelligible, is key to many poststructuralist understandings of educational inequality and performativity is a central concept in understanding this process. Butler builds on Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts and Derrida's (1988) response to Austin to suggest that gender is not a matter of having or being but of doing. Austin sought to shift linguistic discussion concerning the purpose of statements in language away from truth claims and towards an understanding of the performative. That is to say, according to Austin, statements do not describe a past, present or future situation that is either true or false, rather they constitute what becomes truth. 'The issuing of an utterance', explains Austin, 'is the performing of an action' (p.6). No longer is language only semantic in this conceptualisation of the speech act but it becomes social. Indeed, Austin offers particular examples, often linked to the law, to demonstrate speech acts which say as they do such as 'I now pronounce you...' in a wedding ceremony or 'I sentence you...' in a court (1970, p.235). Language becomes inextricably implicated in social practices and thus becomes about the positionality of the subjects that speak. Indeed, as Derrida (1988) argues, the performative utterance locates the words of the speaker within a citational chain which indicates that the authority of the words do not originate with the speaker themselves. Butler takes up this iterative model of the performative to develop her theory of gender performativity. Critiquing biological, psychoanalytic and constructionist theories which view gender as an internal given, Butler troubles the relationship between sex, gender and sexual orientation. She

argues that what appears to be internal is, in fact, fabricated and that corporeality itself is part of this fabrication:

Words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but can never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (p.136)

Butler renders visible the illusion of gender as natural or inherent and, in so doing, calls into question distinctions between the internal and external; between the body and society. These gendered practices, the continual repetition of which 'is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established' (Butler 1990, p.140), are not 'done' by a pre-existing subject but are the process by which the subject is constituted. There is ambiguity at the site of subjection, the performative process by which a subject is produced and made legible as a subject. Indeed, Butler argues that in order to become proper and recognisable, the subject must identify with a fiction of itself and simultaneously disavow this process of identification. The subject must identify with that which it will become (for instance, female, feminine, straight) which will always be a fantasy in that it is an identity that is not fully realisable (due to the absence of a natural sexed or gendered essence) and yet, the subject must not see that this is what it does. It is this not seeing, or disavowal, that ensures the continuation of the illusion of a gendered identity that is enduring and fixed. As already mentioned, the subject is conceptualised here as produced by the performance rather than existing prior to it. This raises interesting and important questions regarding agency, especially when we consider performativity in relation to pedagogic politics. Indeed, what can be meant by politics here when any notion of a completely cognisant, rational 'I' has been destabilised? In order to think through this issue further, it is necessary to confront, again, the ambivalence intrinsic to the process

of subjectivation. This is something Butler (1997b) explores in more detail in her text *The Psychic Life of Power*.

Building upon the work of Foucault regarding the productive nature of power, Butler theorises subjectivation as produced within and by power but also attempts to account for the psyche in this process. Power is not simply the external proliferation of force relations which provide the site upon which the subject is produced but this power is also internalised, becoming the 'guilty conscience' of the subject (p. 107). The ambivalence present at the site of the subject is key here. 'How can it be that the subject, taken to be the condition for and instrument of agency, is at the same time the effect of subordination, understood as the deprivation of agency?' asks Butler (1997b p.10). In order for the subject to become recognisable, it must take on the terms of power that are not its terms. Thus, power can be said not only to act upon the subject and to constitute the very conditions of the subject's viability but also to act through the subject. The 'I' uttered by the subject in its claim to selfhood, is not in fact the possession of the subject but belongs to a discourse that exceeds the subject. As Butler explains, subjectivation 'consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency' (1997b p.2). The process that gives us the experience of agency, then, paradoxically, involves an initial move that is without agency. This fundamental dependency is not of our choosing. In order to become recognisable, there is no option for the subject but to attach passionately to her/his subordination. This attachment is ongoing and marks an uncomfortable tension with the sense of agency it affords the subject. Following Foucault, Butler argues that this agency experienced by the subject does not reside within the subject. As discussed earlier this notion of residing within does not make sense within this framework for understanding the subject in which the inside/ outside binary in relation to the subject is troubled. In his text *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault argues that resistance is a consequence of power relations rather than a choice deriving from the agency of subjects. Indeed, Foucault argues that the operations of power must necessarily be obscured from the subject. The subject does not see what subjects her/ him, not because she/ he actively *chooses* not to see but because this is how power relations work. As Foucault explains, 'secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation' (1981, p.86). Whilst Foucault argues that there is a foreclosure of knowledge on the part of the subject, although not

intentional, regarding power relations, Butler argues, not dissimilarly, that the subject must disavow knowledge of its constitution as a subject. Again, the subject cannot acknowledge this disavowal and again, we see power relations operating unchecked and unnoticed. The subject cannot oppose power because, as earlier discussed, it is dependent upon it; passionately attached to it, for its continued recognisability and viability. Such a conceptualisation of the discursive production of the subject in power renders any notion of emancipation from power untenable. So, from where does the subject act, if, indeed, she can? And to what extent can the subject oppose power when she is dependent upon it?

In her text, *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997a) suggests that power in its different forms can be resisted but maintains that it is impossible to move outside of power. It is the necessity for the subject to perform itself again and again that offers a prospect of performing differently within the discourses in which the subject is constituted. Discussing the notion of agency in the final chapter of this text, Butler writes:

Because the agency of the subject is not a property of the subject, an inherent will or freedom, but an effect of power, it is constrained but not determined in advance. If the subject is produced in speech through a set of foreclosures then this founding and formative limitation sets the scene for the agency of the subject. (p.139).

A conceptualisation of agency which understands it as deriving from the free will of the subject is troubled here. As earlier discussed, the 'I' of the subject is not the possession of the subject but is part of an iterative chain of citations in discourse that exceeds the individual subject. If the subject cannot possess the 'I' it claims as its individual selfhood, it cannot either claim an agency that is derivative solely of itself. Butler suggests that agency is possible only because of foreclosure. In relation to sexuality, Butler argues that the

'heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/ or disavows other identifications. This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of

a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet 'subjects', but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (1993, p.3).

This foreclosure limits the kind of discursive agency possible in any situation. Just as the process of subjectivation involves the disavowal of knowledge regarding the necessity for dependence upon power, so the discursive agency produced by the necessity to performatively repeat depends upon the foreclosure of particular identities. The agency that emerges here is an interesting one: it does not derive from the individual subject, it is not the possession of the subject nor are the options available (in terms of identity) infinite. This last point is significant, especially in terms of what it is possible to say and who it is possible to be within the context of schooling. Butler frames these questions differently, however. 'The question,' states Butler, 'is not what it is I will be able to say but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all' (p.133). So, in a social situation, it is not that the subject might wish to speak what is unspeakable, but, rather, what becomes speakable is already determined by the kinds of foreclosure discussed above. Agency in a more normative sense, deriving from and relating to the free will of the individual subject, does not make sense within this theorisation of the term. The possibilities for the subject to speak are partly determined by what happens when the unspeakable is uttered: 'If the subject speaks impossibly,' states Butler, 'speaks in ways that cannot be regarded as speech or as the speech of a subject, then that speech is discounted and the viability of the subject called into question' (p.136). There seems to be a tension here between the notion of performative politics emerging from the possibilities of discursive agency and the seeming paralysis produced by the risk of speaking the unspeakable. For me, it leads to further questions about how to enact a politics which might disrupt normative power relations whilst remaining a viable subject.

In *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997b), Butler argues, 'agency is the assumption of a purpose *unintended* by power, one that could not have been derived logically or historically, that operates in a relation of contingency and reversal to the power that makes it possible, to which it nevertheless belongs' (p.15). Butler refers to this as 'the ambivalent scene of agency' (1997b p.15). This agency is ambivalent in the sense that the subject can never step outside of power, always being dependent upon it for her/his very existence yet, despite this, there is scope for acting in ways that were not

intended by power. Thus, it is not necessarily conscious and fully understood by the subject/s involved. The distinction between agency and intent is interesting in the way in which it relates to other issues of ethics. Within an ontological framework of rationalism, agency is understood in terms of acting with choice in the knowledge of the likely outcome of one's actions. In her discussion of Butler's notion of agency, however, Mills (2000, p.276 cited in Rasmussen, 2006, p.171), argues that acting with intent does not mean that the subject acts with knowledge of the effects of these actions.

The notion that politics can be enacted with intent but without knowledge of outcomes has important implications for ethics and responsibility in relation to political activism. Butler explicitly engages with such concerns in the final chapter of her text *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) She begins by asking, 'Haven't we, by insisting on something non-narrativizable, limited the degree to which we might hold ourselves or others accountable for their actions?' (p.83). In beginning an exploration of this question, she suggests that 'the very meaning of responsibility must be rethought' in relation to the acknowledgement that there are limits to the extent of the subject's self-knowledge and that these limits provide the conditions for the subject's possibility (p.83). There is still a tension here, however, with regard to the extent to which we can expect a subject to take responsibility for the effects of their actions. Given my concern with pedagogy and politics in education, this is an issue that deserves further consideration. I will turn now to explore Butler's theorisations around the concept of responsibility.

Politics, ethics and responsibility

Butler suggests that responsibility is formed through the subject's capacity to be acted upon by the other. A sense of responsibility develops relationally rather than from internal feelings of guilt and morality. This dependence upon the other, present from the very beginning of the subject's inauguration, is often defended against because of the pain of acknowledging the way in which one's own self is not contained, unitary and self-reliant. Butler explores Levinas' seemingly problematic assertion that acting responsibly and ethically towards the other means accepting responsibility for the acts of persecution of the other towards the self. 'For Levinas,' explains Butler, '[...] responsibility emerges as a consequence of being subject to the unwilled address

of the other' (2005 p.85). Via Levinas, Butler returns here to the paradox of subjectivation she explores elsewhere (1990, 1997a, 1997b). In her reading of Levinas' theorisation of persecution and responsibility, she makes clear that this persecution is not brought about by the actions of the subject but, rather, derives from the site of subjectivation itself:

Persecution is precisely what happens *without the warrant of any deed of my own*. And it returns us not to our acts and choices but to the region of existence that is radically unwilled, the primary, inaugurating impingement on me by the Other, one that happens to me, paradoxically, in advance of my formation as a "me" or, rather, as the instrument of that first formation of myself in the accusative case. (2005, p.85).

Persecution, then, is there from the outset. It precedes us and situates us in a relationship with the other. This other is preontological and belongs, according to Butler, 'to an idealized dyadic structure of social life' (p.90). It is the 'face' of the Other, turned toward the self, that makes the ethical demand. Despite being unbidden, unasked for and impinging upon the self, the Other cannot be disavowed as it is what constitutes the self. 'Whatever the Other has done,' writes Butler, 'the Other still makes an ethical demand upon me, has a "face" to which I am obligated to respond- meaning that I am, as it were, precluded from revenge by virtue of a relation I never chose' (p.91). The presence of the face of the Other implores a non-violent response; it 'communicates an enormous prohibition against aggression directed toward the persecutor' (p.92). Whilst non-violence towards the Other, especially the Other who persecutes, is difficult, Butler, following Levinas, argues that it is the ethically responsible course of action.

The ethical imperative to behave responsibly, that is to say, non-violently, towards the Other, is initiated at the site of subjectivation. Yet my starting point in this discussion about responsibility concerned the capacity for the subject to act with agency and the way this relates to ethical responsibility towards the Other. Later in the chapter, Butler herself asks, 'Have we perhaps unwittingly destroyed the possibility for agency with all this talk about being given over, being structured, being addressed?' (p.99). This relates to the tension discussed above between performative politics and

the impossibility of speaking in a way that might jeopardise one's viability as a subject. Butler argues that whilst there is a primary vulnerability in us all, deriving from our dependence upon the other for our very subjecthood, in our adult lives, this vulnerability and corresponding heightened sense of responsibility is activated at times of 'injury or violation' (p.99). Yet our reflexive responses to such events result in the fantasy of the unitary subject and its 'claims to self-sufficiency' (p.99). Butler seems to go on to suggest that proceeding with ethical responsibility is not a matter of acknowledging our agency but, rather, acknowledging our vulnerability in being dependent upon the Other: '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' (p.101). Yet where does one go from here? Is it enough to act with intent, as Butler suggests in *The Psychic Life of Power*, acknowledging vulnerability and committing to non-violence? How do we hold ourselves and others accountable if we lose the notion of the subject's agency? And, importantly, what kind politics, and political subject, does this position produce?

This final question is significant in terms of my interest in radical politics in the classroom and how I might make use of this understanding in my own pedagogic practice. It is not always clear who 'the Other', on whom we are dependent and towards whom we must act non-violently, is in this text. Whilst the Other may operate on a symbolic level here, to explain the inauguration and ongoing constitution of the subject, there remains, for me, a concern regarding how this relationality operates within the hierarchies of power and social violence present in the moments that make up the everyday lived experience of subjects. This is an issue which Butler addresses in her dialogue with Athena Athanasiou in *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013) but, in *Giving an Account of Oneself* Butler explores the relationality between self and other through the infant/ primary caregiver dyad. This move situates ethical responsibility within an actual relationship yet there is a certain universality about this discussion that seems not to account for the way power operates differently in different geographical and temporal locations.

In the final chapter of *Giving An Account of Oneself*, Butler explores Levinas' theorisations of responsibility alongside psychoanalytic conceptualisations of the infant's sense of responsibility, via Laplanche. 'If Levinas has a point in saying that the Other is impressed upon us from the start, we concede, with Laplanche, that human

life has a way of starting with infancy, then these primary impressions are bound up with the formation of the ego, the establishment of the unconscious, and the instigation of primary impulse in relation to an enigma, a foreignness, that is ours without ever belonging to us' (p.134). Butler returns us again and again to the paradox of what cannot be known, because it is not ours, at the very centre of our constitution as subjects and of our experience of becoming human in the world. So, Butler establishes this dependence upon the other at the very start of human life. The relationship between caregiver and infant is evoked here and a sense of the dependency and helplessness of infancy in the face of the necessary impingement of adult social laws. Indeed, the relational practices between child and caregiver are discussed by Butler in her introduction to *The Psychic Life of Power*. In what is possibly a reference to the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1971), she writes about nourishing the child in a ' "good enough" way' in order that she/he can ' later stand a chance of discriminating among those he or she loves' (p.8). The infant here has no option but to attach to its adult caregivers; indeed, as Butler writes, 'there is no possibility of not loving, where loving is bound up with the requirements for life' (p.8). The passionate attachments to the Other, formed in infancy, are what binds us in relationality to the Other throughout life. However, Butler focuses on the relationship between analyst and analysand in her discussion of the self/ other relationship in *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Given the cultural and classed specificity of this relationship, in addition to the very particular set of relational rules that govern it, it is an interesting choice. Perhaps because the very purpose of analysis is for the subject to tell, and retell, a narrative of themselves to the Other within a relationship to this Other, this example aptly indicates the non-linear nature of self narratives as well as the impossibility of fully accounting for oneself. And yet, the power dynamics of this encounter between analyst and analysand are oriented in such a way that the telling of narratives and receiving of narratives is not done in equal measure by both subjects. The psychoanalytic clinic where this encounter occurs is purposed towards the work of telling and receiving narratives in its dimly lit stillness. Indeed, the corporeal positioning of the subjects in this scene is such that one lies prostrate upon a couch whilst the other sits behind; the telling and listening, confessing and interpreting, is inscribed in the furniture of the room and the bodies of the subjects engaged in the process. Butler seems to use this example to demonstrate a conception of the subject that cannot fully know itself and, therefore, cannot give a

complete account of itself. This begins her work of establishing a relationship between self and other which is based on an understanding of responsibility as entailing an acknowledgement of that which we do not, and cannot, know about the other. If I am to bring this notion of responsibility to bear upon my classroom pedagogy and my relationships with other staff and, of course, students, I need to think carefully about the ways in which power operates in relations between myself and others. Relating ethically, that is to say, non-violently and with responsibility towards the other, does not happen in isolation. It is a practice unavoidably caught up in normative discourses which inevitably do violence to myself and others. This violence is contingent upon my location and social position at any given moment and yet I cannot evade it.

Manifestations of power within neo-liberalism and the ways in which this impacts upon more ethical ways of relating, are issues Butler and Athanasiou explore in more detail in *Dispossession* (2013). They point towards the way in which the notion of personal responsibility has been mobilised in neoliberal discourse to evade acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of cuts to services that support people. Butler terms responsibility referred to in this way 'responsibilization' (p.103). Athanasiou goes on to articulate this further. 'It is critical then,' she argues, 'that we distinguish the calculus of corporate and self-interested "responsibilization," so common to the process of neoliberal restructuring, from responsibility as responsive disposition that can make possible a politics of social transformation, in ways that cannot be reduced to a mere calculus of interests' (p.103). Ethical responsibility in relation to the other holds the potential to be radically political in contrast to 'responsibilization'. Butler situates an ethics of responsibility between 'the entrepreneurial attitude and an ethos of self appreciation' prescribed by neoliberalism and the 'moral maxim' of Christianity 'which underscores the need to care for the poor' but 'never really questions why there has to be poverty of this kind at all' (p.106). Here, Butler more explicitly moves from the presence of the other in the 'I' to the implication of the 'I' in the 'we' (p.107). This is significant in that it turns away from the self/other relationship that is more of a focus of *Giving an Account of Oneself* and towards a consideration of the social. She explains, 'when I am called upon to care for another, or, indeed, to resist a social condition of inequality, or to oppose an illegitimate war or devastating occupation, it is not a matter of finding my bearings in my personal morality or my individual disposition' (p.107). Butler argues that it is the implication of the I in

the other, and vice versa, that makes the 'I' social from the outset and that determines that in such moments, 'reflection and action' must begin 'from the presumption of a constitutive sociality' (p.107). A central concern of this text becomes the way in which 'ethics might act without concealing the workings of power' (p.108). This is an issue to which I shall return as it becomes very relevant to my consideration of ethical relationality and performative politics in the classroom.

For now, however, I want to return to *Giving an Account of Oneself* where Butler moves towards a discussion of the social via a discussion of the works of Foucault and Adorno and their arguments around ethical responsibility in relation to the social world. Her reading of Adorno engages with the issue of acting with intent to disrupt the workings of power which she takes up in *Excitable Speech* and *The Psychic Life of Power*.

'For Adorno, the question of what I ought to do is implicated in a social analysis of the world in which my doing takes shape and has effects. In his view, an ethics of responsibility not only takes into account "the end and intention" of my action, but "the resultant shaping of the world" (*PMP*, 172)' (2005, p.133).

Whilst it might be imperative that we consider the ways in which the world is shaped by our actions, we cannot fully account for this. Butler returns over and over, in different ways and via different theorists, to a conception of the subject that is not unitary and self knowing but which is dependent upon the Other and, because of this, can never fully account for itself. Butler suggests that it is dangerous to think that responsibility derives from the individual subject alone and, furthermore, mistaken to assume the individual subject has agency that can be accounted for. Here, Butler moves towards an understanding of ethical responsibility as a kind of 'fearless speech' (Foucault 2001) in the context of the social world. 'We must recognise,' states Butler, at the very end of *Giving an Account of Oneself*, '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' (p.136).

Parhessia

An idea of ethical responsibility begins to emerge across Butler's work, in particular *Giving an Account of Oneself* and *Dispossession*, which is always relational and involves risk in terms of our position in the social world. The idea that the individual subject has complete agency is a fantasy that can, according to Butler's readings of Laplanche and Nietzsche, lead to narcissism resulting in violence due to the subject's preoccupation with self-preservation. This notion of fearless speech that Butler leads us to at the end of *Giving an Account of Oneself*, is important in relation to politics and pedagogy. I will explore some of Foucault's theorizations around this subject before engaging with the ways it has been used by sociology of education scholars. I will then move on to discuss Butler's arguments around the centrality of intelligibility to any politics in order to think through in more detail the implications of speaking fearlessly in an education context. The idea of truth is an interesting one in relation to the construction of the subject and knowledge discussed already. As I shall go on to explore, parrhesic truth telling is linked to Foucault's (1986) notion of the 'care of the self' which involves an idea of an experiential sense of authenticity, rather than adhering to the idea of any kind of objective truth.

In the series of lectures that make up *Fearless Speech*, Foucault explores the relationship between truth and the truth teller. He asks a series of questions regarding 'who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power' (1986, p.170). He makes clear that speech is only fearless if it unsettles the speaker or if the speaker has something to lose by speaking. So, for instance, a philosopher engaging parrhesia in relation to a monarch (Foucault is using Ancient Greece as his example here) potentially endangers his own life whereas a Greek grammar teacher speaking the truth to his students does not risk anything as his position of authority in relation to his students preserves him (*ibid.* p.16). It involves both risk (due to the way in which it unsettles established power structures) and authenticity. In his exploration of Socratic *parrhesia*, Foucault argues 'Socrates is able to use rational, ethically valuable, fine, and beautiful discourse; but unlike the sophist, he can use *partheria* and speak freely because what he says accords exactly with what he thinks, and what he thinks accords exactly with what he does' (*ibid.* p.101). This conceptualisation of fearless speech foregrounds an understanding of authenticity in which thought, speech and action correspond. As I shall explore in more

detail in chapter 3, engaging in fearless speech relates to the idea of relating ethically to oneself and others in that it involves taking responsibility and speaking with authenticity. This kind of self-mastery can be considered to act in opposition to the disciplinary control of the neoliberal state. I am not suggesting that it is possible to escape this disciplinary control, as I demonstrate throughout this thesis it is constitutive, but speaking fearlessly perhaps troubles disciplinary control from within.

Foucault's observation about the Greek grammar teacher is interesting in relation to my concerns about what it means to speak fearlessly in the context of education. Foucault argues that the teacher is in a position of authority that protects him from the risk of truth telling to his students. Within contemporary neoliberal contexts of education in the west, however, the figure of the teacher alone with a class of students no longer holds. As has been widely documented, teachers are part of increasingly marketised and bureaucratic education systems involving panoptic surveillance of practices (see, for instance, Ball 2003, Perryman 2007, Lupton 2009). The teacher's practice of parrhesia in relation to both students and school management becomes fraught with difficulties in such a context. Unequal distributions of power in pedagogic relationships, of course, continue but the practice of truth telling in the classroom becomes very risky when the curriculum is tightly controlled and emphasis is placed on student test scores above everything else. In her paper on truth telling in relation to queer youth, Valerie Harwood demonstrates that the practice of parrhesia is not straightforward in that some forms of truth are easier to acknowledge than others. For instance, she suggests that parrhesia operates to foreground certain truths about queer youth whilst obscuring others: the 'problematization of wounded truths,' argues Harwood, 'indicates a regime of truth where truth telling is circulated via relations of power which support truths related to woundedness and oppose truths related to homosexual pleasure' (2004, p.474). What can be said, by whom and, as Tamboukou (2012) suggests, who can listen, are questions that have been theorised by education scholars but there has been less attention paid to what it means to practice parrhesia in a school context. This is an idea I explore throughout this thesis in relation to Judith Butler's notion of livability. I want to suggest that part of making life at Greenfield Infants livable for myself and the students I teach is to produce a space for practices of parrhesia.

Intelligible subjecthood

There are myriad reasons why creating such a space is difficult, including, as mentioned above, the bureaucracy of the neoliberal education marketplace which can create fear, exhaustion and endless paperwork hurdles that occupy the time and minds of educationalists. I would like to turn back to Judith Butler here, however, in order to think again about the issue of intelligibility. The process of subjectivation brings us into being as subjects, produces in us a sense of agency and renders us intelligible. This intelligibility is crucial for the subjects of schooling, students and teachers, to be recognised as such and to avoid, in extreme circumstances, exclusion or dismissal from post. Youdell points out that it becomes clear how crucial intelligibility is when we turn our attention to who does not meet the criteria for proper subjecthood (Youdell 2011, p.42). To not be intelligible as a proper subject is to risk abjection. Rather than be cast away forever, the abject serves to shore up the boundaries of the clean, proper, recognisable subject: constituting this subject but also threatening it. The process of subjectivation is inextricably tied to recognisability: without realising it, the subject accepts the terms of power and, in so doing, becomes intelligible as a subject. Risking unintelligibility is a dangerous move in that it can result in social isolation and exclusion. If speaking out; engaging in parrhesia in education, potentially jeopardises intelligible subjecthood, what space is there for action? In what spaces can this action occur and what forms can it take? It is to these questions and tensions, between the call to radical political action and the pull towards remaining recognisable as a proper subject of schooling, that I shall return in this thesis through my data from the classroom. At this point, however, I will turn back to Butler to explore in more detail the boundaries around the concept of the intelligible subject.

In her text *Precarious Life*, Butler (2004) poses the following questions: 'Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What *makes for a grievable life?*' (p. 20, emphasis in original). These questions relate to the question of recognisability and the consequences of not being considered recognisable. In her discussion of which lives are sanctioned in the American press as grievable by way of obituaries and memorials, she considers how the non-grievable, present only in ellipses, constitute recognisable (Western) subjectivity as much as the grievable (p. 35). The non-grievable cannot be mourned because they were never alive in the first place. Their presence demarcates the borders of recognisable human subjectivity by

indicating what or who is not included in this category. To shift focus from the situations of global conflict about which Butler writes to the everyday classroom lives of teachers and children is not unproblematic. They are not commensurable situations. Yet Butler's text does remind me of questions posed by other scholars regarding which student lives are prioritised and which are cast aside (Youdell 2003, 2006, 2006a, 2011) and prompts me to consider what I must do to remain a viable teaching subject.

There are tensions between intelligibility and fearless speech which relate to wider tensions and seeming contradictions between agency and the implementation of political action. These tensions are not resolvable but are productive in terms of the kinds of political action possible. Indeed, Butler and Athanasiou, in dialogue with one another, theorise the ways in which politics is conditioned by the need for recognisability in terms of the survival of the subject. In discussions about liberalism's discourses regarding the toleration of difference, they ask what it might mean to both survive liberalism and to survive without it. The latter question follows Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that liberalism is 'that which we cannot not want' (1993, pp.45-6 cited in Butler and Athanasiou, 2013, p. 76). Butler makes a case here for the indispensability of categories of identity:

It is one thing to say that I cannot not want liberalism, as much as I wish I could not want it, and so to treat liberalism as an object I cannot do without. It is yet another matter to claim that without the horizon and instruments of liberalism, I cannot want at all, that what I call my desire is so bound up with these categories that without them I may find myself not desiring at all (and so not find myself at all).' (pp.76-7).

The subject is not situated outside of discourses of liberalism, in a position to decide whether she/he can survive without it but, rather, produced by liberalism, the subject's very desires are already conditioned by it. Butler seems to suggest that to be able to even consider opting out of liberalism's categories that produce us as viable subjects, is to be in a position of privilege and self-reliance. Butler exemplifies this point through her, hypothetical, discussion of a woman who has been raped attempting to have the crime against her prosecuted by the law. Butler explains that 'she has to comply with the very idea of the reliable narrator and legitimate subject inscribed in the law' (p.77).

The law demands particular kinds of subjects and can also, in Butler's terms, 'deconstitute' these subjects too (p.77). Butler argues that in such instances as rape or immigration politics, one cannot not want the law yet, 'in turning to the law, one runs the risk of being broken by the law' (p.77).

Butler and Athanasiou go on to further theorise around the idea of recognisability and survival. Athanasiou points out that a more conventional understanding of recognisability politics might 'conceive of subjects as pre-existent human agents who ask for recognition', yet she argues that this view obscures 'the power relations that condition in advance who will count or matter as a recognizable, viable, human subject and who will not' (p.78). The struggle for recognition occurs not only linguistically but also corporeally. Butler discusses Frantz Fanon's text *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) and analyses the way in which corporeality becomes central to the work of thinking through the 'costs of recognition within the struggle for survival' (p.80). In reference to Fanon's address to his body: 'o you, my body' (Fanon, cited in Butler and Athanasiou, p.81), Butler suggests that this appeal marks 'the restoration of the body as the ground of agency' in addition to addressing the other through touch 'that is facilitated by the body, a body that, for complex reasons, commits itself to regarding each and every consciousness as an open door' (p.81). The struggle for and against recognition happens corporeally as well as linguistically. Here, it seems the body is central to the notion of keeping open the categories through which the subject becomes recognisable and through which the subject recognises the other.

At the centre of recognisability politics is a paradox: to request that non-normative subjects be recognised (both legally and culturally) is a radical move in itself yet the potential for this recognition to become normative and operate within the terms of liberalism to further exclude others always remains. As Athanasiou asks, 'how can political signifiers that designate subject positions in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class retain their contingency and openness to future rearticulations?' (p.79). Butler's response to this brings us, again, back to the question of agency. 'This all depends,' states Butler, 'on our ability to function as subjects who can instrumentalise state power without becoming subjugated by it' (p.83). She goes on to ask 'to what extent must there be a mode of political agency that is unhinged from state power in order to make critical interventions into its domain?' (pp.83-4). The individual subject is not present here but the 'political agency that is unhinged from

state power' seems to be more about the potential for a space to be found for political action that might be brought about through a more collective agentic movement. Given that teachers in the state school sector in the UK are public sector workers, in effect employed by the government, this question becomes a central concern for me in my discussion of pedagogic politics. So, we arrive back at the difficult problem of the agency of the subject with regard to political action. Butler does not explicate this idea of political agency further to pinpoint precisely how she understands it in relation to the individual subject; indeed, that is not her concern here, but she does indicate how hard it is to achieve this distance from state power through her discussion of the gay rights movement's campaign for marriage rights. 'Some believe that gay marriage is precisely such an instrumental use of state power,' writes Butler, 'but the question remains open for me whether the activist effort to claim gay marriage rights is not a way of submitting to a regulatory power and seeking to become more fully ordered by its norm' (p.84). For me, this is reminiscent of Foucault's discussion of power and resistance, referred to at the beginning of this chapter. They co-exist so intimately and, as Foucault states, they are flip sides of the same coin, the potential for one to become controlled by the other, as in Butler's gay marriage rights example, is great. Whilst Butler and Athanasiou proceed to discuss the law in more detail here, Athanasiou asks a pertinent question in relation to performative politics and recognition: 'To what extent are the regulatory discourses of the state and the law appropriable by radical strategies of resignification and subversion?' (p.84-5). Here we arrive at the issue of performative politics and their potential to disrupt regulatory discourses alongside the continued need for recognition. This is an ongoing tension and one which has been considered by scholars writing about performative politics and education.

Performative politics

Central to performative politics is the notion of the discursive agency of the subjectivated subject. Youdell (2011) explains that 'having been constituted as a recognizable subject in discourse, this subject can deploy discourse to call up her/ him self again or call up another' (p.44). This process of calling up oneself or another again, differently, perhaps, can be understood to trouble normative meanings. The question Athanasiou raises regarding the extent to which normative meanings and structures are changed by the demand for recognition becomes important here. Indeed, whilst

organising around a particular category of identity and making demands for the recognition of that identity in the law, as in Butler's example of gay marriage activism cited above, might mean that the law accommodates that identity but does not fundamentally shift, thereby only reiterating the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In *Dispossession*, Butler seems to suggest a performative move that both demands recognition for the unrecognised whilst simultaneously troubles the discursive structures that have produced subjects as unrecognisable. She writes:

Recognition itself has to be a transformative category, or it has to work to make the potential for transformation into the aim of politics (p.87).

Athanasiou and Butler make a distinction between identity politics and a politics of recognition. The former demands the recognition of victimised subjects, thus forcing victim-hood to become a central component of their identity rather than an oppression to be overcome, whilst the latter attempts to 'summon recognition without perpetuating and intensifying the established terms of recognizability they seek to oppose' (p.88). There is no easy solution to the difficulty of demanding recognition whilst simultaneously resisting the reinforcement of the normalising discourses of the state conferring such recognition. When recognition can be so literally tied to life and death, one cannot, to borrow Butler and Athanasiou's citing of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, not want it (Spivak 1993, pp. 45-6 cited in , Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p.76).

Possibilities emerging from the paradoxes

In this chapter, I have begun to discuss the paradox of Judith Butler's conceptualisation of the subject: namely, the contingent nature of discursive categories, holding out the possibility to be different in their performative repetition, and, because of this contingency, the passionate attachment to these categories in order to remain recognisable. I have begun to explore the political subject that emerges from this conceptualisation of power and subjectivation and how we might begin to theorise agency in relation to this subject. Although there is a paradox at the centre of resignification that can be frustrating, paralysing even, I hope to be able, in subsequent chapters, to begin in this place of difficulty and work with the possibility it offers in relation to politics. Passionate attachments to other subjects, to categories of

identity, indeed, to the necessary process of subjectivation cannot be ignored and it is my intention in this thesis to explore how they can be worked with and used to make school a more survivable place to exist for the students with whom I work and, indeed, for myself as a teacher.

3. Methodology: a conceptual and practical account of my practice in the field

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explore the notion of the non-unitary subject, contingent upon discourses that precede and exceed her. Such a subject is unable to account completely for herself due to a necessary disavowal of the processes by which she is constituted and because of an unconscious that is hers but that she cannot possess. My research interests here, however, are more specifically focused on providing an account of a teaching subject, namely myself, deliberately engaged in political pedagogy aimed at disrupting practices of inequality that are played out in my classroom. Part of this account involves the other subjects (teachers, students and teaching assistants) involved, knowingly or otherwise, and mapping the political effects and affects of such action. Following my discussion in chapter 1 of the mundane, everyday ways in which inequalities are made in classrooms, I aim here to explain how I go about researching these inequalities in my classroom and how I decide what constitutes a political act which disrupts these inequalities. The conceptualisations of the subject, politics and inequality, worked through in the previous chapter, inform every stage of the research process from data generation to analysis and interpretation. Indeed, as I shall describe in more detail later in this chapter, such processes in this study are not linear but iterative: The conceptual frameworks I use determine what kind of data I generate in the field and how I write it up and interpret it. In turn, these interpretations speak to my understandings of the conceptual frameworks I take up and the subsequent data I generate. I will begin this chapter with an account of the process of school selection and the practical arrangements of my time in the field. I will then move on to discuss how I research my own position as a teaching subject in the field. A significant part of this discussion will engage with the concept of reflexivity and how I have made use of this practice to facilitate my data generation and analysis. Ethical considerations inform my politics in the classroom and my writing throughout this thesis yet in this chapter I will also discuss the specific ethical issues arising from the design of this project.

The process of school selection

Following my participation as a teacher-researcher in the No Outsiders project, I wanted to pursue further questions I had during that project regarding the potential of performative politics to disrupt practices of inequality in the classroom. This meant that I, again, needed to be in the role of teacher whilst investigating these questions. Whilst I cannot always act knowingly in terms of the effects of my interventions on the discourses circulating in the classroom or the constitution of student subjectivities, I can act with some intentionality in order to explore the political potential of different kinds of planned and unplanned interventions. Having left the school where I worked as a class teacher in order to complete my MRes, I needed to find another school to employ me for the fieldwork aspect of this doctoral research project. It was difficult. Ideally, I wanted a position for one year only; I wanted to work part-time (in order to give me space to reflect on my classroom practice) and the school had to agree to my research. I began applying for jobs in the summer term of 2011. There were very few part time positions advertised across London at this time, let alone in locations commutable from where I lived. With regards the kind of school I worked in, I did not have any requirements other than that it was a state school, as I was interested in the impact of regulatory bodies such as Ofsted on the space to practice in ways that disrupt rather than perpetuate educational inequalities. Due to the absence of advertised posts, I decided to write to primary schools in boroughs commutable from where I live, to inquire about potential positions. I include in appendix 1 the letter I sent to schools. As a result of sending out this letter to hundreds of schools, I had four schools contact me: one wanting me to teach reading recovery; a school in special measures requiring a full time teacher; an academy school with very demanding teacher selection criteria and a school who had not organised their staffing for the following academic year but needed a part time year 2 teacher. I attended interviews at these four schools and was offered part time positions in the latter two. I chose the non-academy school because I felt I might have more control over the curriculum and practices in the classroom as the academy school had very prescriptive policies in an endeavour to raise standards in teaching and learning across the school.

The implications of working part time

The decision to work part time is deliberate in this project. I wanted to give myself space to reflect on my pedagogic practice, having felt, during my time as a teacher-researcher on the No Outsiders project, that there was not enough time for me to properly plan for and consider my interventions in the classroom. As I shall discuss throughout this thesis, sharing a class with a colleague does involve particular challenges in terms of establishing class ethos and rules, or deconstructing rules as the case may be. These challenges are not as prominent an issue as they may seem on the surface, however. Indeed, as I shall explore in more detail in chapter 4, the main difficulty in trying to enact counter politics at Greenfield Infants is my own teacher subjectivity, produced and made sense of via neo-liberal discourses of education, teaching and learning. The difficulties and benefits of being part time come secondary to the ways in which I am made, and make myself, legible as a teacher in this space.

Informing Greenfield Infants about my research

I informed the head of Greenfield about my research both in my letter of application and in the interview. I also provided the head teacher with an information leaflet about this research in the autumn term, once I had taken up my post (see appendix 2) Later in this chapter, I will discuss the ethics of this project in more depth but I just want to note here the information I provided for the school and my rationale for the approach I took. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that there are three main approaches to informing gatekeepers about research: to be completely explicit about the research aims and planned research activities, to be partly covert and only reveal some information or to be completely covert, not revealing oneself as a researcher at all. However, I would argue that these divisions are somewhat arbitrary. I could not be completely explicit with regard my research aims as, at the stage of applying to Greenfield for a job, I was not myself, entirely sure. This 'not being entirely sure' is part of the research design itself which is responsive to what comes up in the classroom over the course of the year. There is also the issue of the discourses I use to frame my discussion with school staff. I deliberately do not mention I am interested in challenging practices which produce inequality as I worry this would draw too much attention to my pedagogic politics and potentially cause difficult questions to be asked by school management. Thus, I tended to discuss the aims of my project within neo-

liberal frameworks, with reference to equality and inclusion that are recognisable in terms of current school policy and practice requirements. I am suggesting here that the dichotomy often drawn in research literature between covert and non-covert research is more complex in the field. Nonetheless, even taking into account my discussion of this project within neo-liberal discourses of diversity and inclusion which are not the political discourses from which this project emerges, there is information I purposefully withheld from the school, such as, for instance, my intention not to adhere to behaviour management practices that shame and exclude students, as to be explicit about such intentions would be to jeopardise the possibility of exploring the politics around refusing to adhere to particular school policies. This means that my promise to the head of the school that I would stop collecting data and withdraw from my position at the school or simply cease to use my classroom as my research site if she asked me to, was compromised, given I was not explicit in discussing the counter politics I intended to pursue. However, I believe that this work is important enough to justify this level of covertness. Indeed, the British Sociological Association (2002) state that covert research can be acceptable in order to gain access to a research setting that would be inaccessible were the 'gatekeepers' to know the real purpose of the research. Given that my intentions were always to comply with the terms and conditions of my employment contract as a class teacher at Greenfield, I would work within the remit of what was expected of me in this role, I did not feel it was necessary to explicitly state I was interested in exploring what radical politics might look like within this context or the extent to which I could trouble discourses perpetuating inequality. Had I notified the school of these aims, I either may not have been given the job in the first place or my practices may have been subjected to more scrutiny once I started. In an educational system which is increasingly marketised and driven by high stakes testing, finding spaces in school to think and practice in ways that counter this focus on test scores and measuring student progress, is essential. Indeed, whilst educational sociology has long been asking important questions about who succeeds and who fails within the education system and about how particular discourses work to privilege certain knowledge and student subjectivities and to marginalise others, there has been less focus on what it might mean to ask these questions from within the classroom and to practice in ways that counter the everyday norms of schooling that go on perpetuating these inequalities. Such is the difficulty in raising these

concerns about schooling within a school context and such is the lack of research on the issue, in comparison with the research on schooling inequalities by academics working within the field of educational sociology, I believe my deliberate covertness is justified in this situation.

Greenfield Infant School: some background information and some problems with representation

Recently, some scholars within the sociology of education have pointed out that the ways in which some schools are described (within academic literature and the everyday conversations amongst teachers and school staff) can perpetuate their constitution as abject. Bradbury (2013), for instance, highlights the pejorative narratives surrounding the 'inner city school', arguing that such narratives around 'difficult intakes' are based upon a conception of an ideal learner as one who is white and middle class (pp.75-9). Meanwhile, Youdell (2011) attempts to interrupt normative academic discourses describing schools and their subjects, conventionally used by scholars producing school ethnographies. Rather than only including a paragraph detailing the demographic make up of the school, Youdell (2011, pp.116-18), produces an account of Bay Tree school (the site of her ethnography) which provides a spatial and temporal mapping of its architecture and boundaries. This representation interestingly counters other readings in the text which constitute it as 'other' through the citation of its status as an 'EBD' (emotional and behavioural difficulties) school.

I write a more detailed account of Greenfield Infants in the following chapter; in which I try to provide a more nuanced description, based on my impressions that might do more to trouble what can be known about Greenfield Infants. Here, however, I will provide a brief outline of the demographics and location of the school as these are relevant to my later discussions of how the school is viewed from the inside and the outside. I am, however, mindful of the potential such an outline has to be read as a 'complete' account of the students in the school, given the reference to official categories and statistics and, also, to further constitute the school as abject. Greenfield Infants is situated on the edge of an estate in an outer London borough. The area is one of high socio-economic deprivation and is part of the poorest ward in the borough. The largest ethnic group at the school is white British with about half of the student population falling into this category. About 30% of students are identified as Black

African and just over 10% as Black Caribbean. Other ethnic groups include White Irish, Polish and mixed race. I cite these groups here as these are the categories the school is required to use when collecting information about the student population. I also foreground these categories at this point because, as my fieldwork progresses, I notice issues of race and ethnicity at the school become conspicuous in the silence surrounding them. Later in the thesis, I will explore the intersections of race with other categories of identity at the school and how this informs the counter politics I pursue at particular moments. More than half the students at the school are entitled to free school meals and the proportion of the students on the SEN register is higher than the national average. About 8% of students spoke English as an additional language which is also higher than the national average.

Here I have provided an overview of the student population in terms of the categories of identity that schools are required to collect data on. It is worth pointing out here that such descriptions of schools can end up being a short hand way of indicating 'difficult intakes' (Bradbury 2013). Although I cannot escape the potential my description has to inscribe these ideas of 'difficult intakes,' that is not my intention here. Rather, I include this account to give an indication of the school location (as this becomes a very significant factor whilst I am there) and the student population. Also worth mentioning at this point is that I joined the school at a point of movement and transition in its history in terms of its size, staff and governance. When I was appointed in the summer term of 2011, the head of the infant school, Louise, had been in post for two terms following the resignation of the previous head due to the school remaining at a 'satisfactory' Ofsted rating for several years. Claire, the deputy head, who was also my job share partner, had applied for the headship post but had not been successful. Louise's arrival marked a difficult political period for the school as the staff were not supportive of her and produced petitions which were sent to the local authority demanding her removal from post. These petitions were unsuccessful but relations between Louise and the staff remained difficult and when I started in the Autumn term of 2011, staff morale was low and there was much hostility and mistrust between different staff members. By the summer term of 2012 (my final term at the school), both the head teacher and the deputy head had resigned from their posts to take up positions in other schools. An interim head and deputy were brought in by the local authority to manage the school during this term. Whilst these staffing changes

were happening over the course of the year, discussions and consultations were taking place in the local authority and between the infant school and the adjacent junior school regarding the merger of the two schools. A new head teacher had also been appointed at the junior school following the school's Ofsted grading of 'unsatisfactory'. By the end of the summer term in 2012, a decision had been made (by the local authority) to combine the two schools and for this new school to become an academy, run not by the local authority but by sponsors. The infant school I write about in this thesis no longer exists.

An account of the research process

The methodological approach I take is informed by the conceptual frameworks with which I work. My involvement in the field as a full participant (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) with the specific intention of exploring pedagogy that intervenes in normative discourses and practices which constitute inequalities in schooling situates this work somewhere between action research, ethnography and autoethnography. I will briefly discuss these approaches here before giving a more practical account of how I went about the practice of producing data in the field.

As discussed in chapter 1, this thesis follows on from the research I began as a teacher-researcher in the No Outsiders Project (Atkinson and DePalma 2006 - 2009, Atkinson, Reiss et al. 2009). This project was framed within a discourse of action research with the teacher-researchers keeping research journals, reflecting on their practice and, based on these reflections, making decisions about future practice. Typically a research methodology associated with practitioners, action research is often side lined or overlooked within the academy and research methods literature (Lemish 2002, Elliot 2004, McNiff and Whitehead 2010). However, its critiques of the limitations of 'outsider' research and the emphasis, within critical action research, on social change are relevant to my concerns in this thesis regarding politics and pedagogy in the classroom. Whilst my approach to data production in the field does not involve the kinds of spirals or cycles typically associated with action research (Somekh 2006), my emphasis on mapping the politics of interventions, that I initiate or actively participate in, differentiates it from a more straightforward ethnography.

Action research and the conceptualisation of knowledge

The conceptualisations of knowledge, and thus the sorts of action rendered possible and, ultimately, the kinds of insights offered by a methodological approach informed by action research, are worth considering more closely. The sort of knowledge produced by action research is two-fold: Action research focuses 'both on producing new knowledge and on creating actions which will affect directly the social situation in which the issue emerges (Noffke and Somekh 2005, p.92). Critical action research has traditionally been based upon the Marxist understanding of 'false consciousness' which renders the social world as knowable once the distortions of capitalism (false consciousness) are removed (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Fals-Borda and Mora-Osejo 2003). Yet, as I discussed in chapter 2 earlier, Judith Butler, following Michel Foucault, puts forward a conceptualisation of knowledge that is far less certain. Within such a conceptual framework, there is no pre-existing knowledge 'out there' to be obtained through social science. Rather than a stable entity knowledge is constantly in flux; produced inter-subjectively and mediated as valid, or otherwise, through discourses that exceed individual subjects. Such a view of knowledge challenges a model of action research in which an issue is identified and addressed, creating social change of some sort, however small.

Like much qualitative research, action research often stresses the tentativeness of its conclusions and its openness to reinterpretations (Somekh 2006, p.28). Yet one of the underlying premises of action research is that analysis of action can be used to plan and carry out new or different action. This suggests, as Somekh (2006, p.27) states, 'it is possible to generate actionable knowledge which is trustworthy in providing the foundation for improvement'. The knowledge that Somekh cites here is characterised as easily accessible, fairly stable in its ability to form a 'foundation' for further action and, indeed, a prerequisite to this further action. For Somekh, without this understanding of knowledge, there would be no platform for action. However, it is precisely this conceptualisation of knowledge that has been questioned by poststructuralist scholars working within an action research framework (see, for example, Lather 1991).

The kinds of data I generate, contributing to the knowledge claims I make in this thesis are far less certain than those in Somekh's descriptions. My starting point when enacting pedagogic interventions is not straightforward knowledge of the

classroom and identification of a 'problem', rather it is the ways in which inequalities (based on race, class, gender, disability and sexuality as well as childhood) are constituted in discourses and practices. Whilst I might challenge these or participate in students' challenges to these, I continue to be implicated in them. Thus the idea that is implicit in many action research texts involving progression from knowledge to action to reflection on the effects of the action to planning new action based on those reflections, is not the model I use in the field. Following Weiner (2004), I maintain that my research practices in the field are far less straightforward or linear. Whilst I will build on what I think I know when planning particular pedagogic interventions, the progression from this knowledge to a particular action, to the effects of that action to my reflection on it, is not straightforward or linear (Weiner 2004). The understanding of knowledge I use in this thesis is one that recognises the implication of my own subjectivity in any account I produce and, following Foucault (1991) perceives any account of knowledge not as neutral but wholly caught up in operations of power.

This leads on to questions about the different kinds of action made possible by critical and poststructuralist models of action research. Whilst both assert commitments to social change, the sort of change imagined and how to bring it about, are quite different. In some critical action research accounts, it is assumed that simply by adopting a particular methodology which rejects positivism, social justice is prioritised. Indeed, Brydon Miller et al (2003, p.13) assert 'action research rejects the notion of an objective, value-free approach to knowledge generation in favour of an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice', associating the rejection of positivism with the embrace of social justice. Meanwhile, Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.5) call on teachers to 'create conditions under which the critical community can be galvanized into action in support of educational values, to model the review and improvement process, and to organize it so that colleagues, students, parents and others can become actively involved in the development of education'. They imagine action research to be part of the process by which education is democratised.

Ideas that social change is implicit in action research methodology or that there are clear before and after moments in an action research project have been called into question by feminist and poststructuralist scholars. Walker (1996) is an advocate of action research but has been strongly critical of the ways in which empowerment is presented in some texts, arguing it is linked to ideas of social control and a

liberal/reformist agenda which reinforces the marginalised status of participants. Lather's deconstruction of the term emancipation also troubles the notion that power hierarchies can be eliminated or significantly changed through critical action research (Lather 1991, p.15). The work of these scholars calls for notions of transformation to be treated cautiously. Rather than complete social transformation of a particular setting, Walker (1996) conceptualises 'transforming moments' in which small shifts towards critical awareness occur (p.146). I find this a useful critique of the ways in which social change is presented in action research texts. However, I would go further in suggesting that critical awareness is not a prerequisite for change and, indeed, is not something easily definable in relation to politics in the classroom.

Ethnography, autoethnography and poststructuralism

My methodological approach makes use of action research but it is not an action research project. I am interested in understanding the politics of the pedagogical interventions I enact and part of this understanding comes from an understanding of the context in which I teach. Whilst I could have asked the questions I ask in any state school, the practices I explore might well be very different in different school contexts. Thus, this thesis is an account of my attempts to enact counter politics whilst employed as a year 2 class teacher at Greenfield Infants. It is an ethnography of my practice in this school over the course of a year. Whilst traditionally, ethnography emerged as a research methodology to provide detailed descriptions of settings and people (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), poststructuralist ethnographies have, more recently, called into question what we can know about a setting and its subjects. I am indebted to this poststructuralist work in the ways in which it has informed the development of my own methodological approach. Youdell (2006) argues against the binary that is often drawn up between theoretical and non-theoretical ethnographic work, stating that all ethnography is underpinned by conceptual frameworks. What differs, she suggests, is the extent to which ethnographers themselves articulate the conceptual frameworks and politics that inform their work. The researcher imagined in many action research texts is a knowing, rational, unitary subject able to analyse their own practices and make choices about further practice based on this knowledge. Whilst my pedagogic practices are a focus of this research, I am not a self-knowing, rational subject able to give an objective account of these practices. My exploration of

subjectivity in chapter two calls into question a subject conceptualised in this way. Alongside the students in my class, I am constituted by discourses that exceed me, discourses of which I am not always aware or can do anything about. Psychoanalytic literature also calls into question the notion of a rational, unitary subject, arguing that the unconscious undercuts any such idea about subjectivity. My own, often unconscious, desires and phantasies accompany me into the classroom and inform, again, often unbeknownst to me in the moment, my pedagogy and the relationships I have with the students and my colleagues. It is very difficult to give an account of myself that is coherent enough to be received by others and yet does not revert to an idea of myself as the rational teacher and researcher. As I shall explore in more depth later, in order to enact a competent teacher-self within the discourses of teaching and learning at Greenfield Infants, I do have to conceive of myself as a rational subject. This version of myself that I perform, not always knowingly, in the classroom is in constant tension with the contingent, non-unitary self I present in this thesis. The accounts of myself and my students that emerge in the data I generate reflect these tensions.

Youdell (2006) argues that the poststructuralist challenge to the concept of the sovereign subject has important implications for ethnography and, more broadly, research practices, in education:

‘Understanding the researching and researched subject to be perpetually but provisionally constituted through discourse means that research practice (as well as analysis and writing) is also an occasion for constituting subjects and so is wholly implicated in processes of ongoing subjectivation (of both the researcher and the researched)’ (p.64).

I participate in my research as a researcher and also as a research subject. Whilst the focus of this thesis is not individual subjects, I am interested in the politics around reinscription of particular schooling identities of subjects and what it means for me and the students I teach to be recognisable and viable subjects in school. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, such reinscriptions are open to recuperation, and recognisable schooling subjectivities are contingent upon location (for example playground or dinner hall or classroom), time of day (morning literacy, for instance, or

after school) and also on the other subjects present (the head teacher, for example, or teaching assistants or other students). This study is not an auto-ethnography in that my primary interest is not myself and my perceptions. Nevertheless, I do make a conscious attempt to narrate my affective responses to situations and account for the decisions I make in the field. My reasons for doing this are two-fold. Firstly, the personal commitment required by pedagogues engaged in political work in the classroom that counters normative educational discourses and practices is huge, as are the personal risks entailed in undertaking such work. Very little has been written from the perspective of critical educators to give an insight into their affective responses to this work and I believe my own voice, in my data and in my analysis, to be an important aspect of my account of events in the field. Secondly, I write with an awareness and indebtedness to the feminist scholars who have challenged the notion of the aloof and disembodied researcher (see, for instance, Lather 1997, St. Pierre and Pillow 2000). My subjectivity is in constant flux, necessarily being made and made again, not unitary and unable to provide a knowing and coherent account of itself. And yet, it is a subjectivity that is located in a body and this corporeality means that I react affectively to events in the field as well as cognitively. Whilst particular identity markers that I attribute to myself or are attributed to me, or both, become more or less relevant at particular times and in particular locations, I cannot erase my whiteness, my femaleness or my middle class, university researcher background in the field. Of course, these are not the sole identities I bring with me into the field nor can I always know how they are read by others. Youdell (2006) addresses this difficulty of accounting for oneself in a research text without shoring up the notion of a unitary, knowing, subject. 'The risk of slipping into inadvertent essentialism tempts me to avoid such an account,' she writes, 'however, the risk of assuming a disembodied authorial authority by not doing so seems much greater' (p.65).

I tread this line between essentialism and disembodiment as I write myself into this text and my data. As I began to explore earlier, this issue of accounting for myself becomes more complicated as I occupy two subject positions simultaneously. I am both researcher and research subject. These identities necessarily unfold together in the field but are not always easy to negotiate. I am both very invested, despite trying not to be, in how I am portrayed in this thesis yet I also, perhaps in response to this, tend to judge myself and my actions as a class teacher more critically than I perhaps

would another teacher. So whilst this thesis is not an auto-ethnographic account of my attempts to do radical political work in the classroom, I do write about my own subjectivity as it occupies a larger, and more complex, space than it might in a more traditional ethnography. So far in this chapter, I have attempted to situate my work methodologically at the crossroads between ethnography, auto-ethnography and action research. Following on from my exploration of my double presence in the field, I want to discuss the issue of reflexivity and how it is that I find ways to account for my subjectivity.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a term which is widely used and widely contested across different qualitative research methodologies. As Wanda Pillow (2003) has argued, the term is sometimes only used to denote a general reflective stance whereas, at other times, it refers to a methodological politics involving particular awareness and interrogation of the approach being taken in the generating and analysis of data. Following this latter understanding of the term, Pillow advocates the use of 'uncomfortable reflexivity' which demands that the researcher remain constantly aware of the responsibility she carries with regard to knowledge production. She suggests that there are many ways in which this kind of reflexivity may unfold but advocates that it 'pushes toward an unfamiliar, towards the uncomfortable' and 'cannot be a simple story of subjects, subjectivity, and transcendence or self-indulgent tellings' (p.192). I want to explore here how my use of 'uncomfortable reflexivity' has been productive in my data generation (deciding what to write up and how to write it up) and my analysis. My commitment to reflexivity is inseparable from my politics and ethics in the field and my accounts and enactments of these in this thesis.

Uncomfortable Reflexivity

Pillow poses the question, '[i]f, as I suggest, we are currently taking comfort in common usages of reflexivity in the postmodern – relying on reflexivity as methodological power and listening to and desiring only certain kinds of reflexive stories, how can we interrupt these common practices?' (p.187). She cites several studies which she identifies as moving beyond a normative use of reflexivity. One challenges the position and subjectivity of the reader as well as the author; another

presents a pastiche of memories, stories and poems as a means by which to disrupt a coherent narrative; and, finally, Pillow's last example of uncomfortable reflexivity involves the use of 'transgressive data' which concerns the writing of data about emotions, dreams, senses and responses (pp. 188-192). Youdell (2010), takes up Pillow's notion of 'uncomfortable reflexivity' working it through the psychoanalytic concept of the 'uncanny' to tell tales from the field which trouble the processes of subjectivation in queer ethnography. Youdell's use of uncomfortable reflexivity here produces data that might otherwise be left unseen because it is unsettling for her personally and it calls into question notions of child-adult relationships within discourses of schooling and of research. Youdell's use of reflexivity here enables her to tell the stories which may have seemed untellable and then enables her, along with the conceptual frameworks she uses, to explore the implications of such tellings. Reflexivity is used here not to denote a rational, knowing self but, rather, to push the limits of what can be told, and heard, in ethnographic research.

Data generation and analysis

My accounts of data generation perhaps serve to unsettle the notion that my data emerges seamlessly from events in the classroom to observation notes in my notebook to typed field notes in a folder on my laptop. Indeed, as with the data I shall discuss later in this chapter, there can be an elapse of time between an incident occurring and it being written up. To some extent, this is no different to the process of data generation and analysis in more typical ethnographies. However, the situation is complicated somewhat by my dual identity as class teacher and researcher. The research field is my place of employment, the place that, at least in part, constitutes my professional identity as a teacher. The infamous ethnographic call to constantly 'make strange' the research site which appears familiar and comfortable (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) sometimes feels an impossibility for me as the very act of making myself possible and legitimate as a primary school teacher in the space of the primary school excludes other identities and ways of being. Due to reasons of confidentiality and my research being partly covert, as well as reasons of time and practicality, I do not keep a notebook in hand as I teach. I write up brief notes after school and then type up these notes more fully on the days when I do not teach. I am selective about what I write up and do not attempt to record whole days in the classroom. Instead, I

focus on both planned and unplanned interventions that aim to disrupt the normative practices and discourses constituting inequalities in Oak Class and Greenfield Infants more generally. I also write up moments of political action or resistance initiated not by me but by the students. My data mostly consists of written observation notes, but I also collect examples of students' work, lesson plans, school policies and student end of year reports. My starting point with regard to politics in the classroom is that all practice is political. From behaviour management policies to curriculum content to pedagogy, everything that occurs in school has a particular political purpose. There may be more than one purpose, there may be multiple discourses in play in any one instance but I conceptualise myself coming into a space which is, and never can be, neutral. I myself am always already entangled in these discourses and practices of schooling: I have participated in the UK state school system from nursery to A-levels myself; I have been trained to teach by people who themselves taught in primary schools and are following government guidelines regarding primary teaching; and I taught in primary schools for five years prior to taking up my post at Greenfield Infants. I do not come in from outside, ready to enact counter politics. I am fully part of the politics of state schooling and caught up in, and, of course, dependent upon, the discourses that constitute me as a viable teaching subject in the space of Greenfield Infant School. I am interested in this tension between viable subjectivity and practicing in ways that take up a politics counter to the dominant political ideas in play. I am also interested in generating data about moments of counter politics in terms of what happens, what, if anything, seems to shift and the sustainability, or otherwise, of the shift. This mapping allows me to give an account of the effects and affects of particular pedagogic interventions.

The interventions I write about are always inter-subjective, whether I seem to act as the initiator or I participate in, or observe, action that seems to be initiated by the students. The students themselves may not share my understanding, or one another's, of politics and we may not all collectively agree on what, if anything, has shifted in these moments. Youdell (2011) raises the question of whether there needs to be 'conscious intent' on the part of teachers engaged in political work in schools. She argues that the effects of particular practices can be radically troubling to the normative discourses and practices within schools without the teachers or students necessarily conceptualising their work in this way (p.132). She also points out that,

regardless of intent, practices misfire, are open to recuperation and unexpected reinscriptions (pp.131-32). My data generation is wholly bound up in the conceptual frameworks which I take up. The instances I write up as data and the language I use in the data and its analysis are based upon my understanding of Butlerian performativity. As mentioned above, I perceive data analysis to be wholly implicated in the processes of data generation and vice versa. That is to say, the conceptual frameworks I use inform my classroom practice and what I notice and perceive as important to record as data. This data, in turn, further informs the theory I read. Data production and data analysis are not discreet and separate phases of my research; they unfold together.

Accountability in the field

Using reflexivity uncomfortably helps me to hold myself accountable in the field. Sometimes I do not write up events that occur in the classroom because they do not seem relevant to my research questions. Other times I realise that I have not written something up because I feel embarrassed or self conscious about my behaviour in a particular moment. I use reflexivity to produce my data and to reflect on it further, as well as to tell stories of my data generation that trouble the illusion of it fitting into a neat model or following a particular pattern. These processes often occur simultaneously or overlap. The following excerpt of data is from my field notes. It discomforts me to such an extent that it felt impossible to write up straight away. I wish to use this data here in order to facilitate my discussion of my methodology so I will not include very much analysis of the content of the data; this will appear in chapter 7 of this thesis.

It is quarter past ten and time for assembly. It is a rush as usual. I have just about managed to finish the maths lesson, we do a manic tidy up and I tell the children to line up for assembly. They are noisy, I am feeling stressed, not wanting to be the last class into the hall, not wanting to keep everyone waiting for us. After some hushing from me and the teaching assistant, the children quieten down, I am about to lead them out of the classroom when I realise that Daisy is hiding behind the curtain. I ask Diane (one of the classroom assistants), to take the children to assembly whilst I talk to Daisy.

Me: Come on Daisy, assembly time.

Daisy: I don't want to. Can I help you? [sometimes I let children stay behind during assembly time to 'help' with jobs in the classroom]

Me: Sorry Daisy, no jobs today and I'm not going to be in here so we need to go to assembly now [I actually need to gather resources for the next lesson and feel I've not got time to chat to Daisy at the same time]

I hold out my hand and, reluctantly, she takes it. We walk to the hall. When we arrive, Mr Baxter (who will be leading the assembly) is standing at the front and the last class to arrive is coming in. Mr Baxter sees us entering and glares at Daisy. She was in his class in year one and she was frequently in trouble with him. He dislikes her and continues to involve himself in 'managing' her behaviour this year. I am keen to get Daisy, who at this point is pulling on my hand, resisting going further into the hall, to sit down quickly in an attempt to prevent her being shouted at by Mr Baxter or made to miss her playtime.

Me [quietly to Daisy]: Come on Daisy, you only have to be here 15 minutes then it'll be playtime.

She acquiesces and allows me to lead her to where the rest of Oak Class is seated. I see the end of the line and we go towards it. We are about 3 metres away from the end of the line when Daisy suddenly stops. The year 1 class who were entering the hall have now all sat down. There is some chatter amongst the classes and the music is still playing. Mr Baxter glares in our direction again. He is waiting to start. I kneel down so I am at the same level as Daisy. My imperative is to get her to sit down quickly, not just so assembly can begin and I can prepare for the next lesson, but to try to ensure she does not get into trouble. She is the girl with nits, the girl who sometimes smells of wee, she is number four of seven. She is an ignorer of rules who needs 'firm boundaries' and behaviour charts, an SEN child who has extra reading support in the mornings and an adult to work with her each literacy lesson. Staffroom myth revolves around this child and her family. A family, so go the myths, where the children are given chocolate for breakfast and multiple fathers come and go. They seem to represent a kind of poverty that is unacceptable, recognisable only as abject. These

notions of Daisy and her family, held collectively by staff and students, circulating in staffroom and playground, need to both be recognised by me (I am in a position of responsibility and care) and refuted because of the ways in which they render Daisy almost inhuman. This is the blond haired child I kneel beside at this moment, who becomes all of these things and yet is nothing of them.

Me: [whispering] What's wrong?

Daisy: [whispering, looking straight ahead towards Breanna who the last child in the row] I don't want to sit there. I don't like black people.

I look from Daisy to Breanna [who does not seem to have heard]. The music is switched off. I say nothing more and steer Daisy towards the end of the row in front. She sits down. I walk out of the hall, simultaneously relieved and horrified.

LT, field notes, February 2012

It took me months to write this incident up properly and I deliberated over my inclusion of it in this thesis. I worried about my complicity in the racist discourse constituting Breanna as a child who it is undesirable to sit next to. I am complicit in that discourse yet I also engage in other discourses which hold out viable subjectivity to Daisy. In chapter 7 I pursue an analysis of this data in which I examine the ways in which different discourses of student identity, disadvantage and inequality intersect and conflict and how understanding this might complicate further the ways in which we think about performative politics in education. The discussion here, however, is one of methodology. As I suggested earlier, I use Pillow's notion of uncomfortable reflexivity here to produce the data itself and my account of it. The account that I have begun in order to explain the production of this data admits that there is a gap of months between the event happening and my putting it into words. This in itself acknowledges my lack of adherence to the spoken and unspoken ethnographic 'rules' of the writing of field notes as close in temporal proximity as possible to the moment at which the actual events occur. It is an acknowledgement that makes me uncomfortable as a beginning researcher as I feel it calls into question my credibility. However, these sorts of dilemmas and the time lapses that ensue between some instances in the field and my more detailed documenting of them are the everyday

realities of my fieldwork and so I feel they are important to tell. My story of the way in which this data is left unwritten up for months also hints at the difficulties of being accountable in the field. I have been through an ethics committee and, as I explained earlier in this chapter, senior management at school are aware, to a certain extent, of my research questions but leaving these most unsettling incidents omitted from my analysis would be easy to do. My research concerns pedagogical practice in relation to issues of inequality and here is an incident in which I seem to choose not challenge a very obvious incident of racism. At the time, this seemed so incongruous to me, it was difficult to make myself write it up. It was only after spending time considering the incident, that I realised its complexity with regard to its politics. In the moment just before Daisy sits I am forced to choose between Daisy's further constitution as a bad child (if she does not sit down she again becomes disobedient and unruly, holding up the start of an assembly and needing to miss playtime) and Daisy's racism towards Breanna. To my knowledge (then and now) Breanna had not heard Daisy's comment. Working with my understanding of uncomfortable reflexivity helps me to confront the importance of this moment and means that simply omitting it from my data set is not an option. Whilst this data is particularly important in terms of the issues it raises politically and pedagogically, methodologically, it is not aberrant. My field work is a constant back and forth negotiation with myself in terms of what to write up and how to write it up.

It is important to note, however, that I do not only use reflexivity to unsettle myself and make myself write about instances that feel disquieting or discomforting or, even, unbearable. This does happen and does produce the data I include in this thesis yet I take up reflexivity further in terms of the way in which I write my data, the information I include and the words I use. Thus, in the data above, I deliberately refer to notions and ideas of Daisy as they seem to exist in school, in order to try to capture my perception of what it is that I am trying to avoid reinforcing further (however momentarily). This is difficult because it constitutes her as this abject child in my writing as well as simultaneously exposing some of the discourses that constitute her thus at other times. Writing in this way, however, perhaps helps to capture the difficulty and pressure of the situation in the moment.

Ethics: caring for the self and the other

Enacting counter politics at Greenfield Infants raises important ethical questions in relation to the students with whom I work. As I shall go on to explore (especially in chapter 6), finding ways to relate ethically to the students in Oak Class is, in itself, an important counter political act. Research involving children does bring up particular ethical considerations due to issues of power in the adult/ child, researcher/ researched relationships. These issues of power within the research and pedagogic relationships with the children are ones I reflexively engage with throughout this thesis. However, also relevant here, in relation to ethical considerations, is my own subjectivity in the field. I necessarily put myself on the line, writing about uncomfortable encounters, exposing my affective responses to the pedagogic politics I attempt to pursue and theorising interventions that failed to do what I thought they would. I do this deliberately as I want to explore the difficulties, contradictions and impossibilities of enacting counter politics to disrupt the production of inequality as well as to explore what is possible and what space might be created for other ways of being within Greenfield Infants. However, an important question that arises for me is how can I survive this work? How can I find a way of being in this space that feels liveable to me? Due to my position as teacher and researcher in the field, these questions are important in a way that they might not be were my study a more conventional ethnography. Part of my ethics of self-care during this work has been to engage in forms of parrhesia in order to create space for listening, relating and being in the classroom that are less violent than the practices around me. As I mention in the previous chapter, parrhesia is not a straightforward practice. It does not take me to 'the truth' but, rather, offers me a way to conceptualise how I might exist in this space without becoming its chaos and violence. The notion of parrhesia is part of Foucault's (1986) concept of 'the care of the self'. Foucault's understanding of caring for the self is not about a moral philosophy but is, rather, a more spiritual philosophy. What I am interested in here, however, in relation to this thesis, is the notion of truth contained in speaking fearlessly which is about truth to the self as opposed to an external truth. Thus, Foucault begins to lead us towards an idea of authenticity which runs counter to the external forms of accountability within neo-liberal discourses in education. There is certainly accountability in Foucault's version of parrhesia, but it is more about accountability to the self as opposed to an external other. I am not suggesting that

forms of parrhesia produced by such an approach are unproblematic, instead, I am suggesting that this way of conceptualising truth, authenticity and accountability run counter to practices of surveillance and disciplinary control.

In doing this research, I put myself in a difficult position, ethically. I work in a school that is in a very difficult place in its history and am, unavoidably, affected by the school politics and the immense pressure from within and beyond the school gates with regard to raising standards. My commitment to parrhesia rarely involves speaking fearlessly to school management because, as I discuss earlier in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis, I deliberately attempt to keep a low profile to avoid further scrutiny of my practice. However, the work I do, detailed in chapter 5, around involving the students in deciding the summer term curriculum, is an attempt at authentically engaging in the idea of curriculum. As I will go on to explore, this is in no way straightforward but it is resonant of an ethics of care towards myself and the students in Oak Class as it gives us some space for creativity not usually offered within the tight timetabling and delivery of the curriculum we are supposed to follow.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that my methodological approach can be located on the boundaries between action research, auto-ethnography and ethnography. Perhaps more important than the precise methodological categorisation of my work, are the conceptual frameworks that inform my practices in the field and my writing up and analysis of data. I have discussed my decision making processes, and ethical implications with regard to informing my managers and colleagues at Greenfield about my research and I have discussed my take up of the concept of reflexivity and the role it plays in my data generation and analysis.

I hope I have begun to demonstrate the to and fro, back and forth dilemmas resulting from the interweaving of my researcher self with my teacher self and my pedagogic practice with the school institutional practices and policies. These selves are not essentialist or unitary, they overlap, are performed differently at different times and intersect with other identities. The issue of reflexively accounting for myself in the field, in the data and through my writing in this thesis is a difficult one that is not necessarily resolvable. Due to the nature of this work, I am unavoidably present in the data but giving further accounts of myself is a choice I make in order to give voice to

myself as a critical educator enacting counter politics in school. This is not a voice that is often heard in the literature on political counter politics in education. On the flip side of this decision is the risk of presenting myself as a self knowing researcher and teacher but I hope to negotiate these difficulties as I discuss my data.

4. Giving an account of Greenfield Infant School

In this chapter, I draw upon an ethnographic tradition of rich description (Geertz 1973) run through with a conceptual understanding of power informed by the work of Foucault (1990, 1991) and Butler (1990, 1997) to generate an account of Greenfield Infant School. This account is also informed by the recent work of educational sociologists who take up assemblage theory in education. Assemblage theory understands seemingly whole entities, such as societies or institutions, to be made up of assemblages of heterogenous components such as the material, the psychic and the affective (Hickey-Moody and Mallins 2007, Tamboukou 2011, Youdell 2011, Hickey-Moody 2013). Although my account here is conceptually underpinned by Butler's notion of the impossibility of fully accounting for oneself, my work is influenced by new materialism's emphasis on temporality and spatiality in relation to the material and discursive, the economic and the affective and prompts me to consider the importance of different orders of the assemblage as I generate my account.

I cannot capture everything about Greenfield Infants nor even account fully for the aspects I focus on but I hope to give a sense of the different, sometimes seemingly contradictory aspects of the practices, discourses and geographies of the school. To this end, I explore the interconnections and disconnections between the physical structures and geographies of the school, school politics, perceptions of the area in which the school is situated, education policy, staff and student subjectivities and my affective responses to the school. Whilst these components make up an apparent whole which is Greenfield Infants, this site is never stable or unitary and cannot be 'mapped' or 'accounted for' completely. That is not my intention here. Not only do I perceive myself, as teacher and researcher, to be wholly implicated in the accounts I generate, which can only ever be partial and incomplete, I also perceive the notion that there is a whole school available to map, to be misleading. As I attempt to capture different components that make up this school, pursuing particular ideas and discarding others, I generate the site I map. Through taking this approach, I hope to develop the conceptual tools to think about, and question, the idea of context in relation to counter politics in education as well as to provide some sense of the shifting materiality, temporality, spaces and discourses of Greenfield Infant School.

The inside outside binary: Locking out and locking in

My very first sense of myself in relation to Greenfield Infants is of being an outsider. This affective response is produced in relation to the material structures of the school, and its geography as well as the reactions of the staff towards me and my own reactions towards the staff. Whilst this sense of being an outsider remains with me throughout the year my feelings about it shift at different points and there are times of connection and disconnection with colleagues that alter my position during my year at the school. In this section of this chapter, I will consider the ways in which different constitutive forces come together to position me as an outsider. I am not referring here to the conscious intent of colleagues but, rather, the interplay between different factors such as the internal and external geographies of the school, the enactment of policy and the performative subjectivity of staff members alongside the affective responses that are a product of my relations to these factors. Greenfield Infants is situated on the edge of the Orchard Estate which is, itself, on the edge of outer London. Designed in the 1930s with the intention of being a garden city due to its location in the countryside, it had few employment opportunities and there was little reason for people living outside the estate to visit. I am struck by how isolated the estate seems when I first visit the school. The following excerpt of data gives a sense of my initial impressions on my journey to Greenfield Infants in June, 2011 for my interview:

The bus to school takes me out of town and along a dual carriageway. There are fields on either side of me and a few big houses dotted across the landscape but the shops, office blocks and crawling traffic of the town centre where my journey began have been long left behind. I momentarily wonder if I am on the right bus as I hadn't been expecting this much countryside. I get off at the bottom of a hill and, following the Google map on my phone, walk up towards where I think the school is located. I am walking parallel to school playing fields hidden behind trees on my left and the main road on my right. Cars whizz past me. On the other side of the road, behind a fence, there is a big field where horses are grazing. There are more fields beyond this, lined with trees and hedgerows. Behind me, a small church nestles amongst green hills. I am still not convinced I am in the right place but, as the gradient straightens, a council estate appears.

The pavement along which I am walking marks its edge. Still following the map on my phone, I turn left along a narrow walkway. Small houses clad with white pvc panels face each other on either side of me, squares of green lawn in front of each one. The end of the walkway takes me into a cul-de-sac where parked cars line the kerb. The sign for Greenfield Infants is opposite me. To my right I can see rows of houses, similar to the ones I just walked passed, towered by blocks of flats.

LT, field notes, June 2011

This account gives a sense of my initial reactions to the Orchard Estate and its surrounding area. I feel uncomfortable about my research gaze here, not yet turned on myself, it has echoes of the accounts of early ethnographers as they venture into unknown territory (see, for instance, accounts of Chicago School researchers in Hammersely and Atkinson, 2005, p,9). The Orchard Estate is othered in my account here as somewhere far flung and unknown to me. Whilst it is in the same borough I moved to a few months prior to this visit, I had not heard about it until I wrote to Greenfield Infants when contacting schools for this research. This is not somewhere I had been passed on shopping errands or on commutes to other places: it seemed, to me, to be the end of the line in every sense. The next excerpt of data I include here is part of the same account of this first visit to the school. It details my attempts to negotiate my physical entrance into the school.

On the opposite side of the road from where I am standing are the gates to the school: closed. They are tall and painted red. I walk up to them. There is an entrance for cars and another for pedestrians. I try to open the pedestrian gate but it is locked, the same for the other gate. Then I notice a buzzer on the gate post of the pedestrian entrance and press it. There is no response. I press the buzzer again and this time a gruff female voice asks: 'Who is it?' I give my name and also indicate that I have come for an interview. Without another word, I hear a buzz. I push the gate, this time it opens and I follow the signs around to the main reception. There is another buzzer at the double doors to the main entrance. I press this buzzer and am greeted by the same gruff voice. Again, I give my name, remind the

voice that I am the same person who buzzed at the main gate a few moments ago and restate that I'm here for an interview. There is no verbal acknowledgment but I am buzzed in.

LT, field notes June, 2011

The voice of the school secretary combines with the physical structure of the gates at the school entrance, both contributing to my constitution in this moment as an outsider and amplifying my interview nerves. Locked gates and doors operated by buzzer systems are increasingly common in primary schools following Ofsted recommendations regarding safeguarding and school security (Ofsted 2011, Elliot 2012). Yet this system of double protection to keep out unwanted visitors alongside the less than welcoming reception from the school secretary at each stage, gives the impression of an institution that seeks separation from the world beyond itself. In this pre interview moment I write about in the data above, I am physically kept out of the school until my identity can be verified but these processes of gaining physical access to the school buildings are not simply a matter of professional safeguarding of students on site. Discourses of 'best practice' in terms of safe guarding operate via the gates but are inextricably entwined with the gruff suspicion of the voice of the school secretary through the buzzer system. The constitutive force of these two components combines with my own anxiety to produce me as an outsider in this moment. Whilst not the most welcoming reception, perhaps this does not seem particularly strange, given I was arriving for my interview. To get to know the staff and students at the school would be a long process. However, I am made an outsider again and again during my year at the school. This is a process that I am a part of too, not necessarily knowingly whilst it is occurring, and is something I feel ambivalent about over the course of the year and now. The following excerpt from my field notes again focuses on trying to gain physical access to the school on my first day there.

It is the first day of the autumn term. I am at Greenfield for a staff training day. The main gates are unlocked so I walk straight round to the double doors to the main entrance. These are locked. I know the drill. I press the buzzer. There is no response. I press again. No response. I look through the glass but I see no one. I knock on the doors. No response. I find my

phone in my bag. I ring Claire – the deputy head and my job share partner. No answer. I ring Louise, the head teacher. No answer. Is there a code for this door? Am I meant to know it? I don't remember being given a code. I get my notebook out of my bag and flick through. There are no scribbled notes of door codes. I hang around outside. I should have arrived earlier. The training will have started.... Eventually one of the kitchen staff walks past, sees me outside and lets me in. I rush to the junior school hall where the training is taking place, and whisper sorry to Louise as I take my seat. Later Claire tells me she hadn't thought to give me the code for the doors.
LT, field notes September, 2011

The articulation of safeguarding policies at Greenfield Infants is part of the insider/ outsider binary that operates at the school. Safeguarding of students is etched on to the physical structures of the school, delineating the borders between inside and outside; safe and unsafe. Yet the affective responses of the staff in relation to people considered outsiders is also played out through and around these safeguarding systems. The operation of coded doors enables Claire to omit to give me the code and leaves me, literally, out in the cold. This is not to say it is a conscious decision on the part of Claire – rather, I want to suggest that she is part of the enactment of this binary through her relations with me via the code for the locked doors.

This insider/ outsider binary at Greenfield Infant School is in the materiality of the school buildings but is also in the discourses circulating in the staffroom, corridors and classrooms of the school. These discourses operate within the perimeter of the school but also beyond it. They are part of wider affective relations between the Orchard Estate and the outside world. As I mentioned earlier in relation to my own lack of awareness of the estate, nobody has reason to visit unless they live here or have family here. This isolates the Orchard Estate and allows the social injustice of inescapable, intergenerational poverty to continue here, unchecked. In recent years, the estate has gained unfavourable notoriety in the local and national press due to some high profile crime cases and instances of racism. Comments from residents of the estate on online versions of these press articles indicate the strength and depth of feeling about the judgements of others towards the estate and the people who live there. As I shall explore, these are feelings that are echoed by staff at the school.

Whilst the buildings, subjects and practices at Greenfield Infants seem to operate to police the literal and symbolic borders between inside and outside; insiders and outsiders, in many ways this is a school very much on the outside in terms of its location and practices in relation to those of other schools across the borough and the city. Greenfield Infants is geographically on the edge of the borough in which it is located which is, itself, on the edge of London. Neo-liberal education policy, seemingly so prevalent everywhere, seems just to be beginning to wash up on the shores of this school when I first arrive here. This is not simply a case of a different enactment of neo-liberal policy based on school context (Braun, Ball et al. 2011), although this is also going on, but a school literally and discursively on the outside. Greenfield Infants serves one of the most socio-economically deprived wards in the country and its historically poor transport links and the negative representation of the area in the local and national press has meant it has been hard for the school to attract and retain teaching staff. Constantly dropping off the radar of the Local Authority, Greenfield has not always kept apace of developments in educational practice and has not always been subject to the same surveillance as other schools in the borough and throughout London. My arrival at the school coincides with attempts by the Local Authority to bring the school into line with practices elsewhere after a second 'satisfactory' Ofsted rating linked to the plateau in year 2 SATs results. Yet despite efforts from the newly appointed head teacher and another Ofsted inspection looming, practices at the school are slow to shift.

Negotiating discourses of abjection

I have discussed the functioning of the insider/ outsider binary which produces practices, relations and structural architectural features at Greenfield Infants. However, in relation to the performative constitution of staff subjects at Greenfield, the categories of insider and outsider seem to operate as sites of identification in different ways. These categories are never stable and expand and contract, continually being made and remade. Again, I want to stress that I read these processes not in terms of the individual, rational intentions of particular subjects but, rather, as a result of the interplay between different discursive and material factors such as the school's geographical location, its position in national league tables, the negative representation of the Orchard Estate in local and national media and politics and the

challenges the school faces in meeting the needs of the children and families who come through its gates.

The Orchard Estate and its residents are made abject through discourses of the 'undeserving poor'. Such discourses are not new but through their increasing prevalence in Coalition and Conservative government policy have gained more legitimacy in public discourse. This discourse of the 'undeserving poor' is one I frequently encounter at Greenfield Infants in conversation with teaching assistants who live on the estate. Sometimes this discourse works to attempt to rescue the estate from the abject status perceived to be assigned to it or sometimes it works in more complex ways to try to establish the estate as less homogenous than it might seem to outsiders.

Longevity of service at the school is one way in which real insiders are identified. Indeed, some of the teaching assistants have been working at the school for over 20 years and Jean, Oak Class teaching assistant from Monday to Wednesday, has been working at Greenfield for 30 years. These teaching assistants have often, themselves, grown up on the estate, brought their children up here and have sent their children to Greenfield. However, issues of race, class and how near someone lives to the estate are interwoven with ones of longevity of service. There are only two non-white teaching assistants in the school despite about 50% of the student population being from non-white backgrounds. Diane, who works in Oak Class with me at the end of the week is black Caribbean and the specialist teaching assistant to support students with English as an additional language is Nati who is of Indian heritage. The following data is a conversation involving myself, Claire and Jean is about Diane. Claire dislikes Diane to the point of refusing to work with her, hence two teachers and two teaching assistants covering the class across the week.

It is Thursday morning, before the students arrive. I am in the classroom preparing the guided reading books. Jean is in the classroom finishing a display. Diane hasn't arrived yet. Claire comes in to handover to me.

Claire: How's it going with Diane?

Me: Fine – we get on well.

Claire: Be careful, she is lazy. Watch her and be firm or she will never get anything done.

Jean laughs

Me: Honestly, she has been absolutely fine so far. She's working hard and has really helped me out.

Jean: That'd be a first...

Claire and Jean both laugh

Claire: Well, Laura, if that changes, make sure you are clear with her about expectations otherwise Jean will have more to do at the beginning of the week.

Claire leaves after a brief discussion about guided reading books. I am shocked that the conversation took place in front of Jean and also at the characterisation of Diane as lazy. I have genuinely had no problems with Diane in relation to how hard she works. She has, so far, done everything I have asked her to do and more.

LT field notes, September, 2011

There are frequent negative comments about Diane and her laziness although I never see any evidence of this. Nati has been working at the school for over a decade, supporting students with English as an additional language in the classroom and through group work outside of lesson times. However, she is often the target of malicious gossip and, again, accusations, behind her back, of being lazy and not working hard enough. For instance, being a practicing Hindu, Nati took time off to celebrate the festival of Diwali with her family. She had booked this time off in advance and it had been approved by the head and the school governors, as is procedure. The following conversation is one I overhear between Jean, Tilly (another teaching assistant) and Wendy (a higher level teaching assistant who is also the designated SENCo):

Tilly: Bloody hell, Nati is off again, what is it now? Ramadan? Diwali? Something else religious...

Wendy [laughing]: I know, it messes up the support for the kids. I have enough work to pick up from her when she is here, never mind when she's away...

Jean: I'm not against her religion or being racist or anything but it's getting ridiculous now, the amount of time she has off

LT field notes November 2011

Greenfield Infants is a school where staff absence, amongst all staff, is high. The combination of outer London funding (despite the challenges facing the school) and poor management of this funding means that teaching assistants often do work longer hours than they are paid for. Wendy is covering the position of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) that should be the responsibility of a senior member of teaching staff. In this data excerpt, however, Hinduism and Islam are simultaneously conflated and othered in a move that places blame on Nati and excludes her for taking time off work. The responsibility for the excess workloads of the teaching assistants is not that of Nati or Diane but the people who make staffing decisions: Louise, Claire and the school governors. One way in which the insider/outsider binary operates here is to produce racism and religious discrimination. For the most part, discussions of race and racism at Greenfield Infants are conspicuous in their absence. I am informed, in hushed tones, by Louise at my interview that there are 'racial tensions' and 'problems with community cohesion' on the estate. However, the silence around issues of race here is significant and a point to which I shall return when discussing particular pedagogical interventions later in the thesis.

As I have begun to indicate, becoming accepted as part of the staff team during my first term at the school is not easy but I also feel very uneasy about becoming part of this staff team. I began my exploration of this insider/outsider binary with a consideration of the locked gates and doors. The inscription of this binary into the physicality of the building and the furniture is something that reaches beyond the external features of the school. For instance, there are unspoken staff room rules about who can sit where and who can drink from which mugs. Whilst practices such as these are not unheard of in primary school staffrooms, the lack of warning about these practices at Greenfield is unnerving to me when I first start. The school bursar showing me around on my first visit to the school simply tells me to help myself to tea and coffee and points out the dishwasher rota. I then become aware of the seating hierarchies and mug situation during my first term. Again, the insider/outsider binary is present in the physical components of the staffroom: the mugs and the seats. They

are inseparable; just as the secretary's voice through the buzzer is inseparable from the locked gate shutting outsiders out.

Throughout my time at the school, there are frequent references to my outsider status in terms of having taught elsewhere in London and not knowing or understanding the estate. Even from teachers who are not themselves from the estate, there is a simultaneous protectiveness and a seeming desire to acknowledge the abject status of the place before I do. The following data excerpt depicts an encounter between myself and one of the year one teachers at the beginning of the Autumn term:

I am sitting in the computer suite looking over some of the year 2 curriculum planning. A teacher comes in and begins photocopying.

Sheila: Hi I'm Sheila, year one teacher.

Me: I'm Laura. I'm sharing Oak Class with Claire.

Sheila: So, welcome to the chaos!

[We both laugh]

Sheila: Where have you come from then?

Me: I've just moved near here, I used to work in a different part of London.

Sheila: Oh, you're not from round here then, you won't know what's hit you. Around here we have some of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy, nationally. And some of the highest obesity rates.

Me: I think I've worked in schools not dissimilar to this before.

Sheila: [shaking her head, smiling] Just you wait and see [walks out with her photocopying].

LT, field notes, September, 2011

This is one of many such interactions in which I am positioned as outsider both to the area and to the school. I am often informed of the high rates of teenage pregnancy, obesity and high unemployment in the area and it is suggested to me I must be shocked by the students, parents and staff at the school. What comes across to me in these exchanges is a simultaneous need by staff to defend the school and the area, frequently made abject by the local and national press and in local folklore, and a need to identify the Orchard estate and its residents as abject, anticipating my response. Ambivalence emerges in these conversations as staff shift from a protective

identification with the estate and a need to distance themselves from it. Here is a brief excerpt from another conversation, occurring later in the term between myself and Diane. She explains to me:

‘Lots of staff live on this estate but not me. I travel in from town. Don’t get me wrong... it’s not that bad... but I didn’t want to bring my boys up here. The staff from here though, they go back a long way – know each other inside and outside school.’

LT fieldnotes November 2011

Diane, herself often constituted as an outsider, attempts here to give me some insight into the relationship of certain staff members to each other and the area. She is ‘in’ enough to understand what goes on but ‘out’ enough not to become abject with the estate. Jean, the other Oak Class teaching assistant, who has lived on the estate all her adult life, has a more ambivalent relationship to the area and some of her neighbours. During the lunch break at an end of term staff training day, Jean and I discuss the behaviour of Daisy. Daisy is one of seven children and her mum is pregnant with another baby. Jean talks about this alongside the decisions she made about the size of her own family:

Jean: Her family is big. That mother just needs to stop. All different fathers as well, they are....

Me: Mmm... it must be a difficult time in their household....

Jean: Well, Mum’s brought that on herself really. I didn’t want a big family. Just 3 children I wanted and I didn’t know when I was pregnant with my third that it was twins. I had nothing ready or anything. I just had to deal with it.

Me: It must of come as a shock to you to find out you were having twins!

Jean: Yeah. And then I got myself sterilised after my twins. They didn’t want to do it because I was only 29 but I insisted. I really had to fight for it. I was adamant I didn’t want more.... I didn’t want to be one of those women with a really big family. It isn’t fair on the children. You may have enough love but you haven’t got enough time.

Here Jean seems to draw upon a discourse of the respectable working class family in distinguishing herself from Daisy's mum who has 'brought that on herself'. Daisy's family is pushed further into abjection whilst Jean attempts to police the boundaries of respectability and 'proper' mothering for which a woman must have 'enough love' and 'enough time'. All the time, however, these conversations position me as somebody who does not know and who, therefore, cannot comment. This feeling of being an outsider comes from me as much as the staff and is compounded, in both directions, by my status as part time and a PhD student as well as my middle class accent and the fact that I have only very recently moved to this part of London. Another factor contributing to the frosty reception I receive from some staff, especially teaching assistants, is the fact I was appointed by Louise. As I shall go on to explore, the staff team, on the whole, dislike Louise and anyone appointed by her. This includes the school bursar, a teaching assistant from Louise's previous school and Owen, the nursery teacher. Whilst the bursar and teaching assistant are excluded by a big group of teaching assistants, it seems almost the whole staff team dislike Owen. However, as I have already suggested in reference to staff relationships depicted in previous data excerpts, this bad feeling is enacted in whispers hidden behind hands, between the cluster of teaching assistants who go on cigarette breaks together, in the silences that descend upon a room when a particular member of staff enters, jokes that only some people are allowed to get. Who is in and who is out of this staff group, however, is a very complicated matter with allegiances being formed and broken, coinciding or contradicting other allegiances. So, for instance, Jean and Claire are good friends and are usually unfriendly towards me when I first begin working at the school except when Louise has let a staff meeting run over and then I am included in the post-meeting moaning about Louise. On yet another occasion, Jean and I have been working together when I do some extra days to cover for Claire who is off sick. I feel we are getting on better and she seems to be being less hostile towards me. Suddenly, at the end of one of these days, Louise, who often confides in me about how difficult she finds her role, marches in to the classroom whilst I am marking books and Jean is putting up a display. A student teacher, Mark, who is on placement at Greenfield

Infants and based in Oak Class, is also in the room organising the guided reading books. The following conversation occurs:

Louise: Laura, the behaviour in this class is unacceptable – they were so chatty in assembly today and there was a lot of silliness in the corridors earlier. Make sure you sort it out. It's not like this when Claire is in at the beginning of the week. Jean tells me there is a difference in behaviour.

Me: Um.. sorry... I did make them walk back to the classroom when they were being noisy in the corridor. I think the change over from Claire to me is difficult for the class to manage sometimes.

Louise [Walking out]: Get on top of it Laura, it needs to change.

[I am lost for words. My heart is beating hard in my chest and I feel humiliated in front of Mark and Jean. Holding my ground with colleagues on issues of behaviour management is one of the hardest things].

Jean: I don't know where that came from – I only said to Louise that they were a bit naughty today. I don't know where that came from at all.

Me: Well, I do things in a different way to Claire – it is probably difficult for the children to have such different approaches... I will speak to Claire and try to get some more consistency across the week.

Mark: I think we just need zero tolerance on behaviour. No negotiating. I'll do a carpet plan for my maths lesson tomorrow.

Me: Ok, if you would like to try that out you can.

LT field notes January 2012

Jean, who claims to hate Louise so much, went behind my back to complain about my behaviour management to her and Louise, who previously took me into her confidence, comes to tell me off in front of colleagues. Any hint of professionalism and collegiality amongst staff is frequently eclipsed by complex machinations upholding different configurations of insider/ outsider binaries. Louise herself is in a precarious position having been recently appointed as head with the understanding that she would raise standards in teaching and learning in the school. However, since her arrival, two terms prior to my own, she has never had the full support of the teaching staff or teaching assistants.

I am told the story of the staff's attempt to get Louise removed from post a number of times throughout my year at the school. Many staff were very disappointed that Claire, who has been working at the school for 12 years and is good friends with many of the teaching assistants, was not appointed. A group of teaching assistants including Jean, Tilly, Cathy and Wendy sent a petition to the school governors to ask for the removal of Louise after she changed the time of morning break for certain year groups at the school. Nobody actually brought formal grievances against Louise and the governors supported her but tales of this event are retold again and again, particularly at times of stress.

As indicated by the data excerpt above, the usual school hierarchies and the professional practices and procedures that accompany these, do not function as might be expected at Greenfield Infants. Rather, old allegiances are tighter than newer requirements for professionalism. This makes for a very confusing place to work as the more usual collaboration and coherence between senior members of staff does not exist and conflicting direction, or no direction at all, results. The following excerpt is a staffroom conversation between myself, the deputy and head and a teaching assistant, Cathy, on a school visit I made during the summer term of 2011. I am being introduced to different staff members and shown around the building. I include it here to indicate the absence of expected professional norms.

Louise [laughing]: And *this* is Cathy!

[I hear other people in the staffroom laughing too and someone says 'Oh god, here we go'. Cathy, a woman who looks to be about 50, holds out her hand to me and I shake it]

Cathy: Pleased to meet you, what is it? Lauren?

Me [smiling, trying to seem good humoured]: Laura, actually. What year group do you work with?

Cathy: I'm with them brats in reception [more laughing from everyone including Louise and Claire]. So, you married then?

Me [heart sinking, rapidly trying to decide whether I'm brave enough to come out to the whole staffroom]: Yeah... [I immediately regret pausing, it's too late now]

Cathy: When you get married then?

Me: April, so not long ago...

Cathy: You can come to me for sex advice, y' know.

[Everyone laughs, including me, although I'm feeling uncomfortable]

Cathy: Is he as good at sex now you're married? Does he fuck you properly?

[Everyone laughs again. I feel my cheeks go red, I am unsure how to respond – I am new, my boss is right beside me, I am not straight...]

Louise [still laughing]: Don't worry, Laura, you don't have to answer that, go and see Sheila in the office to sort out your pay details.

[I leave the staffroom and go and walk along the corridor. *What the hell kind of school is this?* I think. *Why didn't I just say the name of my wife earlier in the conversation? This feels like no school I have been in before.* I take a deep breath and remind myself I am here for my research. This helps to make the immediate situation feel more bearable but as this happens I begin to feel ashamed at my response. *How can I be doing a project relating to troubling inequalities in school and be unable to think of anything to say to those comments? Unable even to disclose the name of the person to whom I'm married? How will I even write this up?*]

LT field notes, June, 2011

The absence of professionalism amongst the staff at Greenfield is something that strikes me when I arrive at the school. Whilst sexual, and sexist, banter in staffrooms is not unusual, this direct questioning, tantamount to sexual harassment, completely takes me aback. Further, the response from Claire and Louise which colluded with rather than challenged this surprised me and left me unsure how to respond other than to laugh along too. The questions I ask myself at the end of this data excerpt are like many I ask myself during the course of this research. Being watched by a staffroom full of colleagues, some of whom I have not even been introduced to, and the deputy and head, make it feel difficult to respond differently. Yet the pressure I feel to say something that would challenge the heterosexism of the questions posed to me is palpable and is something I negotiate time and again over the year I am working at the school. It seems Cathy's comments to me here are meant to shock and surprise me, which they do. They also position me as an outsider in this

school. The mutter of 'oh god here we go' of one of the other staff members suggests a joke I am not in on; a known initiation ritual that will leave me feeling uncomfortable. It certainly left me feeling like I had failed either to challenge Cathy's questions and/or to come up with something witty that would make the staff laugh; to show that my skin was thick enough to cope with working in this place.

My discussion so far has focused on the production of the insider/ outsider binary and how this operates across different aspects of life at the school; dividing the place, its spaces and its subjects. It is important to acknowledge, however, the productive forces that run counter to this binary movement, generative of different relations and ways of being. My relationship with Ben Marcus, the teacher of the parallel year 2 class, is one that is supportive and sustaining. Ben and I collaborate on planning, share resources and he sometimes gives me a lift to my bus stop after school. He is warm, friendly and genuinely liked by all the staff. He is relatively new to the school, having joined just a term before Louise. In my relationship with Ben, the insider/ outsider binary does not play out and I am grateful for his presence in the room next door. Although his approach to behaviour management is behaviourist in terms of it involving a chart with a sun, rainbow and rain cloud on with students' names being moved accordingly in relation to how they behave, he does not shout at the students as is the norm at Greenfield Infants and always seems very respectful of them. I highlight my relationship with Ben here as it is important to acknowledge that the difficult relational politics I frequently experience at Greenfield Infants are not pervasive and that I do find allies here.

Ofsted and the encroaching neo-liberal agenda

Whilst many of the staff appear ambivalent about their identification with the estate and the families and their children who attend the school, the head teacher often displays ambivalence towards the staff whilst never veering from the narrative that there is no reason the students cannot achieve highly. She has specific aims and objectives to raise standards at Greenfield Infants and move the school out of the Ofsted 'satisfactory' category. Sometimes she calls upon me as an ally; someone who understands what 'good practice' in education is and who can appreciate how her actions are geared towards raising standards in the school. At the beginning of the

school year, she often confides in me after school, just as I am on my way out. At other times, however, when other staff are around, she uses me to position herself as more of an insider. I become someone who does not understand in relation to her and the school. My outsider status makes her more of an insider. I will return to these points in more detail in relation to the ways in which they are linked to neo liberal notions of 'best practice' and the impending visit from Ofsted.

Learning the internal lay out of the school is something that takes me some time. There are mazes of corridors coming off the hall. The hall itself is adjacent and joined to the canteen which leads into the junior school with its own maze like corridor system. That all the infant classes are on corridors leading off from the hall means that lessons in the hall (mostly PE) are frequently interrupted by classes of children walking to and from the canteen (early years and year 1 always eat lunch before year 2 stop lessons) and also other staff moving from their classrooms to the staffroom or school office. Moving around school with Oak Class is never easy. To get to the hall or dining room from our classroom involves walking past both the deputy head teacher's office and the head's office and we frequently get asked to be quiet or to go back and begin the walk again due to the noise. In these spaces outside the classroom we have to, in the words of Laws and Davies (2000), 'do normal' which can be tricky when I refuse to use the expected disciplinary tactics common at Greenfield to elicit 'doing normal' from my class. Whilst this phrase, for Laws and Davies, evokes the normal/ abnormal binary of special education, I use it here in a more general sense to convey the behaviour we have to display. Greenfield is a school difficult to get into yet also difficult to hide in. Even the classroom I use is a thoroughfare for classroom teaching assistants and teachers coming in from the playground or their fag breaks beyond the school gates. There is a feeling of constant surveillance here and interventions into my pedagogy and practice occur here where they may not in a differently structured space. This becomes significant in relation to my own practices of self surveillance and can impact on the kinds of pedagogy I attempt to pursue in particular spatiotemporal moments in the school day.

Over the course of the year, I come to associate the smell of Greenfield Infants with dread: Entering through the double doors (doors I now have a swipe card for), standing outside the school hall, the smell of cleaning fluid mixes with heated paper from the copier, school dinners from the canteen and the children's toilets. It is

distinctive. It somehow comes to represent the stress, uncertainty and fragmentation I experience around me, and inevitably, within me, over the course of the year. It makes my stomach flip over with anxiety: Anxiety of being an outsider in a new workplace where I am attempting to both complete my fieldwork for my doctoral thesis and negotiate the strange staff politics, as, alongside all the staff, I await the call from Ofsted.

The recent appointment of Louise means that the threat of Ofsted looms large over the school during my time there.² Given the national and international prioritisation of high stakes testing and value added scores for schools, a discussion of counter politics and schooling within the state school sector in the UK needs to engage with the way in which Ofsted impacts on life in school. I am particularly interested here, however, in exploring the way in which Ofsted – its recommendations in terms of previous reports, its latest statements to schools regarding judgements and good practice and the threat of the next visit – operates in conjunction with other practices at Greenfield Infants. Government policy changes stipulating schools judged not to be making adequate progress become academies (DfE 2015), are also significant to Greenfield during my time here. Such academies fall largely outside local authority control, often operate within school confederations run by ‘super heads’ who have a track record of school improvement and rely on private investors to resource all aspects of the school from the staff to the equipment and buildings. By the end of my year working at Greenfield preparations were in place for it to become an academy although it remained under local authority control throughout my time there.

My previous discussion of particular excerpts of data begin to indicate the complex interrelations between the staff, the buildings, Ofsted and the wider context of neo liberal education. The school gates in themselves tell a story that combines security, Ofsted requirements regarding child protection and the collective apprehension by school staff at the presence of outsiders to the school and area. Operating electrically to let cars and people in and out, these gates have been installed more recently than the school was built, reflecting the way in which the physical site of the school is overlaid with different understandings of school and schooling. Here,

² Ofsted regulations current during my year spent working at Greenfield Infants state that a school inspection must occur, regardless of when the next one would have been due, within a year of a new head taking up post within a local authority controlled school (Ofsted, 2011)

however, I want to explore, in more detail, the impact of the impending Ofsted inspection at Greenfield.

Foucault's (1991) concept of disciplinary power has been put to work by scholars within the field of educational sociology to theorise the impact of the introduction of Ofsted inspections and the corresponding growth in cultures of accountability in schools (see, for instance, Ball 2003, Perryman 2006, 2007). Before turning to this scholarship to help me to discuss the ways in which this culture of accountability is mobilised at Greenfield, I will first engage with Foucault's theories of disciplinary power in order to be able to explore how this concept is used in the literature and, then, to use this theory in relation to Greenfield School. In 'Discipline and Punish' Foucault (1991) charts the move from sovereign power to disciplinary power. The former, argues Foucault, represents a zero-sum model whereby power is something that can be possessed and exerted. Foucault introduces this conceptualisation of power to us via his discussions of systems of punishment. The aim of punishment, states Foucault, 'is not so-much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength' (1991, p.49). Power here is both a metaphysical possession and the, literal 'physical strength of the sovereign beating down upon the body of his adversary and mastering it' (ibid.). The subject here is subject to a power which is external to it and acts upon it. This subject is visible in Foucault's account as the condemned man brought to justice via means of torture, trial and confession. It is on the eighteenth century scaffold that the full force of sovereign power is wielded through the actions of the judiciary and executioners. The body of the condemned is the site on which the power and will of the sovereign is meted. In Foucault's text, the bodies of these subjects are central to understanding the operation of power. Indeed, the depiction of the torture and killing of Damians the regicide, used by Foucault to open the text, reveals a body being scalded, burned and pulled apart in the process of condemnation, punishment and eventual death (pp.3-6). This judicial system foregrounds the body as the visible manifestation of the consequences of punishment via the power of the sovereign. The body is not a conduit for power here, it is the site on which power is rendered visible and is of principal importance in this system of punishment.

Foucault traces a shift from these sovereign societies to, what he terms, disciplinary societies (p.209) but the move is not a straightforward one or wholly linear. Indeed, elements of the sovereign society remain in the new order although this new order emphasises linear 'progress' as '[p]ower is articulated directly onto time' (p.160). Foucault demonstrates the way in which power comes to function differently as society shifts and his continued focus on punishment, resulting in the birth of the prison in the nineteenth century, allows us to perceive this shift more clearly. Broadly speaking, power is no longer something possessed by one person or group to be wielded over another but, rather, operates through institutions, rendering different the functions of space, time and subjects. 'Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism,' writes Foucault, 'and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes [...]' It is a power that seems all the less 'corporal' in that it is more subtly 'physical' (p.177). The body seems to lose its corporeality here and, instead, becomes part of a wider project in which space, time and objects are inscribed and altered by power, operating now through institutions, not wielded by a sovereign. So, what happens to subjectivity in this disciplinary society? Foucault suggests that technologies of surveillance produce a different kind of subject; a subject that no longer needs external coercion and punishment but one which disciplines itself. He offers us the model of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon to demonstrate the production of this new kind of subject. In this prison institution the prisoners do not need to be commanded by guards constantly. Indeed, the guards inhabit a watchtower around which are built the prisoners' cells. Remaining unseen to the prisoners, the guards could be watching any one of the prisoners at any moment. This has the effect of producing prisoners who watch themselves and, thus, become self-disciplining. Power here is not so much exerted on the subject but, in fact, produces the subject. Panopticonism, for Foucault, 'is the general principle of a new 'political anatomy' whose object and end are not relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline' (p.208). Crucially, this discipline is exercised through the institutions of the prison, the hospital and the school.

This focus on institutions has led many education sociology scholars to take up Foucauldian panopticonism in relation to schools. Both Stephen Ball (2003) and Jane Perryman (2006, 2007) have mapped the impact of Ofsted as a technology of control (Foucault 1991) in terms of the kinds of teaching subjects it produces. Drawing upon

Lyotard's (1984) notion of performativity, the process through which knowledge becomes legitimised in relation to how effectively and efficiently it can perform technical roles, Stephen Ball (2003) describes the 'terrors of performativity' engendered by technologies such as lesson inspections and performance management targets, arguing that they alter the very nature of teaching and learning in addition to creating stress and despondency amongst teachers. Perryman (2006, 2007) uses the term 'panoptic performativity' to bring together Foucault's (1991) use of panoptic power and Lyotard's understanding of performativity. Panoptic performativity, explains Perryman, 'describes a regime in which frequency of inspection and the sense of being perpetually under surveillance, leads teachers to performing in ways dictated by the discourse of inspection in order to escape the regime' (2007, p.173). In both these papers, Ofsted is viewed as a totalising force; dictating practice and producing ever vigilant, increasingly self-regulating subjects. Perryman, however, questions the lasting effect of this panoptic power, suggesting that once the threat of being placed in special measures has passed, teachers cease to perform in the ways expected by Ofsted. Whilst teachers at Greenfield certainly do not produce lesson planning and resources in the way in which they would prior to and during an inspection, the impact of Ofsted is felt in every aspect of day to day practices at the school. This can be partly explained by the changes to Ofsted inspections. In 2007 Ofsted inspections to schools became more frequent and shorter (Elliot 2012). This changes the terrain somewhat. It is not simply that teaching and learning changes in the lead up to an inspection, due to the short notice of inspections and the introduction of the SEF, all aspects of teaching and learning are altered permanently. However, I will suggest here that although, as Ball argues, the influence of Ofsted in a school is 'insidious', the effect is not totalising. Rather, Ofsted acts as one aspect of discourse and practice at Greenfield and intersects with other discourses and practices in complex ways. I will attempt to explore further the ways in which these components operate at Greenfield, in order to give more context to the pedagogical politics I attempt to pursue at this site.

The following data excerpt captures the imperatives to perform to Ofsted expectations inextricably caught up in the tangled attempts at communication from senior management and the everyday pedagogy of infant school PE lessons:

I am just walking out of the staffroom after having finished my lunch when the deputy head and my job share partner, Claire, asks, in a low whisper, if she can have a word. She ushers me into her office.

Claire: You had children lined up too near the door during PE. It's health and safety.

[During the PE lesson before lunch, Louise, the head teacher had come into the hall, as she walked in, the door had bumped a child on the head. The children were lined up to use some apparatus in the hall and the line reached to the hall door]

Me: I know, sorry about that.... We should have lined them up the other side....

Claire: And I just need to let you know that it was observed that the apparatus were not appropriate for year 2. They were more what you would put out for year 1.

Me: Oh right... we were practicing balancing with the beams... lots of the children were not able to do it....

Claire: Just make sure you have other apparatus as well. It did sound like a lovely lesson.

[Myself and the other year 2 teacher had been discussing the lesson in the staffroom. We had linked it to the literacy unit focusing on the text 'The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark' and had been asking the children to link their movements to those of birds – perching, hopping, swooping, gliding, flapping etc.]

Me: Ok... next week we'll put out a wider range of things...

Claire: Great, thanks Laura.

LT field notes November 2011

The spectre of Ofsted is ever present here in the concerns regarding health and safety and the selection of age appropriate apparatus yet these concerns are delivered via a cloak and dagger message from the deputy head who had not even seen the lesson. Whilst this might make sense in a bigger organisation, this is a small infant school where the head regularly comes into classrooms to speak to teachers and children. Judgements are made about my lesson by Louise which are communicated

to Claire without me realising only to be shared with me later by Claire. Children balancing on beams and benches, jumping from boxes on to mats and climbing up ladders on to other apparatus are the staples of infant school PE lessons. Often, the year 1 classes, who have PE before year 2 on a Friday, leave the apparatus out for us and we just change it slightly to suit our plans. The accusation of age inappropriate apparatus here is about lack of challenge and expectation for the students and is aimed at ensuring myself and the other year 2 teacher realise that the lesson we were teaching would not be acceptable during an Ofsted inspection. My ability to make professional judgements about the activities during a PE lesson is undermined. In this situation, I am, yet again, positioned as someone who has not understood the requirements. The children lining up by the door is not simply an oversight but becomes a serious failure to implement proper health and safety precautions. The impending Ofsted inspection at Greenfield does not simply alter practice, as Perryman suggests happens, it alters the kind of teaching subject I become as every action, every piece of equipment or item of furniture is viewed in the context of how it might appear on Ofsted lesson observation sheets.

What does it mean to be a recognisable teacher at Greenfield?

So far, I have attempted to give an account of Greenfield Infants and my experience of the school. I do this in order to situate the politics I enact in my classroom and to indicate how the politics I pursue at different moments is contingent upon seemingly disparate discursive and material conditions. This leads me to ask what sort of teaching subject it is possible for me to be at Greenfield Infants. I have begun to suggest some of the ways in which I am constituted as an outsider and as someone who does not know and I have also suggested that I collude in these constitutions of myself, as uncomfortable as they are. As I will argue, this is a necessary tactic because I am offered recognisability via these subject positions: in taking them up I am limited in who I can be yet, simultaneously, my continued existence in this space becomes viable. Indeed, as Judith Butler (1997b) argues, this is the paradox of subjectivation: it makes us subjects of power and provides the very conditions for our recognisability. Butler writes, “subjectivation” carries the paradox in itself: *assujettissement* denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection – one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies

a radical dependency' (p.83). The dependency Butler speaks of here is a dependency of the Same on the Other and vice versa. As Youdell (2012) comments in relation to this Same/ Other dynamic in Butler's work, 'while the Same might appear to extend a 'gift' of recognition to the Other, this is, in fact a relation of recognition that flows in both directions – the Same needs the Other, its exterior and opposite, in order to be recognised as the Same' (p.143). The Other in Butler's work is symbolic and functions in an inaugurating capacity within the process of subject formation. Yet the figure of the other is also present in a more literal way in a series of dyads that appear throughout her work: Master/ slave; parent/ infant and analyst/ analysand. The process of subjectivation involving the Same/ Other on a symbolic level is situated in actual human relationships, albeit a very specific kind of relationship in the analyst/ analysand dyad – one often contingent upon issues of finance, class and geography. As I shall explore in more detail in chapter 6, Butler (2005) suggests we might find a more ethical way of relating to the other if we are able to tolerate that which we do not know in ourselves and in the other. This is perhaps an easier process to conceptualise when the other in question is a psychoanalyst or, at least, a peer. What happens when the chasm between Same and Other is bigger or more difficult to navigate? How does one let the other live when the other in question seems so different to the self?

I am interested, here, in how recognition operates at Greenfield Infants to regulate who and how it is possible for me to be, as a teacher. As I have begun to explore already in this chapter, one of the ways in which I become recognisable is by being an outsider. This outsider status sometimes constitutes me as someone who knows but also sometimes constitutes me as someone who does not know. This constitution marginalises me whilst simultaneously making my continued existence at this school viable: it forms the basis of my relationships with many of the staff and becomes the smoke screen behind which I hide. Earlier I discussed how Greenfield Infants has somehow managed to largely avoid the enactment of some of the more overt aspects of neo-liberal education policy that other schools in the borough, and more widely, have taken up. My first term at the school is punctuated by moments where Louise confides in me about her concerns about getting staff to implement new teaching and learning policies before the next Ofsted inspection. In these conversations, Louise and I collaborate as joint outsiders (albeit continuing in our head teacher/ teacher roles) who understand what needs to be done to raise standards in

the school. The following data depicts a conversation between myself and Louise towards the beginning of the Autumn term:

As I am leaving school, I call out 'goodbye' to the head teacher as I pass her office. She looks 'round and stands up.

Louise: Have you had a good day today? Are you enjoying working here?

Me: Yeah, I've had a good day – the kids are lovely and so are the staff.

Louise: They're a good bunch here... although they don't know what they have to do to improve teaching and learning. We're expecting Ofsted any day.

Me: That is stressful. I remember at my last school, we were expecting Ofsted all year – then they never came...

Louise: I'm sure that won't happen here. They are due to come and I think we'll be lucky if we don't go into special measures..... You must think I'm a terrible head teacher...

Me: Of course not, you've not been in post long....

Louise: Lots of staff members are blind to the school's weaknesses. They think Ofsted were unfair last time but I don't really think so.

Me: It's hard....

Louise: Yeah.... You know how to write success criteria, don't you, Laura? I've seen you do it...

Me: Yeah, I think so...

Louise: How do I teach my staff? They just don't get it...

Me: Well, I guess assessment for learning needs to come first, then that determines the next learning objective which then can be broken down into success criteria. I guess it's not easy to teach all that though...

Louise: Yeah... AfL is at the heart of the issue – people don't get it though. We need to do more staff training.

We walk out of school together, Louise pointing out what needs to be cleaned up and tidied in the school grounds.

Louise: We have both caretakers off. One with stress – not our fault, it's to do with his wages and the authority sort that out – and the other banged his knuckles into the door of his car.

Me: Oh dear, that must be hard without caretakers

Louise: I mean, look at that [pointing to an arched, metal trellis which is on its side just outside the main entrance]. That's a complete health and safety issue, what if a child climbed on it? Ofsted could pull us up for that... I'll have to get someone to deal with it tomorrow.

Me: You have a lot of stuff to keep in your head...

Louise: It's so stressful. I keep thinking what if Ofsted ask me this, what if Ofsted ask me that? I've been through seven Ofsteds before but never as head. I just keep thinking... have I done everything I need to do?

Me: It's very stressful...

Louise: Anyway, we better get home... have a good week Laura, see you next week.

Me: You too... bye.

Louise: Bye...

LT field notes, September, 2011

Here I am Louise's confidante: like her, the teacher who has trained and practiced elsewhere, who can understand the importance of learning objectives, assessment for learning and assessment criteria. I know how to be this kind of teacher, having previously worked in schools where such practices were embedded in every planning proforma and lesson observation checklist and having had these ideas drummed into me as a trainee teacher. If being the good primary school teacher within current neo-liberal policy discourses of education is what is required for my recognisability at Greenfield Infants, the path I have to negotiate over the course of the year would probably be easier. Yet enacting the good neo-liberal teaching subject does not always secure my recognisability at this school. Indeed, both Louise and I are unavoidably caught up in other discourses and practices that intersect with and undercut neo-liberalism. In the absence of policies or guidance about planning and marking at Greenfield Infants, I draw upon practices I had learnt in previous jobs, knowing that doing nothing would not be acceptable and thinking that such practices ensured my lessons were judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' previously. However, this leads to Louise sharing my approach to marking in staff training (in my absence as staff meetings are on Mondays when I do not work). Whilst this predictably leads

to ribbing from some colleagues, it really alienates me from others who see this sharing of practice as evidence I am in some way collaborating with Louise and am, therefore, not to be trusted.

Whilst acting my place as a good neo-liberal teaching subject makes me recognisable to Louise and some other staff members, occupying this subject position is not enough to sustain my intelligibility in other ways and with other members of staff. Neo-liberalism is only part of the story at this school. Indeed, whilst behaviour management practices in classrooms across the school involve systems of rewards and sanctions, clearly visible and easily understandable to students, these are undercut by displays of rage and aggression by staff towards students which are much less predictable. This behaviour is part of the culture of the school and refusing to partake in it leads to questions about my ability to manage the behaviour of the students I teach. In trying to find an alternative to confrontations with students involving shouting and physical handling, I revert to a behaviourist language of 'choice' and 'making good decisions'. Such an approach is compatible with neo-liberal discourses of teaching and learning as it is technical, there is a measurable element to it and it is, seemingly, time efficient: it is much quicker to put a child's name under a sad face or a rain cloud than to sit with them to try to resolve whatever is causing their disruptive behaviour. As I shall explore in subsequent chapters, I often attempt not to take up behaviourist discourses in relation to the students' behaviour. Instead, I try to make space for acknowledging feelings, discussion about what happened and resolution of conflict. However, as the following data excerpt indicates, this approach becomes difficult when negotiating the management of behaviour with other staff members. The interactions that occur in the data below are between myself, Jean (one of the Oak Class TAs) and two students, Daisy and Ruth.

It is Thursday afternoon. Louise, Claire and the chair of governors are on a 'learning walk' around school. In the briefing this morning we were reminded that the expectation is that all children will be engaged in productive learning and that our teaching assistants must be supporting this learning effectively. There have been arguments amongst some of the children in Oak Class over lunchtime and the class as a whole are fractious. I play a few clapping games at the beginning of the afternoon, to try to calm the

class down. Jean, one of the class teaching assistants, looks annoyed and comments 'these kids should not need this by now'. I am not sure if this is a criticism of my ability to manage behaviour or of the children or both. I ignore her, continue the games and eventually send the children off to their tables for their afternoon activities which involve finishing a booklet about a recent trip to a farm. Daisy is in a bad mood and initially refuses to do any work. Eventually, after some cajoling, she sits down next to another student, Ruth. I then see Daisy snatching Ruth's pencil out of her hand. Jean sees this from the table she is working on and storms over. 'What do you think you are doing, young lady?' she shouts. Daisy has the pencil gripped in her hand. Ruth watches, wide eyed. 'Give that back to me' demands Jean. 'You don't go snatching pencils off of other children, how would you like it if I did that to you?' Jean is now standing over Daisy, trying to wrangle the pencil out of her hand. 'Mrs Harris, I think we need to give Daisy a choice now,' I say. *[I hear what I am doing but cannot think of anything else to say in the moment, feeling the pressure from the 'learning walk' which may descend on the classroom at any moment. I have been attempting for months to resist the behaviourist language of choice and, in evoking it here in relation to Daisy, I place the responsibility of the situation on to her, thus turning attention away from Jean who is behaving in a threatening manner].* 'Daisy,' I say. 'You need to give the pencil back to Ruth or go on time out again...' (this is in line with her behaviour plan). I know that this will end up with Daisy on time out as she does not usually back down when confronted in this way. Jean is still trying to get the pencil off Daisy, Daisy's grip on the pencil is strong. 'Mrs Harris, I think we need to come away from Daisy now and let her make her decision...' I say. This seems acceptable to Jean and she immediately lets go of the pencil, as does Daisy. I'm relieved. Daisy runs behind the curtain. I ask Jean to go and get Mrs Moore (the special needs teaching assistant who has been sitting with Daisy to do time out). Mrs Moore comes in and Daisy seems to acquiesce to having her hand taken by Mrs Moore and being led out of the classroom.

LT field notes, April, 2012

In taking up the language of choice, I, again, become recognisable within neo-liberal discourses of teaching in contemporary schooling. This manoeuvre just about sustains my recognisability as a teacher in this space in that I am seen to take Daisy's behaviour seriously and support the teaching assistant working with me. To undermine Jean at this point is difficult for me as I am concerned she will report back to senior management that I am not supportive of her. The added fear of this situation being seen by Louise and the school governors on their learning walk also prompts me to take up this behaviourist language of choice. Daisy and Ruth endure the consequences of my need to remain recognisable as a teacher, however, in that they have no support in resolving what happened between them and Daisy cannot continue to participate in the lesson.

The position of 'reporter' or, even, 'spy', that Jean assumes in relation to my practice is almost panoptical. Yet this form of surveillance is perhaps more confusing than the panoptical practices of the neo-liberal schooling institution which I am very used to such as book scrutiny (where teachers are not told which of their students' books will be taken for assessment), learning walks (when teachers are only told that members of senior management will come around to observe the learning environment of the classroom but are not informed precisely when) and child target checking (when students are removed from lessons and asked to articulate their targets for literacy and numeracy and to explain what they need to do to achieve these targets). These practices occur at Greenfield and I know how to do enough to be perceived as a good teacher within the discourses framing such practices. Being recognisable as a good teacher within neo-liberal discourse whilst sometimes altering classroom pedagogy can act as a smokescreen for more radical practices (both mine and the students') in the classroom. Here, however, I try to constitute myself via neo-liberal discourses of choice in order to protect Daisy and to protect myself from being reported. I am not suggesting my take up of behaviourist language and, therefore, the assumption of a neo-liberal subject position, is a conscious decision. I perceive it more as a result of grappling in the moment to find my footing as a recognisable subject whilst intervening in the violence against a student.

My fear about the panoptic function that many of the teaching assistants seem to perform is, in part, generated by the upside down hierarchy that operates here. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, some of the long serving teaching assistants at

Greenfield Infants have a great deal of decision making power within the school in that members of senior management often defer to them. Within this structure, I cannot be sure I would receive the support of my managers, especially in a situation in which I attempt to address students' behaviour through compassion as opposed to sanction. The design of the school intersects with the spatial politics of territories and gives me the sense of always being watched. Oak Class has two doors, one leading onto the year 2 corridor and one that leads out on to the playground. Claire (my job share partner for the first two terms) has longstanding relationships with the dominant group of teaching assistants. When she agrees to go back into the classroom (she has been non-class based for a number of years prior to the autumn of 2011) she does so on the condition that she can have the classroom she used to teach in back and that she can have Jean as her teaching assistant. This is despite the fact that Ben has been teaching in year 2 for the past year in the classroom Claire wants, meaning he has to move all his resources. When Claire has previously taught in the end classroom on the year 2 corridor (what is Oak Class during my time at Greenfield), the teaching assistants she is friends with and smokes with, go in and out of the playground door of the classroom. This door is nearest to the school gate on to the playground and is nearest to the alleyway by the garages where staff members go to smoke. Claire's return to Oak Class marks the reinstatement of the classroom as a thoroughfare for this group of staff after playground duties and cigarette breaks. The friendship between Claire and these teaching assistants is such that this group of staff, to some extent, feel ownership over the space of Oak Class: they tidy as they walk through, discipline students or comment on what is going on. I feel as if I am coming into a space that is not mine when I step into Oak Class and my relationships with these teaching assistants who come and go through the class is difficult to negotiate. At the beginning of the autumn term, I am taken aback by this interference from other staff but as time goes on, I defend my teaching space more assertively. The following data excerpt depicts a moment that occurs early on in the autumn term. The students are restless and noisy after playtime and I am helping them settle and focus through some clapping games.

It is noisy. Arguments from playtime spill over into class time as children filter in from the playground, through the classroom to the cloakroom then

back into the classroom and on to the carpet. I sit on a chair by the whiteboard. I start to clap rhythms. Some of the children who are seated on the carpet join in. The rest of the class are still chatting, arguing and complaining about each other. Tilly, Jasmine and Wendy (TAs from other classes) have come in from their fag break behind the tail end of the Oak Class line at the end of playtime. 'This is ridiculous', says Tilly to the other TAs, 'they shouldn't be making this much noise'. I ignore them and carry on the clapping rhythms as more children sit down and join in. Suddenly, Tilly screams 'Everybody be quiet!' This stuns everyone in the room into silence. She proceeds to shout at the class for being so noisy and disrespectful and informs them she never wants to see them behave like that again. Tilly turns to me. 'That's how you need to do it', she explains, 'the kids here are different and if you don't shout, they will walk all over you.'

LT, field notes, September, 2011

The usual etiquette regarding interaction with classes of children for whom you are not responsible, does not apply here. I manage the transition from break time to numeracy via clapping games with which the children are familiar and responsive to. Yet, to the teaching assistants here, this makes me unrecognisable as a legitimate adult with authority in this space. Again, here, I am an outsider as Tilly establishes dominance over the territory of the classroom and the students. These students, asserts Tilly in her intervention, are not ones that will quieten down with some clapping games. The students are, again, constituted here as object in the construction of their inability to respond to anything but shouting whilst I become incompetent in Tilly's construction of me as unable to manage the behaviour of these students. Again we see expected professionalism and adherence to the hierarchical staffing structures of the school turned on their head. I am not suggesting that such adherence is unproblematic but rather suggesting that it is predictable. Having a teaching assistant who does not work in the class and who I do not know scream at the children to be quiet is not something I predict nor am I prepared for it. There is a chaos about Greenfield Infants which puts me always on the back foot. This is a difficult position to be in, strategically, when trying to plan and enact counter political moves that might resist such violence against the students, and, indeed, myself.

As I have already mentioned, the hall is also a space where my teaching is watched and intervened in. The design of the school is such that the only way to access the dining room and the early years and year 1 corridors is via the hall. This means there are often staff and classes of students walking through the hall during PE lessons. This is unavoidable as different classes go to lunch at different times or have to use the hall to access the library corridor. Yet, as with the example of the school gate I used to open this chapter, the physical design of the school is intertwined with its politics and practices meaning the material and the discursive operate together and are almost impossible to distinguish between in this space. Thus, it is not simply that the design of the school means that staff and students must walk through the school during times when classes are doing PE, it is an additional way for some teaching assistants to intervene in the learning and management of behaviour. The next excerpt of data I use is an account of the end of a PE lesson in which Daisy resists complying with my instructions.

It is the end of PE. All the children except Daisy are lined up at the door. Daisy is running around. She does not want the lesson to end. I ask her to line up too but she ignores me. I decide not to intervene further at this point whilst I prepare the rest of the class for the walk back to the classroom. I have not yet decided what to do when we leave, I just know that confrontation with Daisy tends to rapidly escalate the situation. Diane is with me and is standing near the back of the line of children. I realise that she probably does not agree with my response to Daisy but is supporting me in my non-interventionist approach for now. Wendy (the SEN teaching assistant) enters the hall from the year 1 corridor. She sees Daisy and walks towards her.

Me: It's ok - I know Daisy is there but I am just giving her some time to think about what she is going to do now the PE lesson has finished.

Wendy shows no sign of having heard me.

Wendy: [very cross] What on earth do you think you are doing, young lady?

Come with me now!

Wendy grabs Daisy's hand and roughly leads her out of the hall.

LT, field notes, December, 2011

The actions of Tilly and Wendy undermine the relationships I am building with the students in Oak Class, as individuals and collectively. The institutional support for this approach has the effect of normalising violence here, thus making other approaches aberrant. There is no space for dialogue. The teaching assistants in the two moments I have reported, simply assert their authority without consulting me. Whilst I feel very much taken aback in these instances, and they prompt me to call into question my pedagogic approach, I read the behaviour of the teaching assistants in this data as a response to a school in chaos, without clearly functioning management, and under pressure from the increasing surveillance of the local authority in the lead up to the anticipated Ofsted inspection. The school is under threat and the assertion of authority by the teaching assistants is a response to this uncertainty. However, the students are on the receiving end of the rage and violence of some of the teaching assistants whilst inaction continues from school senior management. In the moment of having my own authority as class teacher undermined, it is easy to feel persecuted and to place blame with these women. Yet these teaching assistants are not in a position of privilege in terms of their economic situations. Many were born on the estate and have been here their entire lives, with no prospect of leaving. I am here, primarily, to generate data for this ethnographic study which itself signals my privilege. I do not live here and my time here is limited. I am, of course, unavoidably, swept up in the politics and chaotic organisation of Greenfield Infants and my own sense of my professional identity is troubled in this place yet I have a way out and do not have to defend against abjection in the same way these women have to. This does raise important questions regarding how to negotiate my relationships with these women as I actively seek to develop counter political pedagogy to challenge the production of inequality. I do not resolve this difficulty over the course of my year at Greenfield Infants yet I continue to grapple with it as I engage in counter politics in this space.

My recognisability as an acceptable teacher is already in question and moments like the ones I discuss above just add further to the suspicions of other staff. Whilst I do change tack over the course of the year as the situation in the school changes and relations between myself and other staff members shift, in these moments I do not attempt to resist subjectivation as the incompetent teacher. It offers

me recognisability whereas more resistance from me further risks my position as recognisable teacher within this space.

Part of my political tactics in relation to my pedagogy at Greenfield is to try to remain under the radar where other school staff, especially senior management, are concerned. Thus, I try to become a 'good teacher' through correctly performing tasks that will be seen by senior management, such as my marking of students' books, my lesson planning and lesson observation performance. There are, however, two main difficulties in relation to this tactic at Greenfield. Firstly, as Ball (2008) states, these practices alter teaching and learning at other times. Indeed, in order to perform excellently in lesson observations, I have to teach with the Ofsted lesson judgement criteria in mind a number of times beforehand and ensure I have covered the right curriculum materials in the lead up to the observation. Given that I understand some of the lesson observation criteria to contribute to the production of inequality (for instance, the emphasis on the technical components of writing results in the valuing of particular kinds of written production, easier for some students than others), my counter politics are undermined by my attempts to perform 'good teacher' in relation to lesson observations. In addition, however, in this school this particular performance of 'good teacher' is not necessarily completely legible to the staff and is difficult to effectively enact due to the chaotic organisation of the school. Indeed, throughout my time at Greenfield, I do not receive updated records for the students in my class who were registered as having special educational needs (SEN) despite being required to differentiate classwork and homework for them; there are no marking policies to follow; student assessment data is frequently altered and lesson observation times are made then cancelled then remade. This chaos makes it more difficult to act my place in neo-liberal educational discourse as a good teaching subject here. That smokescreen can only work so far. Neo-liberal policy at Greenfield Infants is articulated via the complex school politics and the, sometimes, upside down management hierarchy which means that it does not look like neo-liberal policy and practice might look elsewhere. Although it is important to note, as Braun et al (2011) point out, that the enactment of neo-liberal policy is never exactly the same everywhere. The following is an excerpt from data generated through recording my perceptions of my experience of being in the school. It reflects my anxiety and confusion over the disorganisation of the school and

indicates how difficult it is to develop any kind of strategy for counter politics here when functioning from lesson to lesson feels difficult:

I feel anxious when I go into school. Everything is being changed all the time – times of morning briefings, assembly times, playtimes.... I'm asked for targets or data for the children that I haven't got and haven't been told to collect. The playground rota is always changing as is the assembly rota. Last week I had to take a whole school assembly I had not prepared for because the rota had been changed the day before (when I was not in) and nobody had informed me. My lesson observation today was scheduled for 9.30am but I received a message from Claire at 9.30am to say Louise wanted to come in to observe after play. I had to swap the times of my lessons around. I feel like I do not know whether I am coming or going and am sure that I am transmitting my own anxieties and uncertainties to the class.

LT, field notes, March, 2012

One response I initially have to the situation at Greenfield is to implement practices that worked at previous schools I taught in. So, for instance, I offer to be responsible for the year 2 literacy planning and plan units of work the way I had done previously based on lots of speaking and listening activities and structured progression from planning a story as a whole class to independent writing. Likewise, in the absence of a specific marking policy but with the instructions to include 'next steps' for the students, I use the '2 stars and a wish' approach I had used in a previous school. Such practices fit into wider neo-liberal discourses in education and, ironically, I find myself taking these up where they are absent in an attempt to find a way to make myself recognisable and to indicate my competency, at least to Louise. The absence of school policy here does not create possibility for different kinds of practice, it creates confusion amongst both staff and students as the 'technologies of control' such as surveillance via lesson observation, data tracking and book scrutiny, are still in place and the spectre of Ofsted looms. However, as I have suggested in relation to the pencil snatching data, discussed above, being the 'good' neo-liberal primary school teacher is not always enough in this space to remain recognisable to my colleagues. Indeed ,

given that subject constitution involves both self and other in the moment, making the subject 'who' s/he is, when neo-liberalism is not the dominant discourse within which practices at Greenfield occur, when my pedagogic practice is produced via neo-liberal discourse, it is not always recognisable to staff around me.

Departures, arrivals, breaks and attempts at repair

Two weeks before the Easter holidays it is announced in a staff briefing that Claire is leaving. A week before the Easter holidays, we receive a staff 'news update' which states that Louise is also leaving. They will be replaced by an interim head teacher, who is currently head of a successful school in the borough and an interim deputy, who currently works for the local authority. This is the beginning of the closure of Greenfield Infants and the arrival of a new academy school which will see the amalgamation of the infants with the, previously separate, junior school next door. Katy is appointed as my new job share partner as it is decided that the role of deputy should be non-class based. Although the departures of Louise and Claire are shocking to me and the rest of the staff group, the new management rapidly succeed in establishing themselves as leaders and remove decision making powers from the teaching assistants. Greenfield Infants begins to appear a little more like the kind of primary schools I had been in prior to taking up my post here. However, relations between Katy, my new job share partner, and myself are not easy. At the end of the spring term, I ask the children what they would like to learn (I write further about this in chapter 5) and I have planned schemes of work based on some collective topics of interest. Our over-arching topic is 'Babies' as this is a topic that many children express a desire to learn about and I have planned units of work across the curriculum subjects to fit in with this. So, for instance, one of our literacy texts is 'Avocado Baby' (Burningham 1982), a tale of a baby who becomes very strong as a result of all the avocados he eats, whilst our geography unit is based around the film 'Babies' directed by Thomas Balmès (2010). With no narration, this film follows moments in the lives of four babies from different parts of the world: Namibia, Mongolia, Japan and America. As part of our science unit, I arrange for eggs containing unhatched chicks to be delivered to the school in an incubator so we can watch them hatch. I have absolutely no intention of

drilling Oak Class for SATs. These topics are not radical. The idea of following children's interests is still a feature of early years education, if not key stage one. My planning is full of learning objectives drawn from the National Curriculum to demonstrate that these are legitimate units of work to be following. Katy is worried about SATs and is not keen on the plans for the summer term which feature no SATs preparation. I suggest that I teach the topics I have planned on the days I teach and she can teach other parts of the curriculum on her days. She agrees. However, by half term, the new deputy head suggests that there is a lack of consistency between the two parts of the week and the four members of staff involved (two teachers and two teaching assistants). I am asked to leave the class. I am to cover other teachers' PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time.

This is the most difficult event I encountered over my time at Greenfield. I feel I am betraying my class and the work we are doing together yet I am also exhausted by trying to preserve a space for parrhesia amongst lesson observations, book scrutinies; progress meetings and pressure to do practice tests. What follows here are some reflections I wrote during the first week of teaching at Greenfield Infants after the summer half term when I am no longer the teacher of Oak Class:

This is the first week I have not taught the class. It's Friday and I am on playground duty. When Oak class come out and see me, many of them rush up to me. They all try to hug me at once. I am nearly falling over. They want to know why I left, when I am coming back, who I am teaching now.... I make clear to them that I did not want to leave Oak class and that I would love to come back to teach them. Adam and Mary are particularly concerned about the babies work we began and haven't finished. I explain that we can watch the films again when I am next teaching them but that I am not sure yet when that is. After the initial excitement about seeing me, the children begin to drift away to play their games. A few want to chat to me. Ruth holds my hand and Kimberly is standing close by. They both compliment me. Kimberly tells me I remind her of her mum because I am pretty and I don't shout whilst Ruth tells me I am the nicest teacher she has ever had. I feel like I have abandoned the class and feel guilty for not putting up a better fight to keep them. The compliments are nice to receive but I

know there is more to them. Do the children feel I have left them? Are they being nice so I will come back? I feel dismayed. I cannot do anything other than chat to them when I see them around school. I feel rather lost. I have lost my class in the middle of the term, lost the work we have been doing together, I feel I have lost myself and my research in the middle of it all.

I feel disloyal to Oak class when I go into nursery later in the day. Oak Class are having an outside science lesson and can see me in the outside area of the nursery, interacting with the children, calming them when they are hurt. Oak class wave at me and call my name. I wave back. They are shouted at by their new teacher for 'disturbing nursery'. I miss being Oak class's teacher.

LT field notes, May, 2012

The loss felt by both myself and the students is palpable but remains unacknowledged institutionally. Indeed, had the loss been recognised, removing me from the class would not have been possible. The departure of Claire marked the loss of one teacher before the end of the year and my removal from the classroom is another loss. Bibby (2011) argues that there is a relentless focus on progress and development in education which disavows loss. She terms this 'a loss of losses' (p.150). I acknowledge the loss to myself, here, in the above reflections but there is no institutional space made for mourning the loss of my relationship with Oak Class as their teacher. Yet what is absent in these reflections on being in school for the first week of the second half of the summer term, when I am no longer a teacher in Oak Class, is my relief. Untethered from class teaching, I am no longer subject to lesson observations, planning scrutinies, book scrutinies, progress meetings and learning walks. The everyday difficulties of negotiating my relationships with teaching assistants and senior management whilst trying to practice in ways that enable school to feel liveable for the students, is exhausting at Greenfield Infants. The expression of love; of students and of the task of teaching, is acceptable within the profession (Bibby, *ibid*, p.141) but feelings of hate, overwhelm and disappointment (with the task of teaching and learning) as well as feelings of loss are less easy to articulate.

Whilst I may not have been their class teacher, however, my relationship with the class did continue over the course of the second half of the summer term. I was the teacher providing planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) cover for Oak Class so, during those times, we continued the curriculum work we had begun on babies. I also conducted interviews with children who wanted to be interviewed (in groups and individually) as part of my ethnographic fieldwork. Although I do not actually draw upon this interview data in this thesis, the interviews become an important site of acknowledgement of my pedagogic relationships with them. Pedagogic love may be something that can be articulated within school institutions in terms of expressions such as 'I love my class' but, as I explore throughout this thesis, particularly in chapter 6, the demonstration of compassion is not so acceptable. Whilst my intention had been to open up space within the interviews for the children to engage with ideas of counter politics in ways that they understood, they end up acting more as a smokescreen for other feelings that need to be acknowledged but are given no institutional space: the children express their feelings of loss and their experience of conflict over loyalty towards me and Katy (their new class teacher), we discuss their feeling of loss regarding their transition to the junior school and their worries about SATs. Not all of the children come but these spaces for dialogue seem important to the ones that do and would not have been possible had I continued in the role of their class teacher.

Conclusions

The realities of teaching and exploring possible forms of counter politics at Greenfield Infants are complex. I adopt different tactics at different moments, sometimes asserting myself more directly to challenge interference from other staff, sometimes acquiescing in an attempt to deflect attention as quickly as possible. The tactics I deploy and the political moves I make inside and outside the classroom are not always conscious or discernable to me at the time they are happening. Sometimes they are driven by my affective response to experiencing myself on the edge of recognisability in a particular moment or my experience of the stress of being recognisable in such an environment. As already explored (see chapter 2), I am also caught in, and constituted by, discourses that exceed me. It is impossible to hold awareness of these discourses throughout the day. Indeed, as Foucault states,

discourse is hard to identify precisely because it does not seem like discourse. This leads me to another tension I experience in negotiating my identity as a class teacher trying to engage in radical politics and my identity as a university researcher collecting her data in the field. This tension reveals itself to me in some of my observation scratch notes, hastily scribbled between lessons and after school. At certain points in these scribbles, I notice the emergence of two voices: that of teacher and that of researcher. As I write up these notes, I am tempted to edit the teacher voice out, embarrassed about my comments on the behaviour of the class or the messiness of the classroom. However, I retain these moments of visible discursive slippage as they indicate the impossibility of separating my researcher identity from my identity as a teacher at Greenfield. The following is an example from a larger data excerpt which details a literacy lesson in which the students are writing about a farm trip they went on. Here, however, I am interested in the final sentence of this account.

I send the children to their mixed ability 'home' tables. They all have their booklets in front of them and photographs taken of the day, printed out on their tables. The children are excited to be sitting at their 'home' tables for literacy (they are usually in 'ability' groups). The classroom is noisy as the children discuss the photographs with one another but they are making progress with their writing.

LT, field notes, October, 2011

I try to observe the events in the classroom and record them non-judgementally in order to later construct an analysis. This is not about being a neutral observer, as I argue in chapter 3, that would be impossible, but, rather, trying not to categorise events in the classroom as 'good' or 'bad' to make space for analysis of what is happening, politically in the moments I write up as data. I hear the voice of my teacher self in this last sentence, as if answering to the spectre of the Ofsted inspector on my shoulder. There are no other adults in the classroom during this session yet something makes me justify, in the writing up of these notes, the noise level in the classroom as if noisiness might indicate lack of student engagement, or worse still, my inability to keep control. I am simultaneously trying to act my place as good teacher and good researcher and the two are not always compatible, as is seen in these instances of

slippage. This is also an important point in relation to the ways in which I conceptualise the counter politics I enact or engage with in the classroom. I am not stopped from doing more radical work in the classroom by the particular discourses that circulate. Rather, I am produced by these discourses and operate within them, often unaware of this process as I go about my day to day tasks as class teacher. The political work I do in the classroom over the course of the year I am there does not occur in spite of my position as class teacher, but because of it. To return to Judith Butler's writing on subjectivation, becoming a teaching subject in the space of Greenfield Infants, both makes possible the counter politics I enact and constrains what is possible for me to do. This constraint is in the very borders of what makes me recognisable as a teacher here, to myself as well as to other staff: it is productive of what and how I think here as well as what I do.

5. The production of the curriculum and the domain of the sayable

'The question is not what it is I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all' (Butler, 1997, p.133).

This chapter is concerned with the parameters of the domain of the sayable in relation to aspects of the curriculum in Oak Class. Whilst the curriculum is a seemingly obvious site of counter politics, my attempts to trouble the curriculum; to introduce topics not usually brought into the primary school; to open it up to students to suggest what should be learnt; to combine topics and ideas in new ways, are fraught with difficulty, disappointment and silence from both myself and the students, as well as the excitement, creative possibility and different ways of thinking these bring. Here, my intention is to theorise these moments of simultaneous possibility and foreclosure I encounter when taking up the curriculum as a site of counter politics in the classroom. As I have written elsewhere, my subjectivity as a teacher at Greenfield School is produced and constrained within various guises of practices of surveillance. These external regimes, internalised by me, permeate every aspect of my practice. I enact a recognisable neo-liberal teacher subjectivity at the very same time as I attempt to undo this subject position. In this chapter, however, I explore the way in which the domain of the sayable produces the collective pedagogic imagination of myself and the students in Oak Class.

Remaining legible subjects at Greenfield Infants is a matter of survival for the students and myself. In the extreme, it is about me maintaining my job and the students avoiding exclusion from school. On a more mundane level, it is about being seen and recognised as legitimate subjects within the space of Greenfield Infants. The absence of this recognition results in alienation and exclusion and is not an easy position to maintain (Youdell, 2006). As Butler writes, '*To move outside of the domain of speakability is to risk one's status as a subject. To embody the norms that govern speakability in one's speech is to consummate one's status as a subject of speech*' (1997, p.133, emphasis in original). The domain of the speakable is, then, productive. In relation to classroom practice, it moves us away from the notion of an external censor, refusing permission for our plans but, rather, suggests that the plans we come

up with in the first place are already censored: they are formed in the domain of the sayable. This is important for me in terms of how I conceptualise counter politics in this space and leads me to consider what constitutes the domain of the sayable at this site and how it appears in the everyday moments of my pedagogic practice. As Foucault (1991) argues, part of the work of power is to remain invisible. Butler further develops these arguments of Foucault's, stating, 'the conditions of intelligibility are themselves formulated in and by power, and this normative exercise of power is rarely acknowledged as an operation of power at all' (1997, p.134). Thus, the articulation of the domain of the sayable in the classroom is impossible to fully produce. Rather, it is through the moments of silence encountered when we stumble towards what is unsayable or the seeming impossibility of speaking some words out loud, that I become aware of its presence. This chapter then, is concerned with what happens at the perimeters of the sayable in order to begin to understand what the sayable is at this site and, then, furthermore, what constitutes taking the 'risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable' (p.139). I begin with an exploration of data generated from a lesson in which I introduce the idea of conscientious objectors to a unit of work on 'Poppy Day', looking at the way in which dominant discourses around WW1 are upheld alongside dominant conceptualisations of the adult/ child and teacher/ student binaries at Greenfield. Assertions of these binaries appear again in data I go on to discuss, which focuses on the process the students engage in when I invite them to consider what topics we should learn about in the summer term. Here I explore the way in which the politics of this session is enacted both on and beyond the symbolic. The domain of the sayable becomes visible through words spoken in whispers and then denied and the writing of words under erasure which leave traces of the difficult negotiations that occur around the idea of sex education as a possible future topic. My aim here is not so much to evaluate the success or otherwise of the interventions in the curriculum, in terms of troubling existing normative ideas, rather, I am seeking out the moments when the borders between the sayable and the unsayable come into view and are maintained or, sometimes, shifted. This has important implications in terms of conceptualising where and how counter politics might be enacted in classrooms.

WW1 and The impossibility of imagining refusal to comply

Remembrance Day is a prominent event in many state schools in the UK. In the days leading up to November 11th, curriculum time is often given over to learning about WW1 and the symbol of the poppy (Armitage, 2014). Despite the absence of statutory guidance on the teaching of WW1 and Remembrance Day, this topic continues to feature prominently on school calendars and in curriculum planning. Armitage (2014) raises concerns about the way in which Remembrance Day is taught in schools, arguing that students are often presented with a romanticised view of war. Victoria Basham (2015, p.1) argues that the narratives of collective mourning produced by the Royal British Legion's Annual Poppy Day are deeply gendered and racialised. She goes on to suggest that 'the Poppy Appeal invites communities of feeling to remember military sacrifice, whilst forgetting the violence and bloodiness of actual warfare' (ibid). These narratives that are constructed around the poppy are very powerful and, as I shall go on to explore, difficult to challenge. At Greenfield Infants, Remembrance Day has been on the year 2 curriculum for many years. According to the information leaflet sent out to parents and carers at the beginning of the year, the purpose of this work is to 'find out the importance of Remembrance Day, why we wear poppies and how we can show our gratitude and respect to those who have died in war'. There is no space here for the complexity of war or even its horror. In the lead up to Remembrance Day, there are themed assemblies, poppies sold in each classroom, displays featuring poppies children make during art activities and a compulsory church visit for each year group to see the WW1 memorial. In advance of this work commencing, I decide that when Oak Class learn about this topic in the classroom, I will devote some time to learning about conscientious objectors in WW1 in order to provide a different perspective from the one the students are receiving elsewhere. I include this in the plan I write for the unit which I also share with the other year 2 teacher (see appendix 3). It is only when we have begun this work that I begin to rethink this idea. Suddenly the inclusion of a counter narrative feels very difficult. My colleague in the parallel year 2 class expresses concerns about teaching the students about conscientious objectors because he worries it is too controversial and complicated for them. However, he takes away the information and comes back enthusiastic so we decide to go ahead with teaching the lesson to our classes. The following data excerpt is from an account of a lesson I teach as part of the Poppy Day

unit of work. I am interested, here, in exploring the moments of silence and stuckness in this excerpt because I want to suggest these generate important insights into the domain of the sayable at this site.

I begin by asking the children who went to fight in WW1 and the reasons why they fought. Lots of children remember it was men who fought in the war, and that they went to fight to 'save the country'. I explain that not everyone did decide to fight in the war but that it was a very difficult decision to make, just as it might have been a difficult decision to fight. I introduce the term conscription and we discuss what it means. I then ask them to imagine an assembly led by Mrs Andrews or Mr Bell, where everyone is being given instructions to do something and they are the only person who refuses.

There is silence as the children seem to be imagining this. Some of them gasp and others smile, as if acknowledging the absurdity of what I am suggesting. I ask how they might feel about doing this.

Mary: You would have to be really brave

Me: Why?

(Lots of children begin talking at once and I quieten them down before asking individual children what they think. Lots of children have their hands up)

Diola: Everyone would be looking at you and you'd get in trouble.

Lee: I'd I'd be actually scared.

Me: (to whole class) Do you think there would ever be any reason for you to not to follow instructions in assembly?

Lukaz: You have to follow instructions at school... you have to be good.

Me: Do you always have to be? Might there be times when other things are more important than being good?

(None of the children respond to this so I continue on a different tack)

Me: Some of the men who lived during WW1 did not believe in fighting in the war... This was for different reasons – they might have believed that hurting other people or animals is wrong for religious reasons, because of their religious beliefs, they might just think that all wars are wrong – that

there are different ways to solve problems, or they might have just disagreed with WW1 but not necessarily all war.... What reasons might people who did not want to fight in the war give, do you think? (I ask the children to talk to each other about this for two minutes).

LT, field notes, November, 2011

In this context, a lesson on conscientious objectors seems to be entering a realm that strays close to the unspeakable. The children mention the saviour of the country and bravery as a reason that men fought in WW1. This is the message they have been receiving in other parts of their learning about Poppy Day. Creating space for alternative narratives is difficult. In the data excerpt above, the idea of conscientious objectors is presented, by me, as if it is an alternative choice to conscription: some men fought, some men did not fight; both choices are equally valid. This simplifies the complex issues of choice and agency in relation to conscription and conscientious objection as well as making the difference between the two positions seem polarised. Yet my decision to put conscientious objectors on the curriculum at all feels surprisingly risky in that it calls into question the valorisation of war seen in the dominant narratives about Remembrance Day in school assemblies and the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) curriculum material we are meant to follow. This valorisation of war, however, is exactly what I struggle to call into question as I am speaking with the students. The students are tentatively presented with an alternative view but in such a way that they do not have to engage with it. The link between conscientious objectors in WW1 and daring not to comply with adults in school seems a difficult one for the students to think about. Indeed, there is silence when I ask the students to consider whether there is something more important than being good and I 'continue on a different tack'. It is as if neither I nor the students can explore this possibility as it questions the messages they receive daily about the importance of following instructions. In this lesson, where the students and I, as in every other lesson, are attempting, both consciously and unconsciously, to embody good teacher and good student, the suggestion we might do otherwise brings us into a silence we all collude with. Our bodies sit docilely in their places, mine upon a chair at the front of the carpet area, the students', crossed legged, on the carpet. As is familiar to us, we act our places in the discourses of schooling, as good and proper

teacher and student subjects. We are doing what is expected of us in this everyday scene of teaching and learning: thinking our way beyond being good and following instructions as the most important thing to do calls into question our very being in this moment. This is not about us all being very compliant subjects of schooling. Indeed, daily, in different ways, we transgress what we know is expected of us. However, here is a reframing of such transgressions via the questioning of a dominant narrative of Greenfield Infants which is that following adult instructions is necessary and important. The ground beneath us is shaky and I move back to the, somewhat, safer territory of the past. However, what follows this return to the past is interesting in terms of the intervention of the teaching assistant, Nati, who, until now has been sitting towards the back of the carpet supporting two children, Oluwahan and Filipe, for whom English is an additional language. The following data is a continuation of the account I include above:

Me: What reasons might people who did want to fight in the war give?

[Again, I ask the children to talk for 2 mins].

[I then ask the class to make a 'conscience alley' whereby they divide themselves into two lines, facing each other with a space in between for a child to walk down. As the child walking down the middle passes the children on either side, they say reasons for or against a particular issue, in this instance, fighting in WW1].

[Most of the reasons given for not fighting are about individuals dying – eg: don't go to war because you might get killed. Most of the reasons given for fighting are about saving something – eg: the country, your family, yourself.]

I ask the children to return to the carpet, we discuss the main reasons given on both sides then I begin to model filling in the thought bubble writing sheet on the board, imagining my thoughts as a young person prior to conscription.

Me: I'm not really sure what I would do because I think it would be very difficult to say that I am not going to fight in a war when my whole community is going.... But I don't believe that violence is the way to solve situations...

Nati: One thing I think we haven't talked about is what would happen to the children if all the mummies and daddies were killed in war, they would be left alone....

Me: Mmm... that would be very sad, if that happened, there would be lots of orphans....

Daisy: What's orphans?

Me: It's when you haven't got a mummy or daddy anymore. Maybe they have died or have gone away...

LT, field notes, November, 2011

Here the conversation is derailed by Nati who moves us away from the difficult idea of conscientious objection and not following orders (both in the past and now). When I read this in relation to Butler's notion of the 'domain of the sayable', I become aware of the multiple possible transgressions being made here. Firstly, and most obviously, there is the issue I have already mentioned of calling into question the dominant narratives around WW1 and Remembrance Day: that conscription was completely unavoidable and that the war was beneficial, making the soldiers who fought heroic. I am surprised at how unsettled I feel when I stray from these narratives and, perhaps, Nati also experiences this riskiness. I do not ask her in the moment or afterwards to account for her intervention but it might be an attempt to bring me back into the realms of recognisability as a teacher in this space. There is also the issue of the subject matter being 'too difficult' for the students. This is a concern initially expressed in Ben's response to my suggestions that we include conscientious objectors on the curriculum. I am straying into controversy politically and pedagogically, transgressing normative narratives of WW1 which are too difficult, perhaps too political, to discuss with a year 2 class of children. My suggestions here about Nati's intervention are an attempt to account for the rapid change of direction in the conversation just as I am attempting to explain the task to the students. I am not suggesting these are conscious in Nati's mind at this moment but, rather, I am suggesting that the effect of Nati's question about orphans is to halt the challenge to the normative discourses around WW1 and around appropriate pedagogy. This question demands empathy from the students towards other children of the past whose parents may have died. It swerves the questions of whether orders should

always be obeyed or whether fighting is always heroic and puts us back on ground that is more familiar in the context of the year 2 classroom.

The Local Area

If disrupting discourses around the valorisation of past wars is difficult, opening up space to discuss students' perceptions and experiences of the area in which they live and the issues that immediately impact their lives, is even harder. The following account depicts my attempts at addressing these issues through altering a series of lesson plans on 'My Local Area'. As I shall discuss when I analyse this account, my own subject position makes these discussions particularly difficult to conduct yet there are additional reasons why the students, and indeed, myself, find the articulation of social injustice in this place almost impossible. The data I include below details my account of screening a clip from the BBC1 documentary 'Poor Kids' (Neumann 2011) in Oak Class.

We are doing a geography topic on our local area. It is one of the QCA topics requiring children to compare similarities and differences between the location in which they live and the Caribbean island of St Lucia. I want the children to reflect on what it is like to live where they live, beyond the level of analysis required on the unit plans which is focused on asking the students to consider the kinds of local amenities they have and how to improve the appearance of the area. In order to open up different kinds of discussions about the local area, I decide to show them some clips from the BBC documentary 'Poor Kids' which attempts to explore growing up below the poverty line in the UK from the perspective of children. The children in the documentary are interviewed and are followed as they move around the areas in which they live. Some of the children in my class will be living in situations not unlike some of the children in the film. I wonder whether they will connect their own lives to the lives of the children they watch. I am uncertain about showing clips from the film as the documentary, not specifically aimed at children, includes reference to parental drug use and alcoholism, and I wonder what Diane (the classroom assistant) will think (and, more importantly, whether this will be reported back to Claire and

Louise). We also have a student teacher in at the moment and I'm not sure what he will make of my changes to the geography curriculum. Before showing the children a few clips from the film that I have pre-selected, I explain simply that the documentary interviews children about where they live. I do not say that it is called 'Poor Kids' nor do I say anything else about it. I ask them to watch and listen carefully because afterwards we will discuss what we notice. The children are very interested in the clips, calling out comments about the house of one girl featured in the documentary, which is effected by dangerous levels of damp, and asking about why the family cannot pay to have new wallpaper and repaint. There is so much noise that I stop a few times to quieten the children down so we can watch the clips. Afterwards we have a discussion about why the families cannot just move away or immediately pay for things to be fixed. I explain about council housing and benefits and people not always being able to afford new things when they have to pay for food or clothes. As we watch the film, and afterwards, I realise the children featured in it and their situations are othered and we distance ourselves from them. Essentially, this is the mechanism the documentary uses: it encourages us to turn our gaze on the 'poor kids' who are not us. And whilst the children in the documentary do show us around their area, commenting on what various places mean for them, there is, nonetheless, a sense that these children have no agency now or in the future. I move on to asking the children to reflect on what the interviewers may have asked the children in the documentary. This is initially hard for them to think about and I prompt by asking questions such as 'Would the children have been talking about how they feel about their bedroom if the interviewer had asked what shops they have in their local area?' This helps the children to think about the kinds of questions that the interviewers might have asked the children on the documentary and we generate a list of questions that we could ask someone to find out how they feel and what they think about their local area. Bearing this in mind, I ask the children to come up with a set of questions they could ask a friend about what it is like to live in their area. I explain this is in preparation for us conducting our own interviews with each other the following week. When

doing the activity, the children do not focus on aspects of life concerning the area or the home their friend lives in but instead want to ask about, for instance, favourite colours and foods or whether their friend owns any pets.

LT, field notes, February, 2012

Showing the students part of this documentary is part of my adaptation of the existing geography unit for year 2 entitled 'My Local Area'. The plans for the unit of work, taken from the QCA, make the site of the 'local area' apolitical in that the focus is on identifying the area on different maps and understanding the area's land use. There is no mention of the social and political factors shaping an area and the way that land is used and interacted with and upon. With these concerns in mind, I adapt the unit to attempt to open up space for discussions about the children's perceptions of growing up on the estate. The estate on which the school is situated and its surrounding area is notorious in the local press for issues such as crime, poverty, race tensions and teenage pregnancy. Whilst the students may not frame the area in relation to these issues, they will be aware, in some way, of the reputation of the estate on which the majority of them live. The discussion of the estate and the local area, however, is always sensitive at Greenfield. I am new to the school and the area, and, as discussed in more depth in chapter 4, I am an outsider here. I am aware that my position as a middle class, white, university researcher from a different part of London will impact on the work I do with the students here and the sorts of discussions which will be possible. However, the silence around issues beyond each other's' personal likes and dislikes, is palpable. It is a silence that does not simply come from the students but, rather, it is collectively generated by the students, myself and the wider school community. The abject status of the estate is known but can rarely be articulated. The students do not want to (cannot?) explore issues around likes and dislikes, safety, fears and interests with regard to their relationships with where they live. I would like to suggest that the reasons for this are complex and multiple. Firstly, the questions they ask might be the ones they are interested in and perhaps reflect what is immediately important in their relationships with each other within school. These questions are ones that are both easy to ask and answer: they are safe. Secondly, my perceptions of the area are not the students'. This is obvious but is worth further consideration. Not only is there possibly a disjunction here between what I want

the students to learn and what the students' interests are, but maybe there are ways of knowing and understanding the estate that I cannot access as an outsider. The adult/ child, teacher/ student binaries become important again here. Constituting us unequally in terms of our power to decide what happens in this space, these binaries also cite further class, race and ability binaries. My perceptions of the estate and the students' relationships to it are not necessarily easily comprehensible to the students themselves and also, perhaps, their experiences are not able to be captured via the questions we generate from the documentary. Thus, they bring the issues back into a narrative that is recognisable to them in terms of their relationships with one another. This recuperative strategy is also protective. It means they do not have to reveal to themselves, each other or me the potentially ambivalent or painful experience of growing up on the Orchard Estate.

Indeed, the students' focus on favourite colours, pets and foods could be read as a disavowal of their situatedness in this particular environment. Whilst such a reading has the potential to further constitute the children and the estate as abject, I want to use it to think about the relationship between the domain of the sayable and viable subjecthood in the space of Greenfield Infants. This disavowal is not only enacted by the students but is practiced across the school, amongst staff as well as parents and I want to suggest it is part of a strategy of survival here. Judith Butler's (1997a, 1997b) discussions of disavowal as a necessary component of the process of subjectivation are useful in understanding why issues of class and poverty in relation to the Orchard Estate seem so unspeakable. Butler's discussion of disavowal centres around the accomplishment of masculine and feminine identities 'which emerge in tandem with heterosexuality' (1997a, p.135). She argues that this successful accomplishment requires the disavowal, which cannot be mourned because it can never be recognised in the first place, of homosexual desire. My discussion here is not around issues of gendered identity but Butler's discussion is useful in my own analysis in its exploration of foreclosure as necessary in the production of viable subjectivity. To acknowledge the severe and unchanging poverty of the Orchard Estate would be to undercut the narratives of hard work and aspiration prominent in assemblies and staff meetings at Greenfield. Many of the teaching assistants who work at the school grew up on the estate, raised their children here and continue to live here. Whilst the notoriety of the estate is often referred to in jest amongst the staff, the absolute social

injustice of the situation here remains unspeakable. What would it mean to speak of social injustice in this space? And, importantly, *who* can speak of it? To acknowledge social injustice in relation to the Orchard Estate would be to acknowledge issues such as the isolation and deprivation of the area in addition to the severe poverty facing some families of children attending Greenfield Infants. This knowledge is disavowed because it is painful and also because it calls into question the viable subjectivities of the staff and students at Greenfield. The school is at risk of being placed in special measures at the next Ofsted inspection and the next door junior school is already in special measures. The survival of the school depends on an adherence to narratives of improvement and high expectations: there is no room in such narratives for social injustice. The staff and students become recognisable, and acceptable, subjects within these narratives so veering away from them has the potential to undermine the project of the school at this time.

It is important to keep in mind here that these issues of viable subjecthood and the unspeakability of issues of class, race and poverty are not accidental. They are produced and shored up in the very structure of the timetable that governs the school day as well as in the policy and curriculum documents used. Geography is timetabled for 45 minutes, one afternoon a week and alternates half termly with history. There is immense pressure on all staff at Greenfield Infants to raise standards in numeracy and literacy and these subjects take up most of the timetable each week. This prioritisation of literacy and numeracy is common practice in primary schools and reflects schools' concerns with high stakes testing in these subjects. However, one consequence of this is that it becomes very difficult to discuss issues such as race and racism as well as class and poverty as part of the units of work taught. It is not that the students I teach are unable to discuss these issues. Indeed, scholars within and beyond the sociology of education have argued that even very young children are able to engage in discussions about so called 'controversial' or 'difficult' topics such as these (see, for instance, Davies 2004, Blaise 2005, Mac Naughton 2005, Atkinson, Reiss et al. 2009). The compartmentalisation of subjects means that there is so little time spent on each that slowing down enough to begin to build relational trust within Oak Class so that we might open up these issues is very difficult. The social injustice of which it is so difficult to speak; which seems to be occurring 'out there' on the estate, is also produced in the timetabling structures of Greenfield Infants. It is not accidental that social injustice

and issues of racism and poverty remain unspoken here and it takes more than the adaptation of a unit of work to begin to create a space that is safe enough for exploration to begin.

Students deciding the summer term curriculum

In the previous data excerpts, the unspeakable is encountered and backed away from. In the data excerpt that follows, some of the students approach what seems unspeakable but, when I try to take their lead, others police my words, and, in so doing, insist that I return to my position as recognisable teaching subject. This raises further questions for me which are inextricably tied to questions of speakability: What is hearable in the classroom and what can be made sense of? From here, I extend the notions of speakability and hearability to what can be written and enacted and explore the relationships between these different forms of communication production and its reception. The data I use here is an account of a lesson where I invite the students to make suggestions about what they would like to learn in the summer term. Whilst not common practice at Greenfield Infants, this move is one that can be read in terms of student voice and participation, absolutely in line with 'good practice' in terms of government education policy and Ofsted requirements. Indeed, state schools are increasingly required to take account of 'pupil voice'. The statutory guidance from the Department for Education explains that 'the term 'pupil voice' refers to ways of listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision-making' (DfE 2014, p. 2). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is not statute law in the UK but these guidelines do make reference to the relevant sections of the UNCRC document concerning children's free expression of views and their right to participation in decision making effecting their lives. The term 'pupil voice' and the way in which it is frequently put into practice in schools has been criticised by a number of scholars. For instance, both Roche (1999) and Noyes (2005) have argued that the term 'pupil voice', and the discussion around it in policy documents, is problematic in that it is presented as inherently and uncomplicatedly positive. As Lundy (2007) explains 'One of the inherent difficulties with this is that the initial goodwill can dissipate when the rhetoric needs to be put into practice, especially when the effect of this is to challenge dominant thinking, generate controversy or cost money' (p.931). The result of this is that many schools take up the idea of pupil voice superficially and children

are not, in reality, able to express their views on issues that matter to them (ibid). Furthermore, Wyness (2013) argues that the emphasis on voice in relation to issues of children's participation privileges a Western conceptualisation of the individual rights-bearing, schooled child. He argues that 'this powerful unitary notion of children's participation [...] has had the effect of constructing less affluent 'Southern' children's social and economic 'material' activities as deficit forms of participation' (p. 341). I find Wyness' arguments useful here in drawing attention to the way in which discourses of children's participation produce normative conceptualisations of who a participating childhood subject is and, therefore, the kinds of activity that count as legible participation. The question of what counts as legible participation is one that Rosen (2015) takes up in her ethnographic study of an early years setting in London. She argues that children's screams in play, often shushed by adult practitioners, are productive forms of political participation and negotiation but ones that we might miss if we only consider participation to occur on a symbolic level. The issue of political participation that exceeds the symbolic is an important one in relation to children and politics and I shall return to it in my reading of the data I discuss below.

I continue to read the following data via Butler's notion of the domain of the sayable. In addition to these readings of the data, but nevertheless completely linked to them, I will explore the diverse forms of participation, and, indeed, resistance to participation, enacted in response to the invitation to contribute to discussions about the curriculum. The students in the following data excerpt, do not always take up my invitation to suggest topics and areas of interest to learn about in the way I anticipate. Indeed, their negotiations with each other sometimes occur via corporeal jostling for space around the large sheets of poster paper I provide them with. They are enacted via scribbles, lines and overwriting with the coloured marker pens they use as well as via suggestions whispered conspiratorially in each other's ears and ideas shouted out across the classroom and taken up amongst other groups of students. The affective reactions of the students infuse and exceed their written and spoken comments. There is a sense in the following data of the students playing with risky ideas. They sidle up to the unsayable then back away; speaking it then gasping and refusing to hear it from anyone else, especially their teacher; writing it on the poster paper then erasing it; letting it exist in whispers between themselves but not in the official realm of classroom discourse, mediated by me, the teacher. This playfulness occurs amongst the,

perhaps, more recognisable negotiations around whether Japan would be a better topic to do than crisps or how easy it would be to learn Russian in the summer term.

Beginning... or is *this* what radical politics looks like?

It is Monday afternoon. I am not usually in school at this time but tomorrow is a mock Ofsted inspection that has been arranged by the head teacher. She sent me a text message at half past 2 in the morning this morning asking if I could teach on Tuesday. I told her I could not but offered to come in this afternoon. I anticipate being asked to help with planning or to put up displays but instead I am asked to teach the class. I have not prepared anything but Jean informs me that we are to go into the ICT suite to produce pictures of Easter eggs for the Easter cards. It is not our usual time to be in the ICT suite but I assume that arrangements have already been made. The children are coming in from lunchtime play. They are fractious. I hear the lunchtime supervisors shouting at the class to line up. I go out. The children are pleased to see me. Some shout my name, others rush up to give me a hug, asking if I'm staying the afternoon. I reassure them that I am staying the afternoon and say that I am pleased to see them. I then encourage them to line up sensibly, aware of the frustration of the lunchtime supervisors. Eventually, the children are standing quietly enough for the lunchtime supervisors to send them in. I sit on my chair with the register, waiting for the children to settle on the carpet. They are noisy, grumpy with each other, fussing, fidgeting. Once they are all seated, I do some clapping games with them which usually helps to calm them. Today this does not seem to be working and children continue to talk and laugh and complain about the heat. I open windows, suggest jumpers are taken off. I go through the register as quickly as possible. I send a child to see if the ICT room is free and she comes back to say it is not. Having no other activities planned, I have to think on my feet. I decide I will ask the children what they would like to learn next term. They are so noisy that I cannot explain what I want them to do. I take the big timer.

Me: This is a five minute timer. I will turn it over. I promise that I will not speak longer than the timer. I just need to explain an activity to you.

The children respond to this and quieten down long enough for me to explain to them that I would like them to write on big bits of sugar paper what they would like to learn next term. I tell them that they can suggest anything they like and although we might not be able to learn about everything they suggest, we would see if there are certain things that lots of them would like to learn about.

I send the children to their mixed ability 'home' tables. There are enough marker pens for the children to have one each but they have to collaborate over the paper. It is big enough for all the children in the group to be writing on it at once but they have to ensure it stays in the middle of the table for this to be effective. The classroom is very noisy but all the children do seem engaged and involved in the task set. Some collaborate in twos or threes, others work alone (although still sat in their groups).

LT, field notes, April, 2012

The pre-Ofsted panic in school produces this situation which may otherwise not have occurred. Again, I want to draw attention here to my own precarious subjectivity, produced simultaneously within and against current neoliberal education policy discourses. The spectre of Ofsted is omnipresent in this scene. It operates through me, producing my subjectivity yet I experience it outside me: it is the external gaze upon me and the classroom and students for which I am responsible; it is the finger tapping upon my shoulder as I teach, calling into question my every move. This Ofsted spectre emerges implicitly in my account in the above excerpt of data. The children do not sit where they want to sit in the room. They sit at their 'mixed ability 'home' tables' which have been chosen by Claire. This seating arrangement alone normalises the idea of 'ability' as innate and fixed in children: the echo of the morning ability grouped tables present in this opposite afternoon seating arrangement. A sense of adults' fears about the uncontrollability of children are also inscribed and called up, again and again, in these seating arrangements. The idea that children could sit where they want and with whom they want to sit, perhaps not even at tables, remains unthinkable even in these moments of off timetable, somewhat rogue, unplanned activity. Particularly revealing here, in terms of this Ofsted spectre, is my observation towards the end of my account: 'the classroom is very noisy but all the children do seem engaged and

involved in the task set'. Although I am not aware of it when I write up this event as data, my words here repeat, almost verbatim, Greenfield Infants' interpretation of the Ofsted grading criteria. This criteria includes a section for 'pupil engagement', stating, under the 'good' heading, 'the teaching is consistently effective in ensuring the pupils are motivated and engaged'. Whilst the act of perceiving this scene as data and writing it up as such, is constitutive of my subjectivity as a doctoral researcher, I do not, indeed cannot, erase my desire to be constituted as a good teaching subject.

This returns me, again, to Butler and Athinasiou's reading of Spivak and the idea that liberalism is that which we cannot not want. There is no option for me but to remain passionately attached to my own production as a recognisable, good (enough?) teaching subject in this space even in my repudiation of this subjectivation. I am not suggesting here that these unavoidable passionate attachments wipe out all other possibilities for ways of being a recognisable subject within the space of this school. Rather, I am suggesting that in my attempts to enact counter politics in the classroom and to account for these enactments within my research, I cannot let go of this teacher self who conceptualises her invitation to her students to reflect upon what they would like to learn about as a 'task' and who remains concerned that all students are 'on task' and 'engaged' at all times. I conceptualise my subjectivation here as occurring through multiple, often contradictory, discourses which make possible the counter political moves I detail in the data excerpt above, and those to follow, but also undercut, derail and sometimes contradict these. As I progress through my analysis of this data, I want to hold on to the idea that radical politics and neo-liberal education discourses do not always run counter to one another. Sometimes this becomes the case yet often they are mobilised together.

The permission to transgress: what is it possible to think, here?

Mary: Can we write anything?

Me: Yes, anything.

Mary: What? Sex education? Can I write sex education? [falls about laughing, hysterically, incredulously]

Me: Yes Mary, you can write sex education.

Mary: [in between giggles] You would teach us about sex education?

Me: Yes. Would you like to do sex education?

[Diola has overheard and comes over from her table]

Diola: Miss Teague, we're children. We're not supposed to learn about that stuff.

Me: Oh? Really?

Diola: No, we're not supposed to know that stuff.

Me: Ok, well, you can tell me what you would like to learn about.

[Diola goes back to her table, looking somewhat puzzled]

Tia: Gay! Can we write 'gay' Miss Teague?

Me: Is that what you would like to learn about?

Tia: [falls about giggling with Mary] Gay boys!

Me: Gay boys?

Tia: [rolling her eyes] You know [purses her lips and makes kissing noises] boys kissing and hugging [more falling about laughing]

Me: You would like to learn about relationships between gay people?

[The students on the table are whispering to each other and laughing]

[Tia writes 'gay' on the paper and also writes 'sex']

[Students on other tables are talking, in hushed but legible tones, about whether they should write sex on their papers].

LT, field notes, April, 2012

Mary's question 'can I write sex education?' exposes the boundaries of the unspeakable in this classroom. Sex education is an unspoken but known about forbidden topic. In asking this question, Mary is also questioning the perimeters of my invitation to 'suggest anything'. Am I serious? What happens if the forbidden is suggested? Whilst the suggestion of learning about sex is made with much laughter, deflecting any notion that this is a serious suggestion, it does ask me whether I am serious. Do I really want the students to suggest anything? Although my response may communicate the integrity of my invitation to the children to suggest anything they like, it refuses to engage in the transgression we all know has occurred (even if we do not agree that the mention of sex in a year 2 classroom *should* be a transgression). Mary's question here does open up possibility for discussion around why sex education is not on the year 2 curriculum and why it feels so dangerous to suggest. I do not attempt to move the discussion to these questions, however. It is Diola who provides the policing

intervention that is perhaps already occurring, to some extent, inside myself. Indeed, Diola tries to rescue me from being an adult who permits six and seven year old children to discuss issues of sex. Her assertion that 'we're children. We're not supposed to learn about that stuff' attempts to return me, and herself and her peers, back to our proper places: Me as a knowing but responsible adult teacher and they as innocent, unknowing, children in need of protection.

I would like to return again to my precarious constitution as a subject here. The question of how to remain legible (to myself and the students I teach as well as the spectre of Ofsted) within this space whilst acknowledging the possibility that the students I teach might want to do sex education is difficult. The two positions, as Diola points out, are not compatible. The students involved in the discussion and I, reach a point where sex is permissible to say, and write, in the space of this classroom, yet we cannot move beyond this point. Perhaps searching further for what is unspeakable here, Tia suggests 'gay' as a topic for next term. Her mocking references to gay boys kissing and hugging are homophobic. Looking back now, in retrospective horror, I am wondering why I did not challenge the comments more directly. Instead, I opt again for an unruffled response and encourage Tia to write down her suggestion. My reaction here is interesting in relation to Mary's earlier sex education suggestion. Tia refers to sexual attraction between boys (kissing and hugging) yet I reconfigure this as 'relationships between gay people'. What becomes unspeakable, indeed, unhearable, is the idea of sex for pleasure. The comments may have been homophobic but they open up the possibility for further discussion here which I do not attempt. Sex for pleasure, pleasurable sex, children talking about pleasurable sex: these expressions are beyond the domain of the sayable in this classroom space, at this time. Sex education is not usually taught until upper Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1, the focus is on baby animals and humans, without detail of conception. However, absent from all curriculum guidance is the idea that sex can be pleasurable and fun. And this is what is unspeakable here too.

As discussed earlier, Butler uses the concept of censorship to explore the foreclosures which make speech possible in the first place. I find this productive when trying to think about why I find these conversations with students difficult to navigate despite having written on issues of queer theory in the classroom prior to beginning this research (Cullen and Sandy 2009, Teague 2010). I want to suggest that part of

my production as a legible teacher in this space is the disavowal of children and sexual pleasure. I am not conscious of this when I teach in the classroom, nor when I write up this classroom scene as data. However, it seems I cannot hear it, think about it or discuss it in this space because, to do so, would be to jeopardize my own viable subjectivity. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my response to Tia's reference to sexual pleasure in terms of relationships is absolutely in line with the government's 'Sex and Relationship Education good practice guidance' document (DfE 2000), which states in relation to good sex and relationship education:

'It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching' (p.5).

The issue of the domain of the sayable is always political. It is about what can be said, where and by whom. Sex is an issue that impacts on the lives of the six and seven year olds in Oak Class. They see it represented in the media they access; they are aware of it happening between older people in their lives; they will have experienced their own sexual pleasures and desires; they will have heard reports about childhood sexual abuse on the news and some of them will have direct and indirect experiences of sexual abuse. These children are aware of sex as something pleasurable but also as something potentially dangerous or harmful and certainly as something forbidden. Along with many other issues that impact their lives, however, their thoughts and feelings about it are not discussed within the official space of their school. I want to suggest that the acknowledgement of sex as a legitimate year 2 topic does produce a micro shift in the boundaries of the domain of the sayable here. Traces of this discussion remain in the erased, yet readable, word on Tia's poster paper: ~~sex~~. This erased word captures the simultaneity of the possibility and its foreclosure. Yet the foreclosure follows the discussion and the indelibility of the scribed representation of this discussion on the poster paper indicates a micro movement of the boundaries of the domain of the sayable here. Important to note is where this shift is situated. It is

not within official school discourses around the curriculum or even within discourses in year 2, nor is it situated within the classroom itself. Rather, the shift is situated within the relationships in the classroom. The domain of the sayable between us, as teacher and students of Oak Class, is called into question and contested: the process of this contestation captured in the word under erasure. The domain of the sayable is not fixed but is constantly produced through these sorts of discussions, and just as importantly, the retreats from them, that occur in the everyday moments of teaching and learning.

Scribbles, overwriting and the refusal to think

I go over to another table and kneel down between Oluwahan and Dillon because there seems to be conflict beginning between the two of them.

Oluwahan: Dillon drew on my writing [begins to cry]

Dillon: No! He drew on mine and his pen is darker. My pen is light.

[Oluwahan is using a red pen and Dillon a light blue pen. I notice they have each crossed out words written by the other].

Me: Hey, can't you just use the area of paper nearer to you and not draw on each other's writing? Wouldn't that be better?

Oluwahan: But he is rude.

Dillon: Haha! You are crying [he scribbles across Oluwahan's writing and Oluwahan immediately scribbles over Dillon's writing. Their bodies are pressed up against one another. Each holds a pen in his hand and pushes against the hand of the other, attempting to write over the marks of the other. Dillon is breathing very heavily. Oluwahan begins a low growl, then Dillon joins in, slightly louder].

Me: Let's stop now. You've both scribbled across each other's writing. You both feel bad.

[The growling ceases].

Dillon: I don't.

Me: Well, you did seem to get cross.... Anyway, maybe you can leave each other's spaces on the paper alone now.

[Both boys refuse to write any more for the remainder of the session].

LT field notes, April, 2012

The students' suggestions about what we learn are shot through with their affective responses to the presence of each other, myself and the task. Their participation in shaping the classroom curriculum, official and non-official, occurs on and beyond the terrain of the symbolic and opens up new directions whilst simultaneously attempting to shut them down. Dillon and Oluwaham *are* participating in the task. They enact the impossibility of reaching consensus over what is learnt in the summer term. Their responses are not those of the unitary, rational student subject of schooling. They do not write their suggestions neatly, or, even, not so neatly, on the sugar paper, as their peers do. What, then, to make of these scribbles, these hands pressed against one another, rigid bodies and raging, growling breath? I read their response as an important defiance of the knowing, rational subjects I require them to be in this moment. In order to participate meaningfully in this task, they need to be able to reflect on what they would like to know and to come up with topics that might be viable to put on the curriculum the following term. This request imagines a subject who can identify and use their 'voice' to participate in discussions about the curriculum. It also assumes a subject who feels hopeful enough to believe their suggestions will be taken seriously and believes that they could come up with something they would want to learn about. No space is left here for not learning or, indeed, for uncertainty and discovery. It also assumes that what is underneath and around the learning of curriculum (the seating arrangements, the ability and mixed ability groupings, the timetabling, the assessments, the assemblies, the carpet and the register and the whiteboard and who writes on it when and so on), is not up for question. This takes me back to my earlier suggestions that radical curriculum material is distilled in the banal constraints of lesson plan pro-formas. Perhaps what Dillon and Oluwaham are speaking to, not necessarily with intent, are the banal constraints of their everyday experience of being schooled at Greenfield Infants.

Despite the inability of this intervention to shift the schooling practices around and on which it is enacted, it is not futile. Indeed, the learning in the summer term that results from this task is engaging and productive. Dillon and Oluwaham's responses, however, enable me to tell a tale of this intervention that is more complex. The very act of asking students what they want to learn cites a chain of assumptions about learning, choice and subjectivity which is embedded in neo-liberal educational discourses yet, in this space, it is also an important counter political move. It is an

intervention that manages both to offer some recognition to the students as having views worth contributing whilst also, simultaneously, failing to move beyond neo-liberal discourses of the rational, agentic and choice making subject.

Conclusion

The politics of the curriculum (what is taught and how it is taught and who decides) is embedded in neo-liberal discourses of teaching and learning as they are enacted at this site. The counter politics I attempt in the interventions I detail above do not run counter to these neo-liberal discourses: They are unavoidably intertwined. The very production of my own and the students' subjectivities is, at least in part, made possible by the very discourses which I try to challenge. A complex process begins to emerge in the theoretical exploration of the interventions I detail in this chapter, whereby the neo-liberal discourses of teaching and learning are taken up in the counter politics which call them into question. Whilst this might seem to lead to an impossible impasse, I hold on to the way in which neo-liberalism itself is not monolithic or fixed, but is also, always in constant production. As Butler (1997a) asserts, it is in this repeated rearticulation of dominant discourses that the opportunity arises to repeat differently. The micro shifts that occur in such moments of challenge offer possibilities for thinking and being differently in the classroom.

6. **'Acceptance of the limits of knowability in oneself and others':
Performative politics, relationality and suspending the desire to know the
other in the primary school classroom**

'Suspending the demand for self-identity, or more particularly, for complete coherence, seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require others do the same' (Butler 2005 p.42)

This chapter takes up the conceptual framework offered by Judith Butler in her text 'Giving an Account of Oneself' (2005), to explore the place of relationality within a performative politics of reinscription. As I have already explored, Butler's understandings of subjectivation and performativity have long informed the work of poststructuralist scholars within the sociology of education concerned with understanding the ways in which student identities are produced, resisted and reinscribed (see, for instance, Renold 2005, Rasmussen 2006, Youdell 2006). These ideas have also been taken up more specifically in relation to classroom pedagogies that aim to disrupt exclusionary schooling practices and to intervene in the production of educational inequalities (see, Lather 1991, Davies 1994, Laws and Davies 2000, Blaise 2005). Whilst pedagogic relationships are important to the performative politics discussed in this literature, they are not a focus for attention. There is, however, a growing interest in pedagogic relationships within psychosocial accounts of teaching and learning (Britzman and Pitt 1996, Bibby 2009, 2011). Such literature suggests that these relationships are of central importance to students' schooling experience and are inextricably bound up in the content of curriculum knowledge taught.

In 'Giving an Account of Oneself', Butler develops her conceptualisation of the process of subjectivation. In previous work Butler (1997a, 1997b) situates the making of the subject discursively and relationally yet here she additionally emphasises the way in which this process occurs in an actual relationship between self and other. In her exploration of this self/other relationship, Butler argues that it is within such a relationship that we tell narratives of ourselves and receive the narratives of others. She suggests that suspending our desire for complete coherency in these narratives can lead to ways of relating that have the potential to be more ethical.

This chapter begins with an exploration of how performative reinscription is understood within education and used, pedagogically, to disrupt exclusionary schooling practices before taking up Butler's conceptualisation of relationality to theorise the encounter with the other in the pedagogic relationship. In drawing these ideas together, I present detailed readings of two data excerpts. The first excerpt of data I discuss was generated during my participation as a teacher-researcher on the 'No Outsiders' research project (Atkinson and DePalma 2006 - 2009), discussed in chapter 1. My reading of this data makes visible the absence of a notion of ethical relations towards the other in a pedagogic encounter in which the student is denied a viable subject position from which he can be recognised. My reading of the second data excerpt I use will suggest the pedagogic relationship and its tolerance of the unknown enables the student to maintain recognisability within the space of the primary school and is central to the reinscriptive politics that facilitates his rejoining of the class. I will argue that the site of recognition created for the student in this pedagogic relationship enables him to avoid the consequences of being, yet again, constituted by other school staff as 'naughty' and 'defiant', the frequent corollary of such inscriptions being removal from the classroom. Exclusionary practices such as these are part of the mundane, everyday minutiae that make up life in school (Youdell 2006) yet result in the students on the receiving end of these time outs, missed playtimes and removals from the classroom or school existing on the margins of their educational experience. Such an existence does not leave much space to find ways of living a life that is viable within the institution of the school, let alone one that leads to high educational attainment. Allowing the incomplete, sometimes less rational, self-narratives that emerge within pedagogic relationships when I am able to tolerate that which I do not know (both about myself and the students I teach) is a risky manoeuvre. It is, however, one which can result in new possibilities for pedagogical relations in the classroom and open up alternative sites of recognition for the students I teach.

Performative reinscription, recognisability and the demand to know in the pedagogic relationship

Subjectivation, the process by which, according to Butler (1997b), a subject is produced and subjugated by power, is central to politics of performative reinscription in education. The process of subjectivation involves the discursive production of

identities through which a subject is made coherent. Butler (1997b) argues that these categories of identity act as performatives, producing rather than describing subjects. Key here, however, is that this production is never certain. Categories of identity gain the appearance of being fixed through their repeated enactment but these repetitions are open to misfire or misappropriation. Such repetitions also become the site for discursive agency (Butler 1997a) and are thus the focus of politics that attempt to reinscribe particular schooling identities which marginalise students. For such reinscriptions to happen in the context of schooling, however, the subject must remain recognisable. In *Excitable Speech* (1997a) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997b), Butler argues that recognisability is the condition of a liveable life. Building on Althusser's (1971) theory of subject formation, Butler states that 'to be addressed is not merely to be recognised for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence becomes possible' (1997a p.5). The subject is rendered recognisable linguistically and, according to Butler, it is this recognisability that allows the subject to survive. There is a necessary knowing and knowledge implicit in this conceptualisation of subjecthood. Youdell (2006) has mapped how Butler's understandings of subjectivation and recognisability might be used to make sense of the subjects of schooling. 'In school contexts,' explains Youdell, 'being a schoolgirl or boy, being gifted, having emotional or behavioural difficulties makes sense' within the discourses circulating in the school (p.44). Youdell goes on to argue that '[p]erformatives that do not make sense in the discourses that frame schooling, or that are counter to prevailing institutional discourses may fail or may act to constitute a subject outside the bounds of acceptability as a student' (p.45).

Accounts of pedagogic interventions taking up Butlerian performativity often cite the identification of discourses through which student subjectivities are constituted as central to the political move that potentially enables students to shift the discursive terms on which they are constituted within school. Indeed, Laws and Davies (2000) suggest that teachers and students can invest in different discourses in order to alter who it is possible for them to be in the classroom. They describe how Cath, the first author of the paper and principal of a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), 'reflexively examines the discourses through which she is constituting herself as principal and she abandons them in favour of another' (p.218). They perceive the political move made by Cath here as a shift across a

discursive terrain. In her interaction with a student who has climbed onto the roof of a school, Cath takes up a discourse of protest and politics in her reading of him as making a stand on behalf of friend. In this account, space is created for the student to occupy a different subject position through Cath's citation of discourses that fall outside the dominant educational discourses framing the school but that are not incompatible with them. This act of performative reinscription enables the student to return to the classroom rather than be excluded from school (which would be the usual course of action in such circumstances). However, in this interaction the demand is placed on the student to be recognisable, rational and coherent in a way that refuses to see him. Bibby (2011) discusses students' painful experiences of being overlooked and unseen in the classroom, arguing that negative mirroring or no mirroring at all, although sometimes unavoidable, can further marginalise students (pp.39-44). Cath's action might be a necessary political tactic to prevent the student's exclusion in this moment yet there remains a question, for me, regarding the psychic cost to the student of such a demand. Another example of a pedagogic intervention located within a politics of performative reinscription comes from fieldwork data I generated during my time as a teacher-researcher on the 'No Outsiders' project. The following excerpt of data depicts a conversation between myself, Jenny (a teaching assistant with whom I worked) and Tomas (a student in my class):

As we were walking to lunch on our school trip to an environmental centre, Tomas (boy aged 8) said, for no apparent reason, 'boys have muscles, girls have boobies'. Both myself and a teaching assistant, Jenny, overheard him. Jenny is very sporty. She does karate and rides her bike everywhere. She rolled up her sleeves and flexed her muscles. 'Look Tomas, I'm a girl and I have muscles!' she said. 'Do you think it's true that only boys have muscles?' I asked. Tomas scuffed his feet on the ground, hung his head and murmured 'no' before running off to a different place in the line.'

Field notes, 2008 (cited in Youdell, 2011)

As Youdell (2011) has demonstrated in her analysis of this data, the intervention here troubles a particular presentation of muscular-masculinity in which Tomas is invested. This results in him disengaging from the conversation and moving

right away from us, possibly feeling humiliated. The teaching assistant and I insist on Tomas' recognition of the muscular female body and, in so doing, ask he divest the, hyper-masculine, subjectivity which offers him recognisability amongst his peers. This recognisability is essential for Tomas in the context of his formal schooling in which he is constituted through discourses of educational attainment as being a student with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The teaching assistant and I show no awareness of this and appear to overlook Tomas himself in this interaction. As I have suggested elsewhere (Teague 2011) my response to Tomas disregards my relationship with him and privileges the way in which my understanding can challenge his. I do not consider that I might not know Tomas as I think I do; instead, I decide I know him, I know what he thinks and I know that what he thinks needs to be challenged. The student in Laws and Davies' account, discussed above, is asked to remain coherent but Tomas' coherence as a subject is unsettled by the insistence of myself and Jenny that he recognise an identity that does not make sense to him. To demand this of Tomas is to ignore the ways in which he is already marginalised within dominant educational discourses and to negate the institutional power conferred on us via these same discourses.

Both the examples I draw upon here take up a politics of performative reinscription whereby particular, wounded, identities (that of the EBD student in the case of the data from Laws and Davies and that of the muscular female in the instance of my data involving Tomas) are situated within alternative citational chains to give them recognisability in an educational context. The encounter with the other in the pedagogical relationships discussed in each of the accounts, however, is missed as demands are placed on the students by pedagogues who speak from a place of already knowing. Situating relationality at the foreground of performative politics in the classroom might allow for a more ethical encounter between student and teacher.

In *Giving an Account of Oneself* Butler develops her theory of subjectivation, emphasising that this process occurs relationally. Butler uses aspects of psychoanalytic object relations theory, as developed by analysts such as Donald Winnicott (1971, 1986) and Christopher Bollas (1987), to explore the way in which subjects are constituted within relationships. Focusing on the relationship between self and other, she suggests a new kind of relational ethics might emerge from the question of how I ought to treat you (p.25). When posed in the context of classroom pedagogy,

this question foregrounds the encounter between self and other in the pedagogic relationship as centrally important to pedagogical counter politics. Before introducing the next data excerpt I will explore, I will look more closely at Butler's arguments concerning relationality and the ways in which we do not, and cannot, completely know ourselves and others, as it is with these concepts I will be working to analyse this data.

The difficulty of narrating ourselves

Butler questions what it means to narrate ourselves and our lives, arguing that we can never provide a complete account of ourselves. She suggests that because our subjectivity is conferred through discourses which precede us, there will always be something of our story that is not ours and which we cannot narrate. 'The norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable' states Butler, 'are not fully mine' (p.35). At the very outset of any account of oneself there is a dispossession; something that cannot be owned and told solely for or about oneself because it inevitably evokes the normative and, thus, the social. Butler suggests that a seemingly personal narrative 'will be disoriented by what is not mine, or mine alone' (p.37). The conditions of one's possibility as a subject, the discourses which make us and sustain us, also interrupt the tellings of our self-narratives; disorient us and confuse us. Butler identifies further difficulties with the idea that one can tell a story about oneself over which one has exclusive ownership and which can be told consistently time and again. She points out that there is always an other, real or imagined, to which one tells one's narrative. The very act of the telling in the presence of somebody else alters the story told. Butler explains 'the scene of address, what we might call the rhetorical condition for responsibility, means that while I am engaging in a reflexive activity, thinking about and reconstructing myself, I am also speaking to you and thus elaborating a relation to an other in language as I go' (p.50). The purpose of the telling of a narrative about oneself, then, is not simply to convey autobiographical information; it also serves to act upon the relational dynamics between oneself and the other who receives the narrative. Linked to this point, Butler suggests that the very existence of an unconscious means that there is something unknowable at the very core of oneself. Drawing on the work of Jean Laplanche (1999), she remarks upon the linguistic confusion of the term 'my unconscious' as this 'nomenclature will always be giving the lie to itself' (p.53). Rather than a possession, suggests Butler, 'my unconscious' is 'that

which I cannot own' (p.53). So again, Butler exposes the impossibility of the idea that a person can own their story and tell it consistently and coherently each time. Indeed, the narrating self she presents in this text is one that 'cannot tell [its] story in a straight line,' who loses its 'thread' and has to 'start again' (p.68).

Possibilities for relating more ethically

For Butler, the impossibility of a coherent, consistently narratable 'I' requires the development of a new kind of relational ethics. In her discussion of the presence of the other who must receive the narrative told, Butler takes up the psychoanalytic concept of transference. Broadly speaking, she understands this concept as the repetition of dynamics from past relationships in present day relationships. Since transference of some kind occurs, according to Butler, in every relationship, it will exist in the relationship in which one's narrative is told. For Butler, the transference relationship itself can become a 'practice of ethics' (p.64). Butler writes that 'if, in the name of ethics, we (violently) require that another do a certain violence to herself, and do it in front of us by offering a narrative account or issuing a confession, then conversely, if we permit, sustain, and accommodate the interruption, a certain practice of non-violence may follow' (p.64). It is in the sustained acknowledgement of the unknowability of ourselves and each other that the basis for an ethics of relationality emerges. Butler stresses that the point is not to celebrate incoherence but rather to understand incoherence, that which confuses, disrupts and dispossesses us of our narratives, as establishing 'the way in which we are constituted in relationality' (p.64). Although Butler, building on the work of Foucault (1991), has always understood discourse to be relational, in this text she works through this understanding further by situating it within an actual relationship. This is significant in terms of discussions of performative reinscription which, as indicated earlier, have typically understood this politics to be enacted on a discursive terrain. Butler's move in *Giving an Account of Oneself* explicitly locates the constitution of the individual subject within a relationship. Subjectivation in schooling, then, takes place within relationships and it is within these relationships that potential is found for new sites of recognition. The pedagogic relationship itself can offer a student a way back from the margins of school life rather than simply being a conduit for curriculum knowledge or, even, a place where teachers reinscribe identities for students.

In obscuring the ways in which we are unknowable to ourselves and others, we further obscure the perceptions we give and receive. Indeed, Butler argues that a new 'sense of ethics can emerge [...] by a certain willingness to acknowledge the limits of acknowledgement itself' (p.42). She goes on to explore what happens when we think we can know the other:

'As we ask to know the other, or ask that the other say, finally or definitively, who he or she is, it will be important not to expect an answer that will ever satisfy. By 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' (pp.42–43).

There is something of ourselves and the other that cannot be captured in any account. As we tell our story, we may get lost in our telling, or find that there is something lost in ourselves that cannot be told. This is also the case for the other whom we might demand give an account of his or her self. I would like to turn now to another encounter with a student depicted in the next data excerpt in which, I will suggest, the acknowledgement of unknowability in myself and the student becomes central to the ethics of the interaction. I focus on a single incident here in order to give space for an exploration of what it might mean to foreground relationality in a performative politics and how this plays out in the context of the school.

Tolerating the unknown, being recognised and remaining included in the classroom

The following data I draw upon features Dillon. He has a reputation in school for being dislikeable. At best, other teachers and teaching assistants consider him 'silly' and 'obnoxious' and, at worst, I have heard him described as 'evil'. Although these terms are not used in Dillon's presence, when staff interact with him, they often seem exasperated or cross, anticipating him being 'difficult'. Whilst amongst his peers, Dillon occupies a 'high status' position, I read him as existing on the margins of formal schooling because he is frequently threatened with exclusion or excluded. He misses playtimes, he is sent to complete work in other classrooms and, on occasion, has been asked to go home from school. Like Tomas, in the data above, his life at school is

made survivable because he invests in a version of hegemonic masculinity that makes him popular amongst a group of his peers. My own relationship with Dillon is not especially easy to negotiate. Whilst I refuse to exclude children from the classroom, my attempts to offer support to Dillon by listening and trying to respond to him at moments when he is upset are often met with suspicion from him, and disapproval from my colleagues because this attempt to form a connection is not in line with school behaviour management policies.

The following data gives an account of interactions between Dillon, Jean (the class teaching assistant), Miss Harvey (my job-share partner), Mrs Hills (a special needs teaching assistant), Mr Marcus (the parallel year 2 teacher) and myself. RM Maths is a mathematics computer programme used in some schools in the UK to develop mental arithmetic skills.

The half past ten sandwich

Dillon has recently been diagnosed as diabetic. He has to have his blood sugar levels taken regularly throughout the school day and every day, at half past 10, he has to eat a sandwich. Jean is first aid trained and usually organises Dillon's sandwich eating and remembers when his blood sugar needs testing. Dillon comes into the classroom in tears just before playtime, at quarter to eleven, followed by Jean. Jean informs me he has not had his half past ten sandwich. Miss Harvey is in the classroom putting sheets in the homework tray. She looks at him and says in a cross voice 'Do you know Dillon, I do not deal with crying children, pull yourself together.' She marches out of the classroom. Dillon continues to sob. I send the rest of the class out to play. Jean stands, hands on hips, watching Dillon. Once the other children have gone outside, Jean moves to stand in front of the door, blocking Dillon's exit outside.

Jean: Please Dillon, just eat your sandwich. Look it's here.

Dillon: [through sobs] No

Jean: [pleading] Dillon, please.... I've done everything I can to help you with your diabetes. I have brought packs of sweets for you from my own home, I've rang your mum to come in with your testing kit.... I have tried to help you, I really have but now you have to help me...

[Dillon continues to sob.]

Me: [kneeling down so I'm on his level] What's the problem with the sandwich Dillon?

[More sobbing.]

Jean: [sounding increasingly exasperated] You are not going out to play until you've eaten this Dillon. It's not safe. You could get really sick, you know. Help me to help you, please...

At this point, Jean moves slightly away from the door and as she does so, Dillon makes a dash for it and runs outside. Jean runs after him and I follow them out. Dillon does a full circuit of the playground, running and sobbing. He dodges Mr Marcus and dodges Jean who has stopped chasing and gone back in the opposite direction to try to catch him. I stay where I am. He runs towards me. I kneel down so that I'm at his level when he arrives at where I'm standing. I place one hand on his back.

Me: [gently, looking at Dillon who is still sobbing] My goodness, that was fast running. You must be feeling very upset to run so fast out of the classroom like that.

[Dillon continues to cry.]

Me: You are upset.... [I rub his back, gradually he calms down]... Will you come inside with me?

Dillon nods his head and allows me to take his hand. When we are back in the classroom, he sits down at a table. I sit near him but at right angles. I decide to stay off the sandwich topic for the moment. Dillon is frowning.

Me: Are you feeling angry?

Dillon: I was in RM maths and I was confused because I was trying to log out and I couldn't remember the letters and the numbers and Mrs Warner shouted at me and I was just confused because I couldn't know how to spell scuba [begins to cry again]

Me: That does sound confusing [I have no idea what he is talking about as there is no need to spell anything when logging out of the RM maths programme].

Dillon: I didn't know what to do...

Me: I think I wouldn't have known what to do either.

Dillon: I hate everybody when they get cross.

Me: I remember I sometimes used to feel like that too, when I was six.

[Dillon looks up at me, as if reassessing me. I nod.]

Me: I used to get so cross I would to kick the walls in my bedroom sometimes.

Dillon: I kick and I punch.

We sit for a moment in silence, looking at each other. Dillon seems to be calming down. Something between us feels different.

I don't want to disrupt things now he has just got calmer but I'm aware it is half an hour past his sandwich time so I decide to broach the issue again.

Me: Do you think you might eat your sandwich now?

Dillon nods his head. I hear the bell go outside. Mrs Hills comes in at this point ready for the next lesson. I ask her to sit with Dillon whilst I get the class in. Dillon sits at a table outside the classroom to eat his half past ten sandwich.

LT, field notes, May, 2012

The potential fatalness of Dillon's diabetes, and, therefore, the great responsibility we have to manage it carefully whilst Dillon is in our care, ought not to be overlooked here and contributes to Jean's desperate response. Yet despite the real seriousness of Dillon's medical condition, overlooking Dillon himself does not bring us any closer to him eating his sandwich. Jean demands that Dillon know and understand her in remarks such as 'I have done everything I can to help you' and 'help me to help you'. Her narrative of herself in this encounter positions her as someone who both knows herself and knows Dillon. My initial response to Dillon is not effective either in helping him to calm down and to eat his sandwich. My question, 'What's the problem with the sandwich Dillon?' both assumes I know the cause of Dillon's distress and places a demand on him to account for this. As Dillon's continuing sobbing indicates, it is not as simple as a problem with the sandwich. Dillon's escape from the classroom possibly indicates how misunderstood he feels and reminds me of Tomas in the data above who ran away from the conversation with me and the teaching assistant. Dillon is clearly very upset and we (the three adults who have interacted with him) have not stopped to listen nor have we even fully acknowledged his distress. The questions and

demands from myself and Jean are, to use Butler's terms, an enactment of a kind of ethical violence that demands to know and that Dillon tell us. When these demands cease, the encounter between myself and Dillon seems to become more about our experience of each other as opposed to forcing Dillon to give a coherent account of his distress.

Judith Butler draws on Donald Winnicott's (1986) notion of 'containment' in thinking through the conditions which allow one person to tell a narrative of themselves to another person. Winnicott's theory of containment, or holding, is based on the 'good enough' relationship between primary care giver and infant. Initially, the parent adapts completely to the infant's needs, modifying this near-as complete adaptation as the baby gets older. Winnicott explains that 'this adaptation to need is not just a matter of the satisfying of instincts but has to be thought of primarily in terms of holding and handling' (1971, p.176). The baby, who cannot distinguish itself from the rest of the world, who's feelings are sometimes overwhelmingly frightening, is 'held' by the person caring for her, who can process the baby's feelings, returning them to her in a bearable form (Bibby 2011). Winnicottian holding in the parent-baby relationship is both physical and psychic. The parent literally picks the baby up carefully, giving it warning and placing it on their shoulder in close proximity to them (Winnicott, 1971). This careful physical handling occurs in tandem with the psychic processing the parent does. The sort of holding Butler refers to, however, is performed by another bodily presence but is psychic. Indeed, within clinical psychoanalytic work, the analyst acts as a container for the patient, processing the patient's most frightening, seemingly unbearable, thoughts and feelings and, in so doing, making them more tolerable for the patient. Yet in a more everyday way, we act as containers for each other's narratives and the affects that accompany them. My response to Dillon, as he runs towards me and once he has stopped, performs a holding function. I speak 'gently' and rather than demand he provide some kind of rational account to explain why he has not eaten his sandwich, I comment on what he is seeming to communicate to me: his upset and confusion. It is within this context that he is able to tell more of a narrative of himself to me.

Whilst my focus on Dillon's feelings here perhaps attempts to ascribe emotional vocabulary to affects that are experienced bodily rather than on the discursive level of 'upset' (see Youdell 2011, p.106-107 for further discussion of affect and feeling), by

not asking for further explanation from Dillon at this point, I create an opportunity for him to exist within the space of the school without threat of exclusion. Indeed, the first conversation we have with Dillon in the classroom leads him to run outside, much like Tomas has to move away from us in the data discussed above. The suspension of the demand to immediately know Dillon is not easy or comfortable in the context of an educational institution where students and teachers are assumed to be rational, knowing subjects. In similar situations involving Dillon refusing treatment for his diabetes, he has been sent to a member of the senior management team to be told by them he has to comply, in a blurring of care taking and discipline. At this moment, in this school, suspending the demand for a coherent narrative, suspending my own desire to know Dillon, is not simply a matter of patience but, as I mentioned earlier, becomes a risky practice for me and a politically important move in terms of a performative politics intended to disrupt exclusionary practices. This is a point to which I will return.

When Dillon talks about RM maths, I cannot follow what he is saying or see what relevance it has to his seeming refusal to eat his sandwich. Yet, I allow myself to remain confused and to keep listening to him, holding a position in relation to Dillon that can tolerate not knowing and resists the desire to be told. Whilst suspending my demand that Dillon know himself and account for himself feels risky, offering a narrative of my own in this encounter is even more difficult. Indeed, giving an account of a much younger and more volatile version of myself unsettles the teacher subjectivity I assume in the classroom. Suspending the desire for complete coherence in my relationship with Dillon, also means allowing my own coherence as a subject to unravel to some extent. Yet telling a narrative of a part of myself offers a different kind of response to Dillon, one that recognises the importance of my relationship with him: He tells a narrative of his own, about hating people who get cross with him, and I answer with another narrative. This momentarily cuts through the way in which we are rigidly constituted, in hierarchical arrangement, as a teacher and student within a schooling institution where policy and practice correlate student defiance with disobedience that needs disciplining. This encounter is one that holds the potential for a more meaningful relationship to form between self/ other; teacher/ student.

Treading the line between not knowing and becoming unrecognisable in the classroom

It seems here that the move I make in suspending my own desire to know Dillon, and in allowing my knowledge of myself as a teacher to be unsettled in the process, does not result in a state of unknowingness. Indeed, in 'Giving an Account of Oneself', Butler does not suggest unknowingness in its own right as an aim but, rather, invites us to imagine a new way of relating in which we suspend the desire for immediate and complete knowledge. In the data above, when I do this, Dillon becomes someone whose actions are seen and whose distress deserves, in Winnicott's terms, 'containment'. Not knowing completely, were it even possible, would result in an illegibility that would call into question mine and Dillon's recognisability as subjects.

The suspension of the desire to know and to remain completely coherent feels difficult to me precisely because it threatens my recognisability as a teacher. Dillon's refusal to comply with our demands that he eats his sandwich and his flight out of the classroom have already called into question his recognisability as an acceptable student. The process of being listened to, being identified with and being shown empathy, without the insistence he present a rational account of his actions, allows Dillon to re-enter a place of recognisability as a primary schoolboy. He takes up his place within the discourses of the school as he is supposed to, eating his sandwich and then rejoining the class to participate in the numeracy lesson. My insistence, not expressed directly in words, that Dillon does this, allows me to retain some recognisability as a teacher. The performative reinscription here occurs within a relational encounter that, eventually, attempts to let the other live and to not perpetuate the ethical violence intrinsic in the demand to know. Dillon is not required to take up an identity I choose for him through my selection of different discourses. Rather, the pedagogic relationship itself creates space for Dillon to be seen, acknowledged and 'held' which potentially allows him to experience himself differently. Whilst I cannot account for Dillon's affective experience here, our encounter did lead to his inclusion in the classroom rather than his exclusion in a corridor or the head teacher's office.

Conclusion

My interaction with Dillon is an example of a performative politics that foregrounds relationality in its enactment. In so doing, opportunity is created for a more ethical encounter with the other that does not insist upon narratives of the self that are

rational and knowing. Indeed, my previous failure to acknowledge the importance of relational dynamics in my encounter with Tomas leaves him divested of the subject position on which he depends to make school life liveable for him. Acknowledging the limits of what I can know about the students with whom I work and allowing them space to be without 'complete coherence' (Butler, 2005, p.42), constitutes a way of relating that can enable more meaningful connections to develop in the classroom. Taking up Butler's theories of relationality within a framework of performative politics in relation to the primary school classroom has allowed me to explore pedagogy which troubles exclusionary schooling practices without overlooking the students who are most severely marginalised by these practices. I hope this opens up further possibilities for thinking about ethical relations in the pedagogic encounter and the potential for these to inform the ways in which we think, more broadly, about the place of performativity within educational counter politics.

7. Moving beyond or around political impasse: Spatial-Temporal liminality, playfulness and collective agency

Opportunities for playful counter politics emerge in everyday moments of spatial-temporal liminality in the school day and new ways of thinking about performative politics present themselves in these times. I will argue that the constitution of the teacher/ student binary that is enacted, and often difficult to challenge, in the formal spaces of teaching and learning, can be called into question in moments of spatial-temporal liminality. Whilst this challenge might be momentary, I will suggest these moments have an effect on pedagogic relationality and politics outside these times. I am using the hyphenated term 'spatial-temporal' here, as space and time frequently coincide in the threshold moments of the in-between. The term 'liminality' was first used in the social sciences in the mid twentieth century. Seminal ethnographic studies from Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) looked at transition points over the life course, particularly focusing on rites of passage from one stage to another and the rituals that surround these points. These studies are interesting in that they present the movement from one stage or state to another as transformative in some way. This process of transformation is rarely simple, however, and is often confusing and imbued with ambivalence. As Goethe (2003, cited in Myer and Land 2005) states, in order to move from one place to another (materially and symbolically) a person 'must strip away or have stripped from them, the old identity. The period in which the individual is naked of self – neither fully in one category or another – is the liminal state' (p. 374). The data I want to explore here does not depict such definite moments of movement from one state to another but I do want to explore what happens to subjectivity in spatial-temporal liminality. Furthermore, whilst I resist a straightforward, linear, conceptualisation of transformation, I want to suggest that the traces of liminal activity remain, in some way, in other parts of classroom life.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the political impasse I sometimes encounter when pursuing a politics of performative reinscription in the classroom and will question the notion of the individual agency of the pedagogue in terms of affecting change. I will then move on to consider the way in which collective agency emerges when the hierarchical teacher/ student binary is disrupted and will argue that moments of spatial-temporal liminality are central in the production of such disruptions.

The Pedagogue as an Agentic Subject

The question of agency is often a difficult one for scholars using poststructuralist conceptual frameworks. Stephen Ball (2003) and Jane Perryman (2006; 2007) suggest that regimes of testing, accountability and school inspection produce particular teaching subjects who perform in ways that perpetuate the very systems that produce their subjectivity. However, other scholarship (Laws and Davies 2000; Blaise 2005; Davies, 2006; Davies and Gannon 2009) takes up Judith Butler's (1997a) notion of discursive agency to explore ways in which teachers might trouble discourses of exclusion in schools. As discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 5, this theory suggests that agency emerges from the alteration of continually repeated discourses. Butler's subject may be discursively constituted yet, as she explains, this is 'not a claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency' (1995, p.46). This agency is experienced by the individual subject as a possession; as an internal force that they have control over. However, given Butler's argument that the subject is produced via discourses that precede and exceed her, she is always, already dependent upon the social and, therefore, the very experience of existing as a self-contained individual with individual agency, is an illusion. This agency, then is not the invention of the individual subject although it may be enacted by her.

This conceptualisation of agency is not easy to depict in writing about pedagogy. When we think of the subjects that make up classrooms, we often tend to think of one teacher and a group of 30 or so students. The class becomes homogenous whilst the teacher retains individuality. The very physical arrangement of the primary school classroom perpetuates such a view. In the case of the year 2 classroom in which my fieldwork takes place, there is one comfy chair placed at the whiteboard end of the carpet whilst the tables, arranged in groups to accommodate 4 to 6 students, have just enough chairs for the number of students in the class. The hierarchical adult/ child, teacher/ student binaries that structure pedagogic relationships are contained within this physical construction of the classroom as well as in practices such as assessment (issued by the teacher, undertaken by the students) and lessons (planned and delivered by the teacher, received by the students). These practices are wholly implicated in the inauguration of teacher and student subjectivities in this space as well as the continued recognition of these

subjectivities. Thus, although I may recognise discursive agency as something of which I am a part but which is not mine and does not emerge from inside me, it is difficult to translate this recognition into practice when the structures that make possible my practice in the first place understand me as an individual very much separate from the students I teach. Indeed, many accounts, including my own, detailing pedagogic interventions which take up a Butlerian politics of performative reinscription, tend to present the pedagogue as the individual with agency. As well as misrepresenting Butler's conceptualisation of discursive agency, these accounts can place unrealistic expectations on the pedagogue and result in the disavowal of more collective productions of agency in the classroom.

As previously explored (see chapter 2, in particular), resignification can be understood as powerful but always open to recuperation. Building on Althusser's account of interpellation, the hailing of a subject, Butler suggests the process becomes more complicated and politically uncertain when it is not the proper name of an individual that is called up in the hail but a social category, relating, for instance, to race or gender. 'If that name is called,' states Butler, 'there is more often than not some hesitation about whether or how to respond, for what is at stake is whether a temporary totalization performed by the name is politically enabling or paralysing, whether the foreclosure, indeed the violence, of the totalizing reduction of identity performed by that particular hailing is politically strategic or regressive, also enabling in some way' (1997, p.96). Butler expresses the paradox at the centre of reinscription; injury is incurred in this move at the same time as political gains are made. This is significant in terms of how we conceptualise reinscription. It is not a zero-sum game, but instead, the very act of reinscription also has the potential to incur injury.

Subjectivation, recognisability and viability

The ways in which categories of identity operate in schools has been of concern to poststructuralist scholars of education for some time now. Such categories are never neutral descriptors around which the subjects of schooling are organised; they are always implicated in power hierarchies which allow some subjects to succeed whilst others fail (Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Rasmussen 2006; Youdell 2006). Indeed, Youdell's (2006; 2006a) work on student subjectivities explores what it means for a student to be intelligible within a school context and develops the idea of recognisable

subjects of schooling. This is an idea to which I shall return with regards to the data I discuss below, both in relation to students but also to my own subjectivity as teacher.

Performative politics does not, indeed, cannot, escape the subjectivating forces of power but, rather, locates some discursive agency in the repeated re-enactment of categories of identity. Yet the necessity for recognisability as a proper subject of schooling can mean that there is very little room for manoeuvre in terms of who and how it is possible to be in school. Furthermore, as I shall discuss in relation to the following data excerpts, attempts at reinscription are not always straightforward when the troubling of one category of identity results in the shoring up of inequalities elsewhere or one potential site of identification seems as wounding as another.

Injurious Reinscriptions

The following data excerpt is a conversation between myself, Katy (my job share partner) and Paul (the deputy head teacher). Place2be (P2b) is a UK charity that works therapeutically with children in schools in areas deemed to have high socio-economic deprivation. Two counsellors work confidentially with children in early years and KS1 both in groups and individually. Mary is a six year old child in Oak Class and, in this conversation, her subjectivity becomes a site of contestation for the adults.

It is lunchtime and I am in the classroom setting up for the next lesson. Katy is also in the classroom organising the guided reading books. Paul comes in to ask if we have written Mary's report yet. He informs us that he has a sheet to fill in about Mary and her family to pass on to a family support service. He suggests that we 'just copy and paste from Mary's report'. I suggest that what we might write in a school report about Mary would be different to what we would put in a document about her progress in school to social services. The following conversation began:

Katy: I don't even know what we're going to write about Mary in her report.

Paul: Just be honest... she's such a little cow.

Katy: I know, I saw she was outside your office again today.

Paul: Yep, the dinner ladies brought her in for screaming in the faces of some year 3 girls when Oak Class were over visiting the junior playground

earlier this lunchtime. Apparently, she pinched someone as well although she's denying it.

Katie: Little liar. I know she did it. She's such a bitch. I can't believe she's already trying to pick fights with the older children before she's even started in the juniors.

Me: I think she might be really disturbed. She's got lots going on at home – she might benefit from P2b sessions.

[Both Katie and Paul look at me, then look away]

Katie: Oh no, she's definitely a madam. We've been too soft on her up 'til now. She shouldn't go to P2b until her behaviour improves. There're loads of other kids who'd benefit.

Me: She genuinely struggles to relate to other kids. It might not be entirely intentional.

Paul: Well, I wasn't taken in by her lies today. She flat out told me she hadn't screamed in the faces of those girls in the junior playground and said she knew nothing about the pinching when various adults and other children had seen her. I told her she was not getting away with it this time. I've kept her in my office all this lunchtime and told her she needs to come back tomorrow to write apology letters to those she hurt and those she has lied to.

Katie: Good. I'm glad she has someone who is putting their foot down with her.

Me: I think she's struggling, she needs help. She's one of the most disturbed children I've met.

Paul: Hmm... she needs firmness. I'd better get back. Return the form to me when you've done it.

[He walks out of the classroom. Katie and I resume our previous tasks without saying another word to each other].

LT, field notes, June, 2012

This conversation is one of many like it. Sometimes Mary herself is told how naughty she is, how disappointed people are in her and how she is not wanted in school. At other times, the conversations about her take place between staff members

in the staffroom or corridors or classrooms in-between lessons or after school. Again and again, Mary is constituted as a 'bitch', a 'cow' and a 'bully'. She becomes an impossible student (Youdell 2006) in the pejorative framing of her in relation to these undesirable descriptors of adult femininity. A notion of an ideal year two girl; someone compliant, kind and studious, is evoked and held up to Mary as the child she is not. Mary's behaviour is read as manipulative, defiant and belonging to a person older than her age. She is discursively constituted as a particular kind of bad girl and, thus, an impossible student. Indeed, it seems she stops being understood as a school child and, in this failure she is denied what a school child might need in terms of adult care, protection and guidance. My contribution to the conversation I describe in the data above is strategic. It is very difficult to expose the sexism and bullying of my colleagues. In this moment, wider cultural discourses of sexism intersect with notions of proper school behaviour and conduct, meaning that to challenge the sexism also seems to suggest Mary's behaviour is not completely unacceptable. It would call into question the behaviour of the adults which would unsettle the taken for granted assumptions of the adult/ child and teacher/ student hierarchical binaries. Exposing and troubling these would be to call into question my own subject position as proper teacher which feels dangerous. Whilst being in places of uncertainty is a corollary of pursuing counter politics in the classroom, to put myself in that place too often is to risk my teacher subjectivity altogether. Negotiating my way between recognisability as a teacher and providing some counter discourse to the normative sexism privileged in the conversation is difficult. Indeed rather than challenging the sexism itself, I insist Mary is 'disturbed' and needs 'help'. Even this suggestion from me, however, is met with a literal turning away from me by my colleagues: It is as if my suggestion almost makes me as invisible as a teacher as Mary is as a student. Perhaps Mary's behaviour has located her so far away from a school student subject position that my attempt to put her back there is unthinkable. Indeed, she is not deemed deserving of help from Place2be as the behaviour she displays does not need therapeutic input but, rather, 'firm' discipline. The options presented for Mary here do not seem to offer much hope; a 'bitch' or a 'troubled child'. My intervention here, although met with the silence of my colleagues, is recognisable within a political framework of performativity. At the core of interventions such as this, is an understanding of subjectivation as an ongoing process that can change tack and enable an individual to take up alternative,

potentially less wounding, subject positions in school whilst continuing to remain intelligible as a student. The extent to which 'troubled child' is a less wounding position, however, is an issue to which I shall return later in this chapter.

I would like to return now to data I discuss in relation to methodology in chapter 3. Here, however, I will explore the politics of the intervention in more detail. As in the data I discuss above, there is tension between challenging problematic discourses, this time of racism, and trying to ensure a viable subject position is kept open for a child. The child in this data excerpt is Daisy and the scene is a whole school assembly led by Mr Baxter (the year 1 teacher who is known for his violent verbal outbursts at the children).

It is quarter past ten and time for assembly. It is a rush as usual. I have just about managed to finish the maths lesson, we do a manic tidy up and I tell the children to line up for assembly. They are noisy, I am feeling stressed, not wanting to be the last class into the hall, not wanting to keep everyone waiting for us. After some hushing from me and the teaching assistant, the children quieten down, I am about to lead them out of the classroom when I realise that Daisy is hiding behind the curtain. I ask Diane (one of the classroom assistants), to take the children to assembly whilst I talk to Daisy.
Me: Come on Daisy, assembly time.

Daisy: I don't want to. Can I help you? [sometimes I let children stay behind during assembly time to do jobs in the classroom]

Me: Sorry Daisy, no jobs today and I'm not going to be in here so we need to go to assembly now [I actually need to gather resources for the next lesson and feel I've not got time to chat to Daisy at the same time]

I hold out my hand and, reluctantly, she takes it. We walk to the hall. When we arrive, Mr Baxter (who will be leading the assembly) is standing at the front and the last class to arrive is coming in. Mr Baxter sees us entering and glares at Daisy. She was in his class in year one and she was frequently in trouble with him. He dislikes her and continues to involve himself in 'managing' her behaviour this year. I am keen to get Daisy, who at this point is pulling on my hand, resisting going further into the hall, to sit down quickly

in an attempt to prevent her being shouted at by Mr Baxter or made to miss her playtime.

Me [quietly to Daisy]: Come on Daisy, you only have to be here 15 minutes then it'll be playtime.

She acquiesces and allows me to lead her to where the rest of Oak Class is seated. I see the end of the line and we go towards it. We are about 3 metres away from the end of the line when Daisy suddenly stops. The year 1 class who were entering the hall have now all sat down. There is some chatter amongst the classes and the music is still playing. Mr Baxter glares in our direction again. He is waiting to start. I kneel down so I am at the same level as Daisy. My imperative is to get her to sit down quickly, not just so assembly can begin and I can prepare for the next lesson, but to try to ensure she does not get into trouble. She is the girl with nits, the girl who sometimes smells of wee, she is number four of seven. She is an ignorer of rules who needs 'firm boundaries' and behaviour charts, an SEN child who has extra reading support in the mornings and an adult to work with her each literacy lesson. Staffroom myth revolves around this child and her family. A family, so go the myths, where the children are given chocolate for breakfast and multiple fathers come and go. They seem to represent a kind of poverty that is unacceptable, recognisable only as abject. These notions of Daisy and her family, held collectively by staff and students, circulating in staffroom and playground, need to both be recognised by me (I am in a position of responsibility and care) and refuted because of the ways in which they render Daisy almost inhuman. This is the blond haired child I kneel beside at this moment, who becomes all of these things and yet is nothing of them.

Me: [whispering] What's wrong?

Daisy: [whispering, looking straight ahead towards Breanna who is the last child in the row] I don't want to sit there. I don't like black people.

I look from Daisy to Breanna [who does not seem to have heard]. The music is switched off. I say nothing more and steer Daisy towards the end of the row in front. She sits down. I walk out of the hall, simultaneously relieved and horrified.

LT, field notes, February, 2012

To challenge the racism expressed by Daisy in this moment would be to disrupt the school assembly and would end up with Daisy in the head teacher's office. As I discuss in chapter 1, racism at Greenfield Infants is very present but rarely discussed. In line with legal requirements, there is a racist incidents book in which all racist incidents are supposed to be recorded. This is the only mechanism via which there is any official opportunity to acknowledge racism at Greenfield Infants. Within official school procedures, structures and curricula, mention of racism is noticeably absent. This raises a difficult problem in that the procedures surrounding the recording of a racist incident in the racist incident book, seek a perpetrator and a victim. The former is told that their comments and/ or actions are racist whilst support is offered to the latter. Whilst this might sometimes be appropriate, when racism is not discussed in the formal spaces of teaching and learning, when it is absent from staff meetings and staff training and does not occur in informal conversations between staff, this is a problematic approach. It situates racism in the individual child and sees racism as something that needs 'correcting' in this child. Critical discussion of institutional racism in the school and racial tensions on the estate, is missed when focus is placed solely on individual perpetrators and victims of racism. David Gillborn (2009) suggests that such omission of discussion around race and racism is not a coincidence and contributes to the continued marginalisation of racially minoritized students in schools. Thus, in the data above, I am reluctant to call out the racism that occurs not only because I am already attempting to avoid Daisy being constituted, yet again, as the non-compliant child who needs to be firmly brought into line, I also want to avoid the conceptualisation of this racism as being located in Daisy herself. However, the seating of Daisy at the end of the next line and my swift departure from the hall means that this incident is not challenged. The omission of challenge at this moment and subsequently, although not desirable, is possible because Daisy's racist comment is not actually aimed at Breanna, but at me. It is a challenge to me and my attempts to seat her. Here, at this moment, my attempts to support Daisy to comply enough to avoid punishment from other staff members result in the further marginalisation of another child. Here, as in the above excerpt of data, the capacity for discursive agency

is placed with me, the pedagogue. And I reach a place of stuckness and silence as injury is incurred to a student which ever immediate course of action I take.

The ways in which performativity has been taken up in relation to pedagogy tends to foreground the teacher as the person who can, with the right theoretical tools, alter the trajectory for a particular student or group of students. Indeed, this is what happens in the data excerpts I discuss above. Yet when the alternative to being a bitch is being disturbed, or remaining legible as an acceptable student at the beginning of assembly means racism towards another child goes unchallenged, the paradoxes at the very centre of subjectivation come to the fore. My attempts to discursively locate Mary differently in order to enable her to escape being a 'bitch', do not mean she escapes injury. Valerie Harwood (2006) writes about the problematic way in which diagnoses and labels of pathology are taken up in schools. Not only do such moves serve to describe the whole child in deficit terms, they also eclipse the ways in which, for instance, discourses of racism or sexism operate in the situation. So my move in the data above to claim these labels for Mary, to ask that we take up a narrative of 'the disturbed child' when thinking about her, is problematic both in terms of the implications for Mary as an individual student but also in terms of the wider pedagogical politics I pursue. Indeed, it does turn attention away from the discourses around gender and childhood, implicit in the judgements made about Mary and her behaviour, thus removing responsibility from the institution of the school and the adults who work there. The narrative of the 'disturbed child' seems the only available to me in this moment where there is no space to acknowledge the impact of childhood trauma and the impact of racism and sexism. Whilst I do not ever attempt to ascribe particular behaviours I see in the classroom to early and/ or current trauma, it is my understanding of the impact of trauma, via Winnicott (1957; 1964) and Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1988) in particular, that enables me to respond with compassion and understanding to the students of Oak Class. In this instance, I am not able to use a psychotherapeutic discourse around trauma and attachment to disrupt the constitution of Mary as a 'bitch'. However, as Allan and Harwood (2013; 2014) demonstrate, discourses which pathologise children and young people through practices of diagnosis and medical treatment can be challenged when a psychotherapeutic understanding of trauma is used to understand the behaviour of these children and young people.

Nevertheless, in this school, at this moment, the calling up of the category of 'disturbed child' is also a re-reading of Mary's behaviour which has the potential to divest her of the badness she is assumed to possess. This does not detract from the problematic erasure of other discourses in this move, nor does it remove the injury of such a label. It simultaneously disrupts existing understandings of Mary's behaviour which position her outside the category of recognisable school student and re-categorises her behaviour as pathological and needing fixing. It continues to suggest that something is wrong with Mary but does so in a way that asks for her continued inclusion in school. Similarly, Daisy's compliance precariously constitutes her as a legible and legitimate student, although this is by no means secure and does not mean that she can avoid being excluded at a later point. However, the costs are great both in terms of the emphasis this places on the desirability of compliance and, as discussed, the way in which the racist comments go unchallenged.

Once again, here, I am reminded of Butler's suggestion that recognisability is key to viability as a subject. In this context dominant behaviour management practices, at best, use exclusion to shame children into compliance and, at worst, more violently coerce children through shouting and bullying; the curriculum is overloaded; staff sickness levels high and standards are scrutinized. Making the life of a child more liveable here might be to make a case for them being disturbed. Yet in relation to both the data excerpts above, I am left wondering what space there might be for the students to themselves participate in the discursive agency I seem to attempt to direct for them. Does it always have to be the pedagogue determining an alternative subjectivity for a child to assume or might a child be able to find another way of being for themselves or, even, could a more collaborative agency emerge? Butler writes that 'a life for which no categories of recognition exist is not a livable life' (2004, p.8). Butler's reference here is to particular gendered bodies and the possibility, or otherwise, of exceeding the demands for identification, but this is a serious question for pedagogical politics too. What meaning does livability have for myself and my students at Greenfield Infants? Whilst livability seems to go beyond recognisability, the need to be recognisable enough to remain in the classroom or playground, rather than sitting outside in the corridor or spending playtimes with the head teacher, is a key starting point.

Subjectivation is not an easily traceable process. It is not a singular movement in discourse with a singular outcome but, rather, it is multivalent in its directionality and implications. An individual might inhabit several subject positions simultaneously thus, a pedagogical intervention to alter the course of subjectivation, cannot always be relied upon to create a reinscription that is singular and enduring. Such interventions can perhaps be seen as strategic moves to make existence at school more bearable. My contribution to the discussion about Mary in the data above is perhaps all that was possible for me at that moment, as I attempt to remain legible and recognisable as a teacher. However, there is something problematic about me determining for Mary what will make her school life liveable. Indeed, Butler writes about the difficulty of determining what makes a liveable life (2004, p.226), but suggests that we ask ourselves 'what are our politics such that we are in whatever way possible, both conceptualizing the possibility of the liveable life and arranging for its institutional support?' (ibid). This is interesting in terms of Breanna and Daisy in the data above. In allowing Daisy's comment to slide, both students are afforded liveability in the moment. However, such an approach is not sustainable over time. Neither of these students' lives, nor the lives of many of the students in Oak Class, are liveable at Greenfield Infants in the longer term. As their class teacher, I cannot reconcile and unsettle all the lines of their abjection or, indeed, my own, although, I have a way out whilst the students do not. Pedagogic counter politics that operates to grasp moments of liveability for subjects of schooling on the brink of abjection, is not sustainable in the long term although it is an important strategy for me at key moments during my time at this school. Elsewhere, Butler (2005) writes about the importance of allowing 'the other' to speak an account of themselves, no matter how full of knots, repetitions, ellipsis, gaps and contradictions such accounts may be. When the only options available to Mary are to be 'bad' or 'disturbed', it is difficult to see where she might have space to participate herself in the enactment of discursive agency, to explore for herself the possibility of subject positions that feel both recognisable and liveable. As a teacher, stepping back is not easy for me. Indeed, part of remaining recognisable as a teacher in this space is about maintaining my position of authority yet in order to create space for the students themselves to speak and be heard, to find their own ways of being in the classroom and to exercise some discursive agency, necessitates a disruption of my own normative enactments of teacher. Determining another's

subject position is not only precarious in its potential for recuperation or misfire, it can also be stifling in relation to the life of the other. I am not suggesting I can simply decide to unsettle my own constitution as teacher but I do locate the possibility for a more collective understanding of agency in the process of my subjectivation as year 2 class teacher.

There are, however, other moments where possibilities emerge for myself and the students I teach to enact our subjectivities differently, if even momentarily. Subjectivating processes continue to act upon us and through us but the focus of my politics shifts from trying to intervene in these to processes to participating alongside the students, taking a risk together and waiting to see if we can become something other than, for instance, the naughty school child who has to spend her playtimes writing lines or the teacher compelled to act her place in discourse despite repudiating the disciplinary authority she takes up. The risk I refer to here is not the same for me as it will be for the students, nor will all students experience it similarly. I have particular privilege in the situation as an adult and students' experiences are effected by the extent to which they are already marginalised or not in the class and more widely (depending, for instance on issues such as their racial, gender and class categorisation). Interestingly, these moments of disruption are often ones of temporal-spatial liminality. These times on boundaries and thresholds offer the possibility to glimpse something different, almost as if the unconscious of Oak Class momentarily erupts at these points where the counter lines of space and time meet. Other ways of being and relating playfully bubble up having been pushed under by the tightly regimented practices of the official daily timetable, played out in the official spaces of the classroom, the school hall and the playground. As I mention in the introduction to this chapter, it is during these moments, that the teacher/ student binary can be called into question. I am not suggesting that I can ever step outside of my teacher subjectivity but, rather, the kind of teacher and adult I can be in these times is different.

Playing in the inbetween of the literacy lesson

I read this play that bubbles up in times of spatial-temporal liminality as an act of subversion which can unsettle processes of subjectivation without arriving at the apparent place of stuckness seen in the data above. Butler's questions about viable life are echoed by the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott when he asks in relation to his

patients, 'What makes life worth living?' (1971, p.105). I mention him here because he develops an understanding and appreciation of the importance of play for both children and adults in his text 'Playing and Reality' (1971). He argues that play between people, constitutes a particular intersubjective space which is neither the inner world nor the outer world of the social (ibid. p.115). Bibby (2011) writes about the ways in which play has been relegated to the playground and the nursery within UK state primary schools and points out that this move forecloses possibilities for learning and connection that play can produce. The absence of play from the infant school classrooms in which I work serve to produce particular kinds of students ready to work to the rigid timetables necessary to get through the curriculum content set down. In line with other state primary schools in the UK, from year one onwards at Greenfield, the teachers and students work to rigid timetables which reflect the hierarchy of curriculum subjects in terms of numbers of hours allocated to them and the time in the day in which they are taught. Thus, mornings are given over to Literacy and Numeracy whilst the humanities, science, music, PE and art are taught in afternoons. Yet it is not just that the days are divided into strict segments of time for different activities and subjects, each lesson (especially in the core subjects) is divided into three distinct sections; introduction, main and plenary. At Greenfield, it is considered 'good practice' to also build in mini plenaries in the main part of the lesson to help keep the students on track and to share examples of work that demonstrate evidence of meeting the success criteria. There is little space for playfulness on the part of the children or myself. Earlier I wrote about the precarious position I occupy as both teacher and researcher at Greenfield. Whilst the research remit I set myself in part requires me to explore the extent to which I might unsettle the kinds of normative schooling practices, such as ability setting or behaviour management policies, that reproduce inequalities, in order to maintain my legibility as a class teacher at Greenfield Infants, I inevitably end up enacting aspects of a teacher identity which are at odds with the politics I attempt to pursue. There are moments in which my strategic intervention, on a discursive terrain, alters the trajectory of a particular child for a morning as they avoid classroom exclusion or allows a child to experience themselves as someone who can succeed in completing their maths work rather than someone who always fails. Perceiving a child as someone different from the naughty or failing non-student can throw a lifeline to them; an option of remaining in the classroom, and of remaining a recognisable student. This is an

important and necessary tactic. However, in the discursive move that attempts to reinscribe the wounded identity of the child in an effort to prevent their exclusion, the opportunity for the child to themselves engage in who or how they might want to be is foreclosed and yet again, another set of subjectivating practices ensues whereby I take up my place as teacher with disciplinary authority and attempt to determine who a child can be. I am not suggesting that without my intervention, a child is simply free to 'choose' who to be or that simply because I offer an alternative subject position to take up, the child will do so or will be recognised by others as doing so. But by focusing on the role of the pedagogue (myself) in the enactment of performative reinscription, I remove the possibility of the child attempting to negotiate this for herself or for narratives other than my own to emerge.

Play finds its way into my pedagogic practices in moments of transition and change. It happens spontaneously in corridors as we move from one space in the school to another; in the classroom as we move from carpet to tables or in those off timetable times when a puppet theatre comes to school or even when two morning lessons are used up for a maths test. This is partly to do with my need for legibility as a teacher. In order to be seen, and perhaps to see myself, as a recognisable teacher of year 2, I stick to the timetable as I am supposed to. The introduction, main and plenary of every lesson is typed out in my planning and becomes not just the structure of the lesson but also its physical choreography. My body understands how to perform teacher. It knows where to position itself for the introductory part of a lesson, how to sit at a table with children doing group work and how to refocus the class for the plenary. For people who have been driving a car for a while, the knowledge of how to drive is inscribed in their body so that a hand automatically flicks an indicator as a right turn approaches. And so, as I begin the literacy lesson each day, it is my body that automatically moves to stand in front of the whiteboard or sit in the chair just as the children's bodies seat themselves in front of me, crossed legged on the carpet. Bodily transgressions - a boy lying down, a teacher sitting on the carpet with the children, unless planned for, disrupt the lesson choreography in their refusal of docile compliance. Of course, these bodily inscriptions are never neutral. Again and again, they confer on me particular authoritative power of knowledge and discipline not shared by the students, ensuring, again and again, that I take up my place in discourse as legible class teacher and that the children are legible as a year 2 class of students.

It takes concerted effort to teach my body to do otherwise. When I take schemes of work I am meant to teach and adapt them so that the content troubles the dominant discourses presented in the scheme of work, there is something lost when these ideas are delivered in the form of three part lessons with objectives and success criteria; when my body stands and sits and positions itself at the tables with the children like a teacher. When the curriculum I teach goes through this process, it is made recognisable as something acceptable to be taught within these primary school walls. Yet it is also this that dilutes its impact. Conversely, the sanctity of the three part literacy lesson is troubled by the presence of play yet playing risks placing me outside the bounds of recognisability as teacher. The following excerpt of data occurs at a time of transition in the choreography of the lesson. It is a moment when my body can risk performing teacher differently without jeopardising my legitimacy to the extent it might be if this moment occurred in another part of the lesson.

It is Friday morning and we are in the middle of a literacy lesson. We are coming to the end of the carpet session and I am about to send the children to their tables. We have been retelling the beginning of 'Percy the Park Keeper' by Nick Butterworth (1992). Adam has been finding it difficult to remain focused during the session and has been calling out and poking children around him. He sits with his legs crossed but with his heels underneath him so his knees touch the floor, he rocks back and forth, bobbing up and down, in this position. I have been gently shushing him, telling him to keep still so the children behind him can see and reminding him to put his hand up, none of which have been particularly effective. I've been resisting issuing warnings and threats of having to work alone in the parallel classroom (as the behaviour management policy states). After reiterating the retelling task and establishing the 'success criteria' with the children, I send them off to work. There is a bit of noise as children get themselves into groups and move to the tables. Adam is sitting at the front of the carpet and is telling me he cannot be bothered to do this activity and that it is boring. He begins making faces and making noises. He puts a finger in each corner of his mouth and pulls his fingers in opposite directions, he sticks out his tongue, wagging it around and opens his eyes

big and wide. I ask him to calm down. He continues. I then move from my chair on to the carpet with him. I sit crossed legged, facing him. Some other boys are sitting nearby. The rest of the class have gone to the tables to do their retelling. Adam puffs out his cheeks. I copy him, puffing out my cheeks too. He and the other boys become immediately quiet, then begin to laugh. I keep watching Adam. Adam makes another face at me, this time pulling his lower eyelids down and poking his tongue out of the corner of his mouth. Again, I copy him. The other children watch intently. Again, Adam makes a face at me, sticking his tongue out straight and screwing his nose up. I copy what he does. This time he stops. He is quiet. I ask if he feels like doing the activity. He shakes his head. I ask if he would like to retell the story with Wesley (the class wolf puppet). He agrees, enthusiastically. I send the other boys off to their tables to do their retelling and Adam remains on the carpet with Wesley. He remains engaged in his retelling of the story and by the end of the session is keen to share his retelling of 'Percy the Park Keeper' with the rest of the class.

LT, field notes, May, 2012

Adam and I play together in the middle of a literacy lesson. Neither of us are performing recognisable year 2 student or teacher here. This is a move which prevents Adam's exclusion from the group or the task but it is also one that risks my own exclusion. This feels different to the political tactics deployed in the first two data excerpts I discuss. I, momentarily at least, stop performing teacher as I have been doing and also stop requiring Adam to perform year 2 student. We play a face copying game together, on the carpet when he is supposed to be engaged in his task of retelling the story. I follow his lead and copy the faces he makes. I enact a different teacher subjectivity here, perhaps calling into question what it means to be 'teacher' in this space. I do not follow the behaviour management policy which states that I need to issue warnings and time outs if a child does not comply with my requests. I give further attention to a child who has been disruptive. Rather than surveying the class, making sure they are settling down quietly or going to work with the group I have allocated myself to work with, I have placed myself on the carpet where I cannot properly see the class. My body is doing the opposite of normative teacher by sitting

crossed legged on the carpet opposite Adam. The making of silly faces within the literacy lesson seemingly has nothing to do with the story retelling task, although I am engaging in a retelling of the visual story he is telling me. My shushing and instructing of Adam during the carpet session does constitute him as the disruptive student. The way he raises himself up higher than the other students by sitting on his heels, his calling out and his eventual rejection of the task as boring contravene the classroom requirements of neat, cross legged bodies, compliant in their physicality and commitment to the task set. To remain in this classroom, as a recognisable school student, it seems that the notion of recognisability needs troubling or that Adam needs to shift categories from 'naughty' to something else. The political move being made here does not ask for this flailing, unruly body to be included in the choreography of the lesson. Indeed, there is no attempt by me here to discursively shift Adam from one subject position to another. Engaging playfully with Adam by copying the faces he makes at me is an attempt to indicate to him that I see him. Whilst I do eventually ask him to take part in the story retelling with everyone else, requiring he act out his proper place in this classroom scene, I do not insist he takes up a subject position I determine for him. Rather, we become something different in our game. We are not abject in our refusal of proper teacher/ student subjectivities in this moment but neither are we completely recognisable as a proper teacher and student.

Liminality and collective agency

I turn now to another example of the playfulness and questioning of the teacher/ student binary that can occur in the spatial-temporal liminality of the school day. The following account details my administration of a numeracy test to Oak Class and the events that follow. I will look more closely here at the concepts of power, resistance and this notion of collective agency that I begin to discuss in relation to the 'mirroring silly faces' data above.

Due to the expected arrival of Ofsted this half term, the head teacher has asked all teachers to assess the children at the beginning of the half term as opposed to the end. Claire (the deputy head and my job share partner) drops off the pile of photocopied tests on Wednesday afternoon and advises me to get them finished by Friday. The next day I arrange with

Diane, to take a small group of children in to the ICT suite to complete the assessment. These are children who I anticipate will have trouble reading the test. Diane can read out each question one at a time for the children. I will keep the rest in the classroom. I decide not to rearrange the tables for the test. As a group of children are completing the test in the ICT room, the children left in the classroom can spread out a bit anyway. The papers for each test have been paper clipped together. I realise as I am handing out the tests to the children that this is problematic: Their paperclips will come off, the children will break them, their pages will get muddled... But it is too late to staple the pages now. 'Your pages are paper-clipped together,' I explain to the children, 'try to leave your paper clips on and just turn over the pages. If your paperclips come off, make sure you keep your pages together.' We begin the assessment. I am rushing around trying to read questions for children, shushing them, asking them to lift their heads from the desks, reassuring ones who are crying that it is ok as long as they have a go, it doesn't matter, leave out questions that are too tricky... I realise that we have not covered many of the topics in the test and also that some of the graph questions have not photocopied properly and are, therefore, impossible to answer. The experience thus far is unpleasant for me and worse for the children. For the majority of the children, this test is not appropriate for their level of reading or understanding. After school, I try to sort out the papers. My attempt at stapling does not work as there is no stapler big enough to staple all the sheets together so I gather each child's collection of pages (most of them out of order with some sheets upside down), collate them and put the paper clips back on. The next day we continue with the assessments. More tears, more talking, more stress. Adam sits with his head in his hands, looking defeated; Dillon is flicking bits of broken paper clip across the desk; Mary expresses how much she hates the test. I make the children keep going until 10.30 (play time is at 10.45). Mrs Hills (a specialist teaching assistant from the speech and language unit, in the classroom to assist three children who integrate for numeracy lessons) leaves at 10.30 because she is on playground duty and needs to have her break. I stop the class. I have a strong desire to suggest they rip

up their papers (which have again become all muddled, out of order, upside down) if they want to but something stops me. What if the head walks in? What if I am asked to hand in the papers? So, instead of ripping up the papers, I ask the children to come on to the carpet. I draw a face on the board with stars for eyes and a wobbly mouth. 'I feel a bit like this about these assessments,' I explain, 'do any of you feel a bit like this?' Lots of children nod and put their hands up. 'How do they make you feel?' I ask. 'Stupid,' answers Adam. Some of the girls, Katy, Charlotte and Adriana, shake their heads. 'No,' says Katy, 'the tests were good.' 'Really?' I ask her, 'I feel very mean for making you do them when we haven't even learnt some of the topics and the pages haven't photocopied. I write the word 'stupid' next to the face. 'What else did the tests make you feel? You can call out...'. The children, including Katy, Charlotte and Adriana, begin calling out, and I write their words around the face on the board.... Dumb, worried, bored, boring, terrified, like crying, crap, worried, blah blah blah, rubbish, difficult, like screaming... There is some concern about my writing the word 'crap' on the board. 'You can't write that,' says Mary, 'that's a bad word.' 'Is it?' I ask. 'Yes,' says Mary, 'a swear word.' 'Oh,' I say, 'well, I think this test is a bad test so maybe it deserves a bad word...' Adam nods saying 'yeah, it does deserve a bad word.' We read the words aloud together, ending on the phrase about screaming. 'Who feels like going outside to scream?' I ask. 'Yeah' say the children. I send them groups at a time to get their coats on and we go out to play early, screaming. I realise that I have left the face and the words on the board in the classroom but I decide I don't care. Mrs Barry (a teaching assistant who is on playground duty with me) is coming back from her fag break, past the playground (I have stopped joining in the running around and screaming and am chatting to some children now). She looks at her watch, pointedly. 'Are you early or am I late?' she asks. 'Don't worry,' I say, 'We're out early, we just finished a numeracy assessment.' 'Ah, that's your fault if you get cold then,' she says, 'if you bring them out early.' 'I think I'll be fine,' I reply. Diane comes out with a bowl of bananas and her group. 'Did you come out early?' she asks. 'Yeah,' I say, 'we couldn't cope with any more test questions.' 'Oh dear,' she replies, rolling

her eyes. Soon lots of the children have bananas and are leaping around pretending to be monkeys. I pretend to be a monkey too which makes the children laugh. I find myself stopping as the other teachers and teaching assistants bring their classes out to play. When I come back to school the following week (I work at the end of the week), Claire informs me that she marked the tests but did not get accurate results so the class redid them with her.

LT, field notes, April, 2012

This data depicts acts of resistance yet disciplinary power pushes back and mapping where my agency emerges as class teacher is difficult. I will first explore the way in which resistance and disciplinary power can be seen to operate simultaneously in this data excerpt before engaging with the difficult issue of agency and subjectivity in relation to both the students and myself as pedagogue. The decision by senior staff at the school to administer the tests at the beginning of the half term due to the impending Ofsted inspection is a move that suggests anxiety about teachers' abilities to accurately report on the progress of students and anxiety about the students' abilities to make progress. This imposition of, in Foucauldian terms, a regime of control is in response to an, at least perceived, resistance to the tracking of student progress and to learning itself. The resistance here is not necessarily conscious nor is it clear whether the teachers would have had trouble reporting on student progress yet its perceived presence by members of the senior management team precede the implementation of control. When asked to administer the tests, I comply unquestioningly yet there is resistance from the students almost immediately in the form of bodily protestations: Heads are placed on desks, hands cover faces, tears fall on test booklets. There is no verbal expression of refusal to comply here but the students' affective responses, displayed corporeally, demonstrate their despondency. Power pushes back however in my insistence that the tests are continued the following day. It is as if a pendulum swings between power and resistance here; as if these two forces act through the subjects that seem to exert them. The chatter of the students gets louder, their gestures of frustration and despair more marked and their demands for help with questions increase. It is at this point, however, that the situation changes as I intervene in a way that is more supportive to the students.

The agency in this scene operates collectively. Together, the students and I acknowledge our feelings of ambivalence, alienation, humiliation and anger regarding the test. My move to make explicit what has been unspoken is a result of perceiving the already existing resistance from the students and to becoming aware of my own sense of hopelessness about this test. My intervention does not mark the beginning of resistance towards the test and what it symbolises but, rather, the resistance already being practiced by the students allows me to find a space to act with intention in a way that can further resist the constitutive force of the test. The agency enacted here, then, is not all my own and does not derive solely from me but my position of authority as class teacher allows me to take up this agency and use it to open up a conversation with the students about their affective responses to the test. Elsewhere I write about the importance of the pedagogic relationship to performative politics in the classroom (see chapter 6). The move I make here is one of collaboration and aims to provide the students with a way to voice their own experience and also a way for me to acknowledge the part I play in their distress. The timing of this intervention is significant, coming once there are no other adults apart from myself in the room. There is cooptation to this seemingly more explicit rejection of the test.

I experience ambivalence towards my own subjectivity as class teacher throughout these events. The pull towards recognisability as an acceptable teacher remains and I never risk this being called into question. Indeed, to do so would potentially involve risking my job. I do not refuse to administer the tests to the class, even after the difficulties they encounter and the problems I spot with the test during the first session, but keep going, almost as if paying lip service to the testing procedure, until it feels safe enough to do otherwise. Interestingly, however, the resistance that happens here is very recognisably pedagogic and teacher led in that I gather the children on the carpet whilst I sit on a chair and write on the whiteboard. This is the everyday stuff of schooling: the hierarchies of adult/ child, teacher/ student inscribed in where and how we sit as well as in who gives the instructions. The students' resistance earlier in the data excerpt was in response to the test but also to me, as their teacher making them complete the test. In a way, this apparently more collective and collaborative move, also allows me to take authority back. It is at once radical in its encouragement of explicit critique of the test and banal in its adherence to the everyday practices of teaching and learning with their hierarchies of power which

perpetuate, rather than challenge, schooling inequalities. Whilst putting into words the complex affective responses of the students might validate their feelings and help to shift their understanding from themselves as poor learners to the test as a problematic test, the force of the affective response expressed corporeally is lost at this point. This shift from the student as problematic to the test as problematic is potentially significant in terms of the students' understanding of themselves and is where discursive agency finds a place to operate within the broader to and fro movements between power and resistance. Leaving the classroom enables the students and myself to recapture some of the force of the feeling from earlier in the lesson with relief and joy being expressed in the running, screaming and monkey impersonations. Whilst these moments fade as the other classes come out for playtime, our resistance to the test endures in the crossed out answers, unfinished questions and muddled pages of the assessment booklets as well as in the image of the wobbly mouthed face with the responses to the test around it. Unsurprisingly, however, disciplinary power pushes back in the deputy head's insistence on the tests being redone in her numeracy lessons at the beginning of the following week.

This data excerpt reveals the very complex process of enacting radical politics in the state school classroom. I am ambivalent about my own subject position as teacher throughout the events depicted in the data above – neither completely complying with what I am required to do by my school nor eschewing it altogether. This tightrope walk is necessary in order to remain recognisable enough as a class teacher so not to, in an extreme case, lose my job, or more likely, invite further scrutiny of my practice from senior management which would make further political action more difficult. Furthermore, the agency I have is limited and certainly does not derive solely from me. Indeed, there is something collective about the agency that produces resistance across the students' corporeal demonstrations of despair at the test; in their reinscription of themselves as bad to the test as bad; and in the running and screaming we take to the playground. As with the 'Mirroring Silly Faces' data episode I discuss earlier, I cannot step outside my teacher subjectivity here but the liminality between the end of the test and the rest of the school coming on to the playground, creates a space in which the students and I can relate differently to each other. The deputy head insists on the redoing of the tests but the difficult to challenge teacher/ student, adult/

child binaries have been troubled and it is the traces of such troubling that remain as we shift back into the times and spaces of the official teaching and learning.

Conclusion

I have drawn upon four excerpts of data to discuss moments of stuckness and the disruptions that emerge in times of spatial-temporal liminality. I am not suggesting that this is a solution to the difficulties of the impasses sometimes experienced when engaging in performative politics. However, it perhaps offers another way of engaging in counter politics in the classroom and of disrupting exclusionary practices without insisting a child comply with demands from the pedagogue that they take up another subject position. Play erupts in the classroom in moments where there are gaps in the structure. It directly challenges the status quo and is important in the way it hints at the possibility of different ways of relating and being in the classroom. It is also these moments of spatial-temporal liminality where discursive agency seems to be enacted more collaboratively due to me having the space to let go of some of my authority as teacher. This is significant because, as I argue throughout this thesis, one of the most difficult binaries to disrupt in the classroom is that of teacher/ student.

8. Conclusions: Sustainable counter politics in education and spaces of collective resistance

I have explored the possibilities and limitations of taking up performative politics to interrupt the everyday production of inequalities in the classroom. Whilst the politics I enact at Greenfield Infants are in direct response to the events that unfold in Oak Class and the school over the period of time I am there, as well as my experiences of the school, the theorisations I produce of these moments of disruption, interruption and challenge, as well as the times of silence, stuckness and seeming impasse, have relevance beyond this place. I argue that the politics I pursue are radical despite being focused on micro moments in the classroom and school. Indeed, I cannot, for instance, claim to have significantly shifted discourses of racism at the school nor can I claim to have achieved greater gender equality. What I did attempt to make possible however, were ways to make life at this site more liveable for the children I taught over the course of the year I taught them. This meant that children who might otherwise have been sent out of the classroom remained included, narratives usually silenced made their way on to the official curriculum, despite difficulties we encountered around the speakability of these narratives, and the regime of standardised testing was openly challenged in order to transfer the idea of failure from the children to the test. These small moments are important in shifting the parameters of who and how it is possible to be in the classroom at any given moment. Such political work, however, involves risking my own intelligible subjectivity at this site. Indeed, this is one of the key difficulties encountered in this work: How to remain a legible teaching subject whilst disrupting the very discourses that constitute me as this subject? This paradox is not resolvable but I have tried to indicate the ways in which it permeates my practice at all times. I cannot step out of neo-liberal education policy and its enactment at Greenfield Infants. I enact counter politics from within my pedagogic practice which is, in part, produced via neo-liberal discourses. Thus, the counter in the counter politics I pursue is not so much in direct opposition to these discourses, but, rather, disruptive from the inside. Sometimes the disruption I attempt does trouble discourses, does shift what it is possible to say in the classroom yet at other times it does not, or I am not yet able to articulate the effects. Yet these times of impossibility are just as important in furthering our understanding of counter politics.

The emotional labour of sustaining compassion for the students I teach in a system that actively undermines the importance of pedagogic relationships is hard, as is the continual uncertainty of pursuing counter politics that risks my professional teacher identity. Whilst I build alliances with other staff where possible at Greenfield, the isolation of doing this political work as an individual teacher, is not easy and, indeed, not sustainable, in isolation, in the long term. My main collaborators in this project, are, in fact, the students I teach. This thesis deliberately foregrounds my perceptions and experiences as a class teacher engaged in counter political work as I want to provide space for these reflections which are not so often articulated. However, in so doing, I again reinscribe my privileged position as teacher. In chapter 7, I explore the way in which the enactment of counter politics develops via an agency that is collective and co-created between myself and the students. This does not eliminate the power dynamics, but it does allow a different pedagogical relation to form and demonstrates the importance of the students' own counter political practices. It is the collective action in the flight from the classroom, described in the previous chapter, that I hold in my mind as I consider other spaces for collective resistance and counter politics in education. My work in this thesis speaks to these different movements in providing ways to consider, in detail, the politics of the interventions being practiced. Whilst Greenfield Infants can seem aberrant in its violent practices, especially in the first two terms I teach there, there are many schools in the UK in similarly uncertain positions as the threat of closure and/ or academisation hangs over them. The precise episodes and the pedagogic politics I detail here are specific to this site but my theorisation of them has relevance to institutions, practices and educational counter politics elsewhere.

Speaking back, walking out, creating a different educational future

The term 'unschooling' was first used in the 1970s by educational philosopher, John Holt. Holt argues that the process of being schooled has the effect of making children less able to learn. 'The anxiety children feel at constantly being tested, their fear of failure, punishment, and disgrace,' states Holt, 'severely reduces their ability both to perceive and to remember, and drives them away from the material being studied into strategies for fooling teachers into thinking they know what they really don't know' (1983, p.10). Educational practices informed by a philosophy of

unschooling foreground the idea that children can and will learn autonomously, if allowed to. This does not mean in isolation but, rather, in a way that is not directed by adults. Unschooling has always been counter to the mainstream and has been a bigger phenomenon in the US, where parental rights to choose the kind of education provided for their child are given a bigger precedent, than in the UK. However, interestingly, communities of unschoolers have begun to grow in the UK since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010 (Lees 2014, p.3). Indeed, since becoming a mother myself, during the writing up of this thesis, I have been considering unschooling as a form of counter politics from the outside, as opposed to the counter politics from the inside I pursue at Greenfield Infants. The following excerpt is from some reflections I wrote up after an unschooling meet up I attend with my daughter in the summer of 2014.

It is two years since I completed my fieldwork at Greenfield Infants. I am in a children's playground with my one year old daughter. The sun is shining. Around us are parents and children, more than twenty families, here, like us, because of a meet-up organised on facebook for families interested in unschooling. This is not an event we have travelled far to attend. The location is local to us. Some of these families live within a few streets of where we do. Other such meet-ups and facebook groups exist for other areas across London. As I observe my daughter ascending the slide, I am discussing institutional racism and the rise of academies with two mothers who are both unschooling their school aged children. Later, on a picnic rug, I am discussing the possibilities of rethinking who children can be when we remove the constraints of 'ability setting'. The oldest children here are eight and the youngest are babies. We realise that, in this space, nobody is a 'low ability child': the language does not make sense here. These are not all middle class parents with high incomes. The demographic of this group is perhaps not completely representative of the area in which we live but we are not homogenous in terms of our class backgrounds and racial identities. What brings us together, in our diversity, is having arrived at a place where we no longer tolerate the school system available to us and our children.

This space and others I have been encountering, participating in and co-producing, ever since, are deeply counter political. The parents I meet understand the politics of the system and oppose them by stepping out of the system to create educational spaces underpinned by completely different sets of values. The numbers of families rejecting schooling for their children, whilst still very small, is increasing. Indeed, an article in the Croydon Advertiser reports that the number of children being home educated in the borough has doubled in the past five years. They include an interview with a mother who decided not to enrol her son in the local primary school who states, "I did not know anything about home education before I had Harrison, I knew I wanted to fund his interests though and I didn't like the way schools tell children what they have to learn" (Booth 2015).

My reflections, above, detail aspects of my first encounter with other, so-called, unschooling families. Whilst organised meet-ups via facebook can seem transient in terms of the establishment of more permanent communities, there are families who are renting spaces together (for instance, church halls, scout huts, community centres, areas of woodland) in a commitment to establishing and sustaining educational communities. Whilst groups across the country differ in terms of their approach to funding themselves, they are generally not applying to be free-schools as such attempts to do so have often proved unsuccessful (Lees 2014). In order to make the decision to home school or unschool, parents do need to be in certain positions of privilege in terms of time and economics and it is certainly not an option open to everyone. I am not suggesting here that home education and unschooling communities are the only possible forms of resistance. Rather, I am highlighting the increasing numbers of families indicating their resistance by stepping out of the system to create an alternative education.

Yet as some parents and educators work to establish communities outside the schooling system, the 'Slow Education' movement, taking its name from the 'Slow Food' movement, is aiming to transform schools from the inside. A small team of teachers and educationalists, led by Professor Maurice Holt, are facilitating networking amongst schools who are interested in creating deeper learning experiences for students than the current regimes of testing allow. According to the beliefs and visions of the Slow Education movement in the UK, as outlined on their website, they perceive Slow Education to be 'about process: we believe *how* children learn is as important as

targets and tests'. They also state that 'the quality of the educational engagement between teacher and learner is more important than judging student ability by standardised tests'. Schools and teachers are supported to develop curricula that are broad and rich, where teachers are facilitators and where students learn to problem solve and initiate their own learning (Holt 2015). This movement is a response to regimes and testing in schools and a commitment to learning with real purpose, rather than a direct attempt to disrupt educational inequalities. However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, regimes of testing and pupil tracking against National Curriculum levels, actively work to produce inequality. What is really interesting about Slow Education in the UK is that there are a group of people who actively support teachers in schools to do this work and also facilitate networking between schools. I am interested here in the potential for collaboration between teachers that is enabled by this movement which, in itself, is important in a system that individualises pedagogic practice. There has been very little written about Slow Schooling aside from articles in the press but I am very interested in how schools negotiate inspection and statutory assessment whilst pursuing an alternative vision of the purpose of education and in how we might make sense of student and teacher subjectivities in such schools.

As I find ways to practice education in ways that feel liveable, indeed, pleasurable and inspiring and sustainable, I hold in my mind the students of Oak Class with whom I struggled to find liveable moments in an environment which was crushing. As I stated in the introductory chapter to this thesis, Greenfield Infants is a school on the outside and on the edge: situated at the edge of an estate which is on the edge of a borough on the edge of London but, most of all, on the edge of abjection. I left this place in which I barely felt recognisable to myself, having had my sense of what it means to be a primary school teacher turned upside down by the shouting, shaming and chaos that surrounded me. The students I taught during that year are still there. And they haven't got a way out as the most recent budget of the, now, Conservative, government plunges them and their families into further poverty. Stepping out of the system, articulating my criticism of it and, when I have the energy, spitting out my utter rage at the injustice, amongst people who feel similarly, online and in real life, is crucial to me in maintaining momentum yet it is not enough on its own. In rejecting the education system that further marginalises children living in places such as the Orchard Estate, we must be careful not to reject these children themselves. As I have

shown throughout this thesis, the struggle from within the system is hard. Yet there continue to be direct challenges to government education policy by networks of teachers and academics opposed to continued changes towards privatisation, increasing expectations of pupil achievement in areas such as grammar, spelling and mental arithmetic, and the further undermining of teachers' professional autonomy.

The National Union of Teachers have set up a campaign group, 'Stand Up for Education' (2015) which includes academics and researchers as well as classroom teachers. As the government revises the National Curriculum and expectations for students in schools and makes increasing demands on the profession, teachers and academics are feeling an increasingly urgent need to speak out and expose the lack of evidence for the changes being made. As part of the campaign, academics and initial teacher educators have produced a pamphlet entitled 'Reclaiming Schools: The evidence and the arguments' (NUT 2015) which provides an accessible and concise engagement with current governmental changes to the education system. The pamphlet offers evidence based in academic research literature to counter the claims being made by government ministers regarding, for instance, the suggestion that universities are not important in initial teacher training or that punitive inspection regimes raise standards. Again, what is interesting about this campaign is the way it can bring people together to resist the unrealistic demands made of teachers and students. Michael Apple (2006) writes about the important role academics can play as secretaries to teachers engaged in critical pedagogies on the ground. He argues that academics can use their positions to provide platforms for the voices and work of these teachers. Whilst this NUT campaign may not have enabled the kind of collaboration to which Apple refers, it is a starting point and has the potential to support teachers in sustaining work on the ground.

I have already mentioned Facebook in terms of the role it plays in facilitating families interested in unschooling to locate each other and to sustain the communities they build. Social media also has an important function in engaging those involved in education in counter politics online. Voices of dissent in the form of articles, performance poetry, memes and letters, to name but a few, spread quickly. For instance, Jess Green's (2014) performance poem, 'Dear Mr Gove', challenging, amongst other issues, the changes to the National Curriculum and also the working conditions of teachers, has received hundreds of thousands of hits on YouTube, being

shared and reposted multiple times on Facebook and Twitter. Similarly, Disidealist, a blogger who also writes for The Guardian about education policy, wrote a post in April 2015 entitled 'Mediocre Failures' which received 300,000 views in just one day (Schools Week, 2015). The post is a response to David Cameron's announcement that a 'zero-tolerance' approach will be taken to 'failure and mediocrity' through a new policy to ensure that children who do not reach level 4 in their SATs tests will be made to resit the examinations in secondary school. Disidealist explains why his adopted children are not able to excel academically and why such a policy is so unfair for so many children, including his own. The children's author and former children's laureate, Michael Rosen, keeps himself informed with education policy and practice in schools, using his platform to offer important critiques of the current system, from himself and others. The significance of blog posts, YouTube videos and Facebook pages such as the ones I mention here, is that they present an immediate and accessible challenge to Coalition and Conservative government education policy. They have the potential to reach teachers who feel isolated in their classrooms and provide a point of connection. They are not enough on their own, but they are an important part of current counter political debates in education.

Whilst none of the examples I have discussed here, can, on their own, completely subvert current education policy and practice, when considered together, they indicate significant, and in some cases, increasingly organised, dissent. For me, the importance is to honour and work with the collective whilst pursuing counter politics on a micro level in the classroom. The micro-politics about which I write in this thesis have the potential to be sustained via my engagement with collectivities of dissenting voices. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) take up the notion of 'critical agency' in their discussion of politics. They explore the self as always in relation to the other, despite the sense of sovereign agency the self might experience. 'And so we take up the question of how to become disposed of the sovereign self,' they write, 'and enter into forms of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession that systematically jettison populations from modes of collective belonging and justice' (ibid, xi). To keep engaging with the collective, recognising ourselves as always already constituted in the social, as always in relation to an other, is to undercut the neo-liberal concept of the self. Finding ways to connect the micro political practices of the classroom to wider

collective practices is always a challenge but it is to this space of connection I turn as I end this thesis and think forward to future possibilities for counter political pedagogy.

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Appendix 1: Example of letter sent to schools

Dear

I am an experienced primary teacher and have worked for 5 years in permanent classroom teaching posts in London. I have particular expertise in literacy and EAL teaching as well as in issues of equality and diversity in relation to schooling. I am creative and am able to produce my own schemes of work from the National Curriculum objectives and also to use and adapt work schemes from, for instance, the QCA or National Strategies. I have taught large classes across key stages 1 and 2, with children of diverse abilities and backgrounds. Both my teaching and behaviour management are excellent and I have never achieved below a grading of 'good' on Ofsted lesson observation criteria. In addition to my class teaching responsibilities, I have been the coordinator for EAL and equalities. This involved me developing and implementing policies, leading a working party, managing a budget and running staff training on these issues. Currently a doctoral student at the Institute of Education, University of London, I am looking for a part time teaching post (ideally one or two days per week) to begin in September. The full time masters programme which I am completing this year meant that I was unable to continue in my previous teaching post but from September onwards, my study hours will be more flexible so I would like to combine my PhD work with a teaching post which will enable me to continue to develop my classroom skills. Please find enclosed my current CV.

If a part time position becomes available in your school, I would be grateful if you could consider me. I would be happy to accept a fixed term or permanent contract, or, if available, work on a more ad-hoc basis. Please do get in contact if you would like some more information about my past teaching experience or if you would like me to fill out a specific application form.

Yours sincerely

Laura Teague

Appendix 2: Research information leaflet for schools

An Action Research Project Investigating Issues of Equality and Diversity in the classroom

An Information Leaflet for Schools

This leaflet is designed to give you some background information about my research project.

What is the purpose of the Research?

In the past decade, requirements on schools to address issues of inequality have increased significantly. Research has been carried out on the impact of this for schools and, more generally, on schooling inequalities. However, there is not yet any research on the ways in which issues of inequality are manifested in an individual classroom and how an individual class teacher might intervene in these. I will use myself and my classroom practices to analyse this as part of my PhD research, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

What is my past experience?

I qualified as a primary teacher in 2006 and have worked full time in London schools since then, taking on the responsibilities of EAL and equalities coordinators in my past post. I have also participated in a nationwide ESRC funded action research project, lasting three years. This focused on issues of gender equality and I used my classroom and practices as the focus of my research. As a member of the research team for this project, I received the British Education Research Association 'research into practice' award. I have a Masters in Educational Research Methods in which I have learnt about different research approaches and have focused, in particular, on action research.

What will my research mean for your school?

I will carry out all the usual duties of a classroom teacher, no different from any other teacher in the school. The only difference will be that I will be particularly reflecting on issues of equality. I will constantly review my pedagogic practices and make changes in order to try to alter outcomes in a particular situation (for instance, disputes over football at playtime) or raise students' critical awareness (for example, through the teaching of history or even mathematics). My research does not have to have any impact on the wider school community. However, I am happy to discuss my research findings or background research more formally, through staff meetings or briefings, or informally, through chats in the staffroom. I am also happy to input into equalities policies and action plans or review curriculum materials in relation to issues of equality.

What is action research?

Action research is a research methodology often used by teachers in school settings to reflect upon and improve their own teaching practices. It follows a cycle which involves reflection and evaluation as well as the implementation of new practices.

My research questions:

- How do the everyday practices inside my classroom (such as lining up arrangements, groupings, procedures for answering questions, behaviour management) contribute to the marginalisation of particular children or groups of children?
- What can be done to change this?
- How are issues of in/equality taught through curriculum subjects?
- How can this teaching be improved whilst continuing to meet National Curriculum objectives?

What kinds of data will I collect and how will it be used?

I will keep a research journal that focuses on my classroom and my practices. My notes in my journal will be written up and then a selection will eventually be used in my PhD and academic articles, with full anonymity of the school and any other staff or students mentioned. This will form the main part of my data collection. Of further interest will be school policies concerning equalities issues, examples of my own planning and also examples of students' work, for lessons I have taught. I am happy to negotiate access to these document by document, however, and do not expect agreement at this stage.

Issues of Ethics

In line with the Economic and Social Research Ethics guidelines, the name and location of the school will be changed to protect its identity as will the names of any students or other practitioners I write about. I will not include any visual images (photographs or videos) in my work. At this stage, I do not intend to use any audio recordings but, if this should change, I will consult with school senior management first. I am happy to discuss my research findings with any member of the school community as I am conducting the action research or after it has finished. The school will have the right to withdraw from the project at any point and I will be happy to continue in any teaching post I have without continuing with the research.

Appendix 3: Remembrance Day planning

Year 2 Autumn 2: History – Remembrance Day

Main Learning Objectives	Activities	Key Questions
<p>(Monday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognise the symbol of the poppy • To understand some reasons why people wear poppies • To learn about life for a soldier in WW1 	<p>Show chn images of poppies and people wearing them from Oxford History powerpoint or elsewhere (eg: British legion website or big book on remembrance). Do you recognise these? What are they? Do you know why people wear them? Why do you remember things?</p> <p>Explain that people wear poppies now to remember people who fought and died in WW1. Place WW1 on timeline and discuss in relation to time periods they know (Victorians and now). Talk briefly about the causes of WW1 (the shooting of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria by a Serbian freedom fighter – some leaders of countries supported Austria but others supported Romania – lots of countries got involved). Show chn pictures of WW1 and talk about the fields and trenches where fighting took place. Discuss who went to fight and what it might have been like for them to leave their homes and families. Discuss what life would have been like in the trenches – thought shower descriptive words and phrases. Model writing descriptive letter from soldier to family about life in trenches.</p> <p>Chn write letter from soldier to family.</p> <p>Less able to complete using writing frame. All chn to have word bank.</p>	<p>Why do people wear poppies?</p> <p>What was WW1? Why did people fight?</p> <p>How did it feel to live in the trenches?</p>
<p>(Tuesday)</p>	<p>PE – sports coach (year 2 planning time)</p>	

<p>(Wednesday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ICT to find out facts about Remembrance Day/ WW1 	<p>Chn to use fronter to find out facts about remembrance day.</p>	<p>What did you find out? Is there anything that surprised you?</p>
<p>(Thursday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand reasons why some people did not fight in WW1 • Think about the reasons for and against war and decide what they would have done 	<p>Discuss what children have learnt about Remembrance Day on Monday and Wednesday. Recap on who went to fight in the war, what the experience might have been like for them and what it might have been like for their families left behind. Explain to the children that not everyone went to fight even though the government and other people told them to. Discuss the term 'conscientious objector' and what it might have been like to have refused to fight in the war and what often happened to conscientious objectors. Do a conscience alley with one side giving reasons to go to fight in the war and the other side giving reasons not to. Ask the children what they would do. Chn write what they would do if they were asked to fight in a war. Provide writing frames and word banks.</p>	<p>What were the reasons people went to fight? What reasons did people have for refusing to fight in the war? What happened to them?</p>
<p>(Friday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss different ways to remember people who have died as a result of war 	<p>Show chn clip of remembrance day event on youtube. Explain that there are lots of events like this being held in the country this Sunday. Talk about the different ways people remember (alone, with family, with a bigger group of people), wearing red poppies, wearing white poppies, not wearing a poppy at all. Discuss how people might remember at other times as well and that's ok too. Chn write message to someone or about someone they would like to remember (it doesn't have to be someone who has died, it could be someone they don't see anymore or a pet or a simply a particular memory they want to remember). Make memory wall in class in reflection area.</p>	<p>What different ways do people remember those who have died in war? Who/ what would you like to remember? How will you remember?</p>