Negotiations of Power and Resistance: A spatial exploration of educational policy and practice with particular attention to the stories surrounding the learning and teaching of Gypsy/Traveller children

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Abstract

The educational underachievement of Gypsy/Traveller children was first identified in the late 1960s. Yet subsequent government reports and other sources from the mid-1980s through to the 2000s continue to emphasise the significant educational ‘underachievement’ of children from these communities. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by considering why nothing much seems to have changed for these children for over fifty years. It does this by exploring the distinctive relationship between these children’s particular lifeways and the educational structure of schooling in England.

The theoretical aim of this work is to consider the lived experience within the context of spatial theory. By deploying a spatial ‘lens’ to analyse the schooling situation faced by Gypsy/Traveller communities, this thesis makes a further significant contribution to knowledge. Space and place are being reconceptualised, particularly within the social sciences, in order to help make sense of the power relations implicit within contemporary capitalist society. However, educational enquiry has only recently begun to embrace this ‘spatial turn’ and this thesis therefore offers an original empirical insight into this developing field of investigation.

The work finds that some teachers and some schools are able to adapt dominant cultural practices in order to accommodate Gypsy/Traveller children. However, many schools find this difficult to achieve due to tension between the cultural norms and expectations associated with the dominant cultural norm of Sedentarism and those of Nomadism, which continues to be a strong cultural characteristic of many Gypsy/Traveller communities. A further finding highlights how community encouragement for the adoption of strict gender roles at a young age is also at the heart of the ‘problem’ of educational underachievement, as some parents restrict access to schooling beyond primary education. Despite this, it was found that, for some girls, schooling proved to provide a space in which to challenge the gender norms of their communities. There is limited literature relating to issues of gender and the schooling of Gypsy/Traveller children, and this work offers an empirical insight into this developing field of enquiry.
Chapter One

Introduction

The problem to solve here is the lack of adaptation by Traveller children to school and also the lack of adaptation of schools to Traveller children. (ACERT, 1993:24)

The educational ‘underachievement’ of Gypsy/Traveller children was first identified in the late 1960s. The inability of children from these communities to read and write due to a lack of schooling became a major concern (Cudworth, 2009). As a result, a number of different policy initiatives and support mechanisms were pursued to address these concerns. These initially included support in the form of summer schools of voluntary teachers teaching children and adults on Gypsy/Traveller sites (Cemlyn et al. 2009). Later, local education authority provision came in the form of qualified teachers visiting sites in mobile caravans. Finally, with an emphasis on ‘multiculturalism’ and inclusion during the 1990s a network of Traveller Education Services were set up to support the enrolment of Gypsy/Traveller children in mainstream classrooms (Derrington & Kendall, 2007). Yet, despite this support and policy initiatives, government reports and other sources from the mid-1980s through to the 2000s have continued to emphasise the significant educational ‘underachievement’ of children from these communities (Cemlyn et al. 2009).
In order to investigate why very little seems to have changed for these children in relation to school ‘achievement’, this thesis engages with literature which suggests that part of the ‘problem’ is related to the historical formation of a Sedentarised society and the subsequent demonization of nomadism and a nomadic way of life (see chapter two). The relationship here with education is that schooling in England involves children being settled in one place and attending the same school for each stage of schooling. This is to ensure that children and young people remain ‘on track’ to achieve a particular educational trajectory that will ultimately prepare them for access to university at the age of 18-19, i.e. good SATs results at Key Stage (KS) 1 and 2 (children aged 5-7 and 7-11), five or more A–C grades at KS3 (aged 11-16) and three or more good ‘A’ levels at KS4 (aged 16-18). Schools themselves are also keen for children to do well in these tests as good results will secure a good position in published league tables for each age-range.

In this context, this thesis argues that despite changes in the occupational practices of many Gypsy/Traveller communities in England mobility remains very much part of their lives; which in turn affects the attendance of children at school, and thus their overall achievements. Although many of these communities are settled on sites, with some even taking up permanent housing, it is this value attributed to Nomadism and mobility as a cultural way of life, that remains a key factor at the heart of children’s schooling experiences and achievements.
The irony here for these nomadic communities is that educational achievement today seems to be about an ability to be able to move and settle in an area that has a ‘good’ school. Furthermore, the wider social, cultural and political aims of current educational provision being framed within a globalised context (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009) also suggests the need to be mobile in order to access and strive in the global market. It therefore appears that the mobility of Gypsy/Traveller communities is a different mobility to that engaged by the ‘mobile’ Sedentarised population. Such ideas connect with the work of Skeggs (2004:49) who notes that ‘Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship’. There are different degrees of mobility, based on ideas of respectability whereby ‘The mobility of choice of the affluent British middle-classes, conducted in relative ease, is quite different from the mobility of the international refugee or the unemployed migrant’ (Skeggs, 2004:49). As Shubin (2011:1930) puts it ‘There is a certain contestation between social acceptance of certain kinds of movement, and lifestyles based on continuous mobile engagement with the world’. Whereas movement from the sedentarised community is voluntary, and seen as a ‘social good, a resource, not equally available to all’ (Skeggs, 2004:50) the mobile Gypsy/Traveller ‘has long been conceptualised as an ‘aberration’ (based on ‘sedentarist’ thinking prioritising fixity over movement) or as ‘freedom’ to travel and escape from specific places and the trappings of the state’ (Shubin, 2011:1930). As a result nomadic movement is seen as a threat to ‘respectable mobility’ and the need to become ‘firmly fixed in order to be identifiable and governable’ (Skeggs, 2004:50). Shubin (2011) suggests that the problem is associated with this idea that the ‘mobility of travelling people is seen as detached from space and considered as
simple repositioning or abstract movement with no connections to specific places’ (Shubin, 2011:1930). Therefore, nomadism as a cultural practice becomes associated with not belonging, conflating placelessness with deviant behaviour (Leahy, 2014).

In order to widen the debate as to why nothing has really changed for Gypsy/Traveller children this thesis also engages with literature that argues neo-liberal education policy has continued to undermine educational opportunities for certain children (see chapter three) by eroding the egalitarian project of social justice in terms of structural inequalities that may exist. With its focus on individualism, self-interest, deregulation of the state and the privatisation of the public sector, neo-liberalism has transformed ‘every human domain and endeavour, along with humans themselves’ and reduced everything to economics (Brown, 2015:10). Walby (2009:12) notes that ‘while neoliberalism appears to laud a small state, this is only in relation to the economy; in practice neoliberal governments simultaneously develop a large coercive state to maintain the domestic social order and position in the global state system’. Consequently, ‘all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized’ (Brown, 2015:10).

In terms of education, this has led to contemporary schooling becoming increasingly ‘marketised’ and organised around the economic ideals of consumerism and the ‘product’ (Apple, 2005a). The ‘school product’ has become associated with competition and outcomes in tests, with results being
published in league tables. A good position in these league tables has come to represent the marker of a ‘quality product’ that parents can choose to ‘buy’ into. Consequently, with schools competing to reach the top of these league tables, many try to attract parents of children who possess the right attributes to do well in these tests and parents that value the educational trajectory that will ultimately secure their children a university place. This is the neo-liberal project, in that ‘…freeing the market from state controls was the best way to ensure economic growth, which in turn was believed to deliver human well-being, freedom, democracy, and civil liberties’ (Walby, 2009:11). The problem with this is the myth that democracy will inevitably follow as market forces and parental choice will ensure systems are fair and just for every single individual irrespective of their social and cultural location. This thesis sits within this literature, which continues to argue that the contemporary political climate has reconfigured the conception of education, the school and the pupil in particular ways consilient with neo-liberalism. As a result, neo-liberalism as a globalising economic project, has impacted schooling ideologically in two ways. Firstly, it has established modes of knowledge that have supressed, and even silenced, alternative narratives of education, including child-centredness, experiential learning and development of the whole person, that maybe more consilient with child development as well as schooling within a local public provision. Secondly, neo-liberalism has reinvented the idea of individualism as a self-reliant hegemonic ideology and thus eroded ideas of collectivism and the actual responsibility of the importance of collective democratic membership (Skeggs, 1997, 2004).
Consequently, overall I suggest that the question raised in this thesis is an ontological one. One of the key issues concerns the tension in the encounter between the cultural values of nomadic communities based on mobility which is ‘considered one of the key elements of their engagement with the world’ (Shubin, 2011:1931). The values underpinning the expectations of neo-liberal education policy based on individualism, choice (to move schools) and performance and its relationship with the global economy can thus often be at odds with Gypsy/Traveller lifeways. In chapter three I provide a brief overview of how the growth of neo-liberalism since the 1980s, fostered by subsequent governments in the UK, has contributed to these expectations that have become firmly entrenched within current educational policy. Although, according to McGimpsey (2016:1), other key values, namely ‘austerity, social investment and localism’, have now become the key drivers of this policy today (see chapter three).

**Aims and Objectives**

Drawing on and further developing the current literature in the field and analysing the narratives of parents and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities and practitioners working with them, the main aims of the thesis are to:

- evaluate the extent to which a mismatch and conflict between the culture of school and the culture of Gypsy/Travellers’ everyday lives has contributed to their underachievement and lack of involvement in schooling;
- understand how neo-liberal educational policy and practice has become reproduced by the mechanisms of the market, particularly in terms of a the focus on performativity at the expense of educational equality;

- examine how successful educational policy and practice has become in accommodating and including Gypsy/Traveller children in schools and thus to what extent it is able to contribute to a positive schooling experience for these children.

In line with understanding the relationship between spaces and places and educational policy that embody certain ‘power’ relations, two further aims of this work are to:

- explore the extent to which the socio-spatial structures, practices and organisation of the wider education process continue to operate in producing and maintaining educational inequalities for children from Gypsy/Traveller communities;

- investigate how social relations within schools could operate in producing a schooling experience that could adequately support children from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds.

**Why Gypsy/Travellers?**

My primary interest in the relationship between children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities and schooling initially stems from my own personal experiences of being an ‘interrupted learner’ during my primary school years in England in the early 1970s. Up until the age of 10, I suppose you could argue that my family adopted a Nomadic lifestyle. My father was in the army and as a family we moved around quite a lot, often midway through a
typical school year. As a consequence of this, my brother, twin sister and I experienced a disrupted learning pattern, often missing a few days out of school as we travelled and settled into a new place and subsequently a new school. Altogether, we attended five different primary schools from the age of 5–11. Our younger sister, seven years my junior, on the other hand, remained in one primary school.

When my twin sister and I were 10 years old, my father retired from the army and my parents decided to buy a house and settle down in one place. My brother was 11 at the time and went to a local secondary school, where my twin sister and I joined him and remained until the age of 16. Despite being a new comprehensive school, this secondary school had retained some of its grammar school ‘trappings’ and was streamed. On enrolling at the school we all found ourselves in the bottom streams. I remember in the first year at this school that, like my brother, I had to take extra English lessons while our peers learnt French. My twin sister made good progress and moved to the middle stream in her second year and remained there until she left, but my brother and I, who struggled particularly with our reading and writing, remained in the bottom streams throughout our secondary school years. When I left school, at the age of 16, I had gained two recognised qualifications. Our younger sister, who attended a different, more local, secondary school, gained six qualifications.

There was no talk of ‘A’ levels or university in our house. That was what other people did. The expectation was that we needed to think about the type of job we wanted and perhaps attend a vocational course at the local college in order
to secure employment. So after leaving school, we all went on to a local college where I studied a business/office management course, my twin sister a secretarial course, my brother mechanics and my younger sister animal husbandry. During my course, I undertook a work placement as a cost clerk for a double-glazing company, who offered me a job at the end of the course at the age of 17. It was whilst developing social relations with others working in an open-plan office that I realised that I did not want to become like many who had worked there for many years since leaving school. So, at the age of 18, I decided to follow in my father’s footsteps and joined the military, the Royal Air Force (RAF), as an airman. I was ready to leave home, wanted my independence and joining up was the only way that I considered I could achieve this, just as my father had done when he was 18. My mother was pleased and said that this would be a good opportunity to ‘see the world’.

I signed up for six years’ service as an administrative clerk and, after basic training, I was stationed at RAF Honington in Suffolk with a Tornado strike unit. My post involved administrative support for a number of pilots and navigators. Being surrounded by all these officers, I started to think about my own identity as an airman. I had to call them ‘Sir’, salute them and carry out any instructions that they gave me; it was a very authoritarian environment. Whilst in the RAF, I continued to move around – being posted to three other RAF stations – and I started to think more about why officers were more privileged than my peers and I. Officers occupied different environments from us, with their living arrangements, food and leisure opportunities being superior to those we were exposed to. I remember one particular officer, who
was very friendly to everyone, being reprimanded by a superior officer and told
to ‘stop fraternising with the troops’. What was it about this officer’s behaviour
that warranted this kind of comment, I thought. I suppose this was when I first
started to think about equality and question why some people were more
privileged than others and, on thinking back, about how social relations
warranted certain types of behaviours. Why were they officers and I wasn’t?
What was it that they had that I didn’t? Was it due to my lack of qualifications?
My background? If I had had a more settled childhood would I have obtained
more qualifications from school?

It was while serving in the Ascension Islands on a six-month detachment at the
age of 23 that I realised I wanted something different and did not want to stay
in the RAF after my initial six-year contract. I wanted to ‘better myself’ and do
something different. It was then that I started to think about what I really
wanted for a career. I knew that I would need to gain more qualifications so
decided to make a start and enrol on an ‘O’ level Sociology distance learning
programme with the UK Open University. I am not sure now why I chose this
subject except to say that whilst looking through the prospectus, Sociology was
attractive because I could easily relate to the subject matter. Being stationed in
the Ascension Islands at this time provided me with a lot more time to study
than I would have had being stationed in the UK. The Ascension Islands base is
in the middle of the South Atlantic near the equator and is like a tropical island.
Every weekend was spent on the beach and I met lots of people from different
trades and with a wealth of experiences, and we all just got on with life on this
island. It seemed less authoritarian than UK bases, and both work and people
were much more relaxed, including relations between officers and airmen. It was a great place to be, and a great place to think. Although I did not complete the ‘O’ level Sociology programme, the reading I had done made me begin thinking about my own schooling experience and life chances, and I knew then that I wanted to become a primary school teacher and make a difference to support children in my position. On leaving the RAF at the age of 24, I proceeded to gain experience working with children within the leisure industry. I trained as a lifeguard and tennis coach and picked up work as a lifeguard, a swimming instructor and ran a children’s tennis club and holiday club in the summer months. I really enjoyed working with children and thought that as a teacher I could make a difference to children’s schooling experience, particularly those who had travelled around as I had done.

I knew that perhaps one of the factors that had held me back educationally was my interrupted primary school experience. I also became particularly interested in the sociology of education, especially around the ‘bread and butter’ issues of social class and social justice. It is only with hindsight and my subsequent educational experiences that I suspect that my limited reading and writing skills on entry to secondary school were what led my teachers there to label me as a low achiever, or even an educational failure, and this was something that I must have internalised from a young age for many years.

It was not really until I undertook an Access to Higher Education course in Sociology and subsequently a first degree in Sociology and History and a Masters in Social Justice and Education that I began to develop a real interest in
educational equality. I was particularly drawn to children who travelled and I explored the situation facing New Age Travellers as the topic for my undergraduate dissertation. I engaged with literature that argued that the state and the media demonised such communities. I interviewed people who had adopted such a lifestyle, and began to think about the negative experiences they endured from the wider community, as well as the media. This group of people drew strength from each other and took it upon themselves to educate their children. They were not interested in sending their children to school as they were ideologically opposed to the testing culture and felt school would stifle their children’s natural curiosity and love of creativity and nature.

While undertaking my PGCE in primary education, one of my assessments was to produce a policy of support for one particular community. I chose to focus on the Gypsy/Traveller community and began exploring their particular situation and the support they required. I opted to spend some time working with a Traveller Education Support Teacher on one of my school placements, which gave me a fantastic insight at a more practical level. I also visited a centre that was used to support Gypsy/Traveller children while they were not in school. In line with my own early schooling experience, the children from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds that I came into contact with experienced a disrupted schooling pattern; and their reading and writing skills in particular very poor when compared with their peers. However, unlike me, many of these children continued to have a disrupted learning pattern throughout the whole of their schooling lives, with many often not even going on to secondary school as I had done. As a result of this experience, coupled with my growing interest
and passion for equal opportunities as a teacher, I became increasingly interested in whether a person’s socio-economic background, including their geographic mobility, contributed significantly to their ‘educational underachievement’. Furthermore, it was while working in schools that were considered to be in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage that I began to think more seriously about the complex institutional processes and practices that might be at play in (re)producing and maintaining educational inequalities for some children.

On reflection, as a student, student teacher, teacher, teacher educator and now as a researcher, I recognise that the types of people that I have engaged with over the years have all had an impact on where I am today and the type of person I am. I believe that the environments that we find ourselves in and the people and places we associate ourselves with all contribute to the way we experience the world; hence my interest in the dynamics of space and place, which I define in chapter four of this thesis. I now consider myself to be an educational sociologist, and it has been thinking about educational disadvantage, sporadic school attendance, and the practices of schools as institutional spaces that eventually led me to undertake this thesis investigating the situation of Gypsy/Traveller communities and the schooling environment.
The Context of this Project

Key Factor One: Nomadism and Sedentarism

In an attempt to provide some clarity over the issues surrounding the schooling of Gypsy/Traveller children, many official government reports (including Ofsted, 1996, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Save the Children, 2002; Bhopal, 2004; DfES, 2003c, 2005b; DfES, 2006c; DCSF, 2008, 2009; DfE 2010) have focused their attention on ‘access, attendance and attainment’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2005:769). There has been limited exploration of ‘the cultural dissonance between Gypsy and non-gypsy contexts’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2005:769) other than from literature within Romani studies. As such, there is currently a lack of a wider structural analysis of Gypsy/Traveller culture, resulting in a failure to provide appropriate strategies for schools seeking to accommodate and include Gypsy/Traveller youngsters in their classrooms. The behaviour and values of Gypsy/Traveller children have been (mis)interpreted as constituting merely a challenge to institutional norms, attributed to a mismatch between home life and the expectations of school life. To attribute any educational difficulties experienced by minority students solely to a mismatch between the features of home and school is to overlook the importance of any social structures and practices in place in the education of these youngsters. Consequently, I also engage with some of the literature within Romani studies in chapter two (ACERT, 1993; Acton, 1974, 1997; Acton & Mundy, 1998; Adams, 1975; Bhopal & Myers, 2008; Clark & Greenfields, 2006; Ivatts, 2005; Liegeois, 1986; Niner, 2003; Okely, 1983, 1983; Richardson, 2006; Tyler, 2005). Such literature provides an understanding of Nomadism and Gypsy/Traveller identity in order to
illustrate the history of the ‘othering’ of such groups from Sedentarised mainstream society.

Bhopal and Myers (2008) suggest how the positioning of these communities relates to debates about ‘whiteness’ (2008:25). The ‘othering’ of Gypsy/Travellers from the rest of society is not something that is immediately apparent by skin colour (Garrett, 2002; Power, 2003) but is coupled with certain shared values associated with ‘white’ respectability and decency (Skeggs, 2004); which then sets them up as ‘strangers’ in the institutions they come into contact with (Ahmed, 2007).

In exploring the literature I came to the conclusion that the paradigm in which educational policy is developed assumes Sedentarism and considers that all ‘decent’ UK communities should ‘inhabit’ a particular shared notion of educational provision and ‘values’ of ‘schooling’. With the emphasis on measureable outcomes that have come to dominate the desirable ‘product’ of schooling (which I explore in chapter three) the examination of the relationship between Sedentarism and Nomadism provides a deeper ‘structural’ understanding of the key themes surrounding this ‘underachievement’ of children from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

**Key Factor Two: Neo-Liberal Education Policy**

Part of the discussion in Chapter Three engages with literature which has explored the impact of the implementation of the neo-liberal educational policy architecture which has continued to embed a particular hegemonic discourse
and bring schooling more in line with market-led values. Such ideas surrounding school improvement and effectiveness have led to a focus on ‘product’ (what) and less and less on ‘process’ (how). The literature notes how neo-liberal schooling has become enmeshed in a performative culture whereby schooling has become less inclusive and ever more dictated by performative and disciplinary practices to secure outcomes in tests (product). This manifests itself in the form of subject hierarchies, with a focus on academic success in certain subjects, the collection of performance data (outcomes) and parental interests rather than a concentration on inclusion, democracy, values and the respect of human rights or citizenship (Cole, 2000). As Torres (2002) asserts, ‘…education has…become directed toward a marketplace rather than toward human rights ideology, and in such a process the democratic notions of citizenship that include tolerance, conviviality, and respect for human rights becomes secondary’ (as cited in MacRine et al., 2010:x). Drawing on the work of Stephen Ball (1990, 2007, 2008, 2013) in particular in Chapter Three, this performative educational culture will be considered within the current context of the ‘privatisation’ (or marketisation) of education, symbolised by the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the erosion of the public sector. Much of Ball’s work sits within critical policy analysis, where he is interested in unmasking the power relations set up by the development of the neo-liberal education policy since the 1970s, which has continued to pursue market-driven discourses around consumerism, choice and competition at the expense of social justice and inclusion for all children. Indeed, according to Alexander and Potter (2005:6),
[t]he values of our present school system reflect a divided society, with different kinds of school serving people from different social or religious backgrounds... [where] better-off parents can afford to buy the education of their choice.

By investigating the schooling situation faced by many Gypsy/Traveller children, this thesis draws on this literature in order to demonstrate how the inclusion of such children in schools is being eroded by a climate of a particular notion of school ‘efficiency’ and ‘achievement’, which results in some kinds of needs remaining unmet. Thus part of the discussion in Chapter Three relates to an investigation of the extent to which neo-liberal education ideology, policies, discourses and structures of schooling have influenced the socio-spatial production and imagery of schooling away from ideas of inclusion and social justice. As Youdell asserts ‘with competition based on performance in national tests secured as the key driver within education...there is little incentive, resource or conceptual space for mainstream education to pursue inclusive education’ (2010:315). It is to the ideas relating to the socio-spatial that I now want briefly to introduce my interpretation of spatial theory as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

**Spatial Theory – Theoretical Framework**

By engaging with and referring to the socio-spatial landscape of education and schooling (as defined in chapter four), the theoretical focus of this thesis will be to consider the lived experience of schooling within the context of spatial theory. In particular, the work of Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996) is examined. This sets out the conceptual framework for the development of a spatial lens
which is then deployed to analyse the empirical data in chapters six, seven and eight. By focusing on the ‘spatial’ aspect of schooling, this thesis complements yet further develops the literature within educational enquiry that focuses on social location, including social class, ethnicity and gender (or the intersectional complex relationship of all three), as the terrains of struggle that often creates and maintains educational inequalities. Consequently, the purpose of this thesis – as noted in the aims above – is to develop an additional conceptual tool, or more precisely a ‘spatial’ lens, that could be deployed to provide further knowledge and understanding of such structural inequalities when considering the schooling experiences of many Gypsy/Traveller children.

Although social theorists have been engaging with spatial theory since the latter part of the twentieth century, such literature has only relatively recently been applied within educational enquiry (Tamboukou, 1999; Armstrong, 2003; Gulson, 2005, 2008, 2011; Gulson and Symes, 2007a, 2007b; Middleton, 2010, 2014). This turn to spatial theory in educational enquiry marks the re-appraisal of Lefebvre’s (1991) *The Production of Space* and Soja’s (1989) *Postmodern Geographies* and his (1996) *Thirdspace*. However, there is also an emerging field of literature alongside the increasing influence of this work that develops further this turn to space by drawing in particular on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1988, 1994) and their ideas around ‘assemblage’ and ‘becoming-otherwise’ (Tamboukou, 2003; Semetsky, 2006; Hickey-Moody, 2009; Webb, 2009; Youdell, 2010, 2011). Such work sees schooling as marked by ‘movements and flows of bodies, practices, affectivities and subjectivities’ (Youdell, 2010:313) and is interested in the way that ‘feelings’ are an essential component
in the creation and production of schooling identities (Youdell, 2011). Although my work is keen to explore schooling at the micro level of the classroom as, like Youdell ‘I’m interested in the minutiae of everyday life in school’ (Youdell, 2011:8), my thesis is more of an exploration of how the cultural values of nomadism as a system (or structure) conflict with the everyday practices and discourses of schooling and operate to marginalise nomadic communities. Nomadism for me is not so much about individual ‘feeling’, ‘the self’ or the ‘movement’ of individuals, or subjects, but about a cultural way of life that does not necessarily prioritise ‘schooling’ as an essential part of a child’s daily life. This thesis is, therefore, primarily interested in how school space as a social and political structure is absorbed in institutional practices that may inadvertently produce places that exclude certain children. I see my work as positioned alongside Armstrong’s (2003) *Spaced Out: Policy, Difference and the Challenge of Inclusive Education*, who uses Lefebvre to explore ‘the relationship between space, place and identity…in relation to disabled children and young people…in educational systems’ (2003:1). Consequently, by focusing on the work of Lefebvre’s spatial triad in which to develop my ‘spatial lens’, I put space at the centre of this thesis in order to provide a further tool with which to analyse the ‘Spacing Out’ (Armstrong, 2003, 2007) of Gypsy/Traveller children, just as Armstrong’s work analyses the ‘Spacing Out’ of disabled children in schools.

As such, this thesis offers a unique example of how the spatial orientations of Gypsy/Traveller communities often conflict with the spatial orientations of the school in order to create and sustain structural educational inequalities for
children from these communities. Although Levinson and Sparkes’ (2005) work addresses these issues, they do not deploy a spatial lens as an analytic tool, as my work does. Rather, they draw on the work of Sibley (1995) to discuss ‘the struggle for power over certain spaces’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2005:752) that results in the ‘othering’ of certain communities and then they relate this to the schooling landscape. Herein lies the originality of this thesis in its application of Lefebvre’s spatial trilogy as an analytic device when exploring the ‘spacing out’ of Gypsy/Travellers in schools. As such I see my thesis as building on and developing the work of Levinson & Sparkes (2005) in order to contribute to our understanding of how contemporary power relations work to set up, embed and normalise certain strategic spatial practices and behaviours that often erode educational equity for some communities.

By using Lefebvre’s (1991) trilogy of the perceived, conceived and lived space, this thesis is able to examine the overlapping relationships of spatial production, including: spatial practices of teaching and learning (perceived space); representational space in terms of policy discourse (conceived space); and spatial representations in terms of the daily experiences of school life (lived space). The particular emphasis here is to think about how schools can change practices by examining the stories of people’s schooling experiences in order to understand how schools are shaped by the ‘structures’ and ‘landscapes’ of society and the education process, as well as by considering the social practices and the relations of participants in schools themselves. This is something that relates to Potter’s work (as cited in Alexander & Potter, 2005:26), which argues
that ‘The case for change must be understood and tackled at three levels: 1 society; 2 the school; and 3 the interaction between teacher and pupil.’

So by using Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial trilogy of the perceived, conceived and lived space, this thesis extends the literature by offering a spatial explanation to educational experiences of Gypsy/Traveller children. The spatial ‘lens’ is deployed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight to analyse data in the form of the narratives of people’s experiences of being part of the neo-liberal education process and the narratives of those teaching and supporting Gypsy/Traveller children within the structures and systems of primary schooling in England.

This thesis demonstrates how the schooling process can often produce a relatively constraining space for Gypsy/Traveller children yet equally also has the potential to provide more embracing spaces whereby Gypsy/Traveller children can be equally accommodated. In providing such examples, this thesis provides a further unique insight into how the spatial lens can be used to highlight how some schools can work successfully to provide a more inclusive space for children from such communities, despite operating within the structures and values of neo-liberal education policy.

**Defining the Term Gypsy/Traveller**

With an estimated 10-12 million Roma, Sinti, Gypsies and Travellers in Europe and approximately 300,000 of these communities residing in Britain (Richardson & Ryder, 2012:3) it is necessary for me to define briefly from the
outset the umbrella term ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ that I have chosen to use throughout this thesis. This is important as despite the presence of a wide variety of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Britain for over 500 years, it is recognised that the definition of these groups is problematic and contested (Clark & Greenfields, 2006). Terms traditionally used to describe these communities have been ‘tinker’ (often used to refer to Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers), ‘didicoi’ (a term used often derogatorily by both Gypsies and non-Gypsies for those of mixed race (see Acton, 1974)) and ‘gypsy’. The term ‘gypsy’ itself involves a number of different groups. European gypsies are divided into the Rom or Roma (from Eastern Europe), the Romanichals (from Western Europe, including the German Sinti and English Romany Gypsies, for example) (Smith, 1974:3). However, there does seem to be agreement about two clear subgroups, Occupational Travellers and Gypsy/Travellers. Occupational Travellers include show or fairground travellers, Circus Travellers, Boat-Dwellers, and New Age Travellers, while Gypsy/Travellers comprise those families which have traditionally travelled between states with a particular cultural/racial identity.

There is also the question of ethnicity when thinking about these groups’ identities (Richardson, 2006). The 1996 Race Relations Act, and the subsequent (Amendment) Act 2000, legally recognises Romany Gypsies and Travellers of Irish and Scottish heritage as ethnic groups and thus their right to equal opportunities in adopting a nomadic lifestyle is protected under race-relations legislation (Clark & Greenfields, 2006). Other Traveller groups, including New Age Travellers, fairground, circus and waterways communities, are not recognised as ethnic groups, although due to their ‘Nomadic’ lifestyle they are
also legally recognised as ‘Gypsies’ under this legislation. As such, the Commission for Racial Equality (HMSO, 2003) were confident that all Gypsy/Traveller groups would benefit from the promotion of equal opportunities ‘by all public authorities’ that this act affords.

Such a diversity of these nomadic groups suggests part of the difficulties involved in providing a generic solution to the ‘problem’ of educational underachievement of children from these communities. In terms of educational policy for example, all such groups are identified under the generic title of Gypsy/Travellers or, more recently, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT), and it is for this reason that I too refer to these groups under the umbrella term ‘Gypsy/Travellers’ throughout this thesis. This term alludes to the commonality across these groups – their diversities notwithstanding – which consists of a deep-rooted belief in Nomadism and, in particular, a belief in and need for cultural ‘mobility’ and collectivism. Furthermore ‘What all these groups have in common is the high level of exclusion they endure; exclusion that the state has actively contributed to through assimilationist and hegemonic discourse and policy’ (Richardson & Ryder, 2012:12). This is still very much the case today irrespective of those Gypsy/Travellers that may have become settled or reside in permanent housing. According to Clark and Greenfields (2006:12) ‘culturally, an ethnicity or ethnic identity is not somehow magically ‘lost’ or abandoned when a family settles into “bricks and mortar”: it continues and adapts to the new circumstances, and this is commonly accepted within the communities concerned’. Consequently, many Gypsy/Traveller communities adopt a code of existence that remains structurally different from the Sedentarised majority,
which means that neo-liberal compulsory schooling often sits uncomfortably with the reality of a Gypsy/Traveller’s everyday existence or their cultural identity (Richardson & Ryder, 2012). In the following chapter this construction of a nomadic identity is more fully addressed.

**The Empirical Data**

The data on which this thesis draws reflects a range of perspectives gathered from three main ‘interest’ groups. These three groups consisted of professionals working ‘inside’ schools, including teachers and other professionals; those working ‘inside/outside’ schools alongside Gypsy/Traveller communities, including Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) staff; and finally the communities themselves, including parents and young people. A mixed qualitative methods approach was adopted. Data collected for this thesis between 2005 and 2013 draws on three focus-group discussions, a number of one-to-one semi-structured interviews, and participant observations in two primary schools (see Appendix 1 for demographics of participants).

Having a number of contacts that I had established and developed over the years as a primary school teacher and then as an initial teacher educator (trainer), selection of interviewees was relatively straightforward for me. I had a clear idea which individuals had relationships with Gypsy/Traveller children in their schools, and I was already familiar with colleagues in the TESS. It was not particularly difficult, then, for me to learn about their experiences with schooling children from these communities, as these were people with whom I
was already familiar professionally and who were willing to share these experiences with me. Interviewing individuals from the communities was initially more of a challenge. However, after establishing a contact with a support worker and interviewing them, this person acted as my gate-keeper to the community. The two schools where I carried out the participant observations were also known to me, and my strength here was that I had been a primary school teacher, so both head teachers were keen to use me as a much-needed resource teaching classes in order to free up some time for staff to use for preparation and marking.

In order to observe and work with individuals in the socio-spatial environment of the school, these two short participant observational studies in schools with Gypsy/Traveller children on roll were absolutely crucial for my work. Both schools were mainstream primary and, for the purposes of anonymity, I have changed their names, and throughout this thesis they will be referred to as Oak Tree Primary (with Irish Travellers on roll) and Green Acre Primary (with English Romany on roll). Further data, in the form of reflections, was drawn from my previous seven years’ experience as a primary school teacher, and five years as an initial teacher educator.

**Outline of Chapters**

In Chapter Two, *Schooling the Citizen: The Nation State, Sedentarism, Nomadism*, I review the literature that considers whether a limited respect for, and understanding of, Gypsy/Traveller values, cultures and identities, as associated
with Nomadism, is a key component in the educational underachievement of children from such communities. By also engaging briefly with some of the literature associated with ‘whiteness’ (Ahmed, 2007; Bhopal & Myers, 2008; Garrett, 2003; Holloway 2005), this chapter suggests that part of the problem relates to the perception that Nomadism is an inappropriate ‘uncivilised’ cultural lifestyle (Power, 2010). In particular, I examine whether a conflict exists between the specific needs of children from Nomadic communities and current school provision that is based on a settled, static, local community.

Against the backdrop of a Nomadic identity and Sedentarised schooling, this apparent conflict is further explored in Chapter Three, Neo-Liberalism and the Privatisation of School and Education: An Erosion of Educational Social Justice? This chapter consists of a review of the literature which suggests that neo-liberal education policy architecture and practice has increasingly eroded educational equity. This chapter focuses on the shift towards the neo-liberal ‘marketisation’ of education since the 1980s and the development of public–private partnerships between schools and a variety of businesses ever since. Through such developments, the goals of schooling have become redefined and cast in terms of performativity, competition and choice. This chapter develops this debate and argues that any structural analysis of educational underachievement for these communities has become further side-lined by the historical ‘ratcheting’ of neo-liberal education policy (Ball, 2008, 2013). As a result, schools have diversified with new actors and agencies involved in education via the introduction of city academies and specialist schools (under New Labour); the expansion of academies, the launch of Free Schools and the
scrapping of education quangos (under the Coalition Government); and the continuation of Academies and the spread of Free Schools (under the current Conservative Government). All of which has continued to fervently undermine much of the discourse associated with schooling and structural inequalities (Chitty, 2014) and placed underachievement firmly within ‘individual schools, teachers and families’ (Bailey & Ball, 2016:141)

Chapter Four, Theoretical Framework: The Spatial Context of Social Relations, sets out the conceptual framework that is deployed in this thesis in order to analyse the empirical data and the spatial narratives behind the policy architecture of neo-liberal schooling. The chapter begins with a brief overview of why a ‘turn’ to space as an epistemological tool has become increasingly popular amongst social scientists as a way of analysing contemporary society. The chapter then moves on to discuss the conceptual difference between ‘place’ and ‘space’ in order to situate how I use these terms in my thesis. Relating these ideas to schooling, the chapter demonstrates how the spatial environment of a school (first as a space, then as a place) is not only the context that frames the identities, meanings, behaviours and practices of teachers and pupils, but is itself an aspect of those relationships linking adults and children in this particular place. I argue therefore that a spatial understanding of the classroom could have emancipatory potential for those groups of children who are often marginalised.

Chapter Five, Methodology, explores the methodology adopted in constructing and undertaking empirical research to explore the relationship between
Gypsy/Traveller communities and the structures of the schooling process. It raises some key questions in relation to the issues around the conflicting cultures of schools and Gypsy/Traveller communities and links such questions to the empirical study. The chapter describes and defends the methodological tools deployed in collecting the empirical data for this thesis. It also provides a reflection on the theoretical implications of my ontological position and epistemological perspective in researching within this particular field. Furthermore, the chapter theorises and reflects on the relationship between the aims of the thesis and my theoretical position as the researcher, and on the knowledge gained and produced within this thesis.

Connecting with the literature in chapter Two, chapter Six, *Contesting Cultures I: Gypsy/Traveller Lifeways and the Schooling Process*, is the first of three chapters that deploy the spatial lens to analyse data collected for this thesis. This particular chapter focuses on how contemporary cultural norms and values of schooling based on Sedentarism often conflict with the cultural mind-set of Nomadic communities. Consequently, the cultural differences experienced by children will often raise concerns around schooling and assimilation for the parents in these communities, who want to protect their cultural uniqueness.

Linking with the literature discussed in chapter three, chapter seven, *Contesting Cultures II: The Neo-Liberal Impact on Schooling*, builds on chapter six to provide a structural analysis of educational underachievement. The chapter presents an illustration of how the shifting nature of schooling as a neo-liberal market-driven system continues to spatially marginalise children from Gypsy/Traveller
communities. Engaging with the narratives from practitioners and deploying
the spatial lens, the chapter explores this marginalisation in relation to how
educational policies are ‘played out’ at the micro level of the school and the
classroom. The idea here is to analyse how educational policy has embodied
certain ideas that have eroded equality of opportunity for all children. So in
particular, the chapter considers how such policy has had an impact on the
organisation of teaching and learning that focuses on performativity to the
detriment of personal achievement and growth. However, the chapter also
highlights through the data how a change of ethos in some schools can provide
a sense of belonging for Gypsy/Traveller children and thereby produce a
welcoming space in which these children might flourish.

Relating to the literature in chapter Four and the idea that, for many women,
space and place are fundamental in formulating gender relations, chapter Eight,
*Contesting Cultures III: Schooling and the Gender Norms of Gypsy/Traveller Culture*
focuses on gendered power relations and how such relations within these
communities might in part be responsible for the spatial segregation of boys
and girls from a young age. By adopting a feminist lens, this chapter provides a
distinctive insight into how by implementing a spatial analytic we can also
expose the (gender) power relations implicit within cultural space. However, I
demonstrate in this chapter how some schools are opening up a more inclusive
space for many girls where they are able to challenge such gender relations.

Chapter Nine, the *Conclusion*, elaborates the theoretical connections between
analyses of the structures of schooling and Gypsy/Traveller communities and
the spatial dimensions of interaction and social reproduction. In undertaking these discussions, the chapter argues that space has an important role within educational enquiry, offering an additional tool with which to unravel the power dynamic implicit within the structures and processes of neo-liberal schooling. So by thinking about educational institutions, practices and experiences in terms of space, this thesis offers fresh insights both for educators and for those who wish to theorise the position of minority children in the school system. Such insights might inform policies and practices that offer more fully inclusive educational experiences which genuinely address the needs of different families and communities, and can yield better results so as to address the external pressures. In turn, it might enable us to think more critically about processes of exclusion and inclusion and the ways they might operate and affect the lived experience of school for pupils, their families and the staff.
Chapter Two

Schooling the Citizen: The Nation State, Sedentarism and Nomadism

Whenever we look at how Gypsies and Travellers are treated, we are at the same time looking at the social history, the politics and the psychology of those who are reacting to them... The image of the stranger and of the strange, updated every few years, exposes the fears and worries of those who create it, by giving shape to the group’s idea of its ‘opposite’... The worries projected onto this image are the worries on the mind of the group at any given time. (Acton, 1997:21)

Introduction

Sketching the development of mass education since the end of the nineteenth century, this chapter provides an investigation in to how ‘modernity’ cemented the idea that a Sedentary mode of existence was a superior and more ‘civilised’ social arrangement than Nomadism, whether this is a lived or imagined cultural arrangement. Modernity was concerned with the ‘experience of progress’ (Thacker, 2009:3) that brought about the rapid expansion of the overall population and their mass migration to towns and cities across the UK during the nineteenth century. During this period of industrial expansion and urbanisation, there was a growing awareness of ‘the management of the empire and “national efficiency”’ (Ball, 2008:56). The state became increasingly
concerned about social order and the effective management of this growing ‘urban’ society. The implementation of the 1870 Elementary Schooling Act eventually brought about compulsory schooling for all children in 1880. The Act was symbolic of this growing concern and epitomised the state’s interest and involvement in education and schooling. Two main objectives of schooling at this time related to the concerns around social order and economic prosperity. Subsequent government legislation relating to state schooling, particularly during the early part of the twentieth century, went on to further consolidate this relationship between social character and economic prosperity and, later, the perpetuation of democratic values. The role of education thus became fundamental in the transmission of certain cultural values and orientations to these ends (Silcock & Duncan, 2001). Sedentarism, I will argue, was an important form of social organisation in realising such orientations.

For McVeigh (1997:9), Sedentarism is a ‘system of ideas and practices which serve to normalise and reproduce Sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress Nomadic modes of existence’. As such, Sedentarism becomes associated with ‘a movement upwards towards civilisation, security and modernity’, which establishes ‘being Sedentary as the only possible mode of existence within contemporary society’ (McVeigh, 1997:10). Nomadism became associated with ‘the notion that Nomadic people had an inherently inferior culture and civilization’ that was against modernisation (Griffin, 2014:2). Subsequently, the increasingly close relationship between Sedentarism and modernity created the need for assimilation and the transition from a Nomadic mode of existence to a Sedentarised mode of existence. This
Nomadic/Sedentary binary (or anti-Nomadic discourse) represents a long history of tensions brought about by the perception that Nomadic communities were ‘lawless and antisocial’ (Richardson, 2006) and thus posed a threat to the construction and protection of the nation state. Leahy (2014:165) notes how a nomadic lifestyle related ‘to a theme of placenessless’ and was ‘often viewed with suspicion and mistrust’. As Shubin (2011:1930) observes:

…the mobility of travelling people is seen as detached from space and considered as simple repositioning or abstract movement with no connections to specific places. Scottish Gypsy Travellers in particular have been caught up within discursive arrangements and power relationships, which tend to interpret mobility within an ‘immobile’ legislative framework and to adopt a default position that their mobility is a problem.

For Griffin (2014), this Nomadic/Sedentary divide fuelled racism and prejudice towards those that chose to move around. Nomadic people became ‘othered’ and often found themselves ‘spatially’ divided from the mainstream and on the ‘margins of society following trades or occupations which set them apart, and routinely denied civil or social rights or equality with members of the mainstream society’ (Griffin, 2014:2).

According to Bhopal and Myers (2008) this historical ‘othering’ of nomadic communities (or groups) by mainstream society provides a unique and interesting insight into Gypsy identity, ‘racism’ and ‘whiteness’ in that Sedentarism has connotations with ‘white’ decency and respectability that ‘says more about the fields of acceptable white behaviour than does much racist
language directed at non-whites’ (2008:90). As they succinctly observe (Bhopal & Myers, 2008:90):

Gypsies do not comfortably sit within all the interpretations placed upon the concept of whiteness despite their skin colour. Although there is clearly an overlap between categories of ‘whiteness’ and of ‘Gypsies’, understandings of that overlap tend to be unsettling. In some respects this reflects the uncertainty that is generated by whiteness being coupled with elements of society considered disreputable. Where whiteness becomes associated with an underclass...quite ferocious outpourings of revulsion are often generated within the wider population.

Such arguments relate to Skeggs work in Class, Self, Culture (2004) which provides us with an account of how class is formed through culture and inscribed on our bodies by the spaces we occupy and via our social relations with others inside and outside these spaces. For Gypsy/Traveller communities identities are grounded in cultural terms based on nomadism and thus excluded more so than other ‘others’ that fit in with Sedentarised society (Cemlyn et al. 2009, DfES, 2005a).

Access to mass schooling for children from such communities has thus often proved challenging, due not only to the hostility and ‘racism’ such children often faced if they did attend a school but also due to the fact that schooling was assimilationist in nature and thus inculcated values associated with the dominant Sedentarised community, particularly around notions of respectability and certain kinds of movement. To achieve what is expected from schooling today, children are required to be settled in a particular location so that they are able to attend school on a regular basis and be exposed to the
National Curriculum and its programmes of study both consistently and regularly.

The key issue I raise in this chapter is concerned with a particular world view that serves the interests of the project of a Sedentarised society and ultimately provides a justification for the historical erosion of Nomadism as a cultural way of life and an acceptable form of mobility. The chapter will look at the phenomenon of mass schooling both as a disciplinary project for controlling the masses and as a progressive idea of democracy, human rights and social justice. What I argue is that taken either as a disciplinary regime or a progressive project, mass schooling promoted Sedentarism and continued to vilify Nomadic communities.

**The Birth of Mass Schooling**

An educational institution can form a ‘national consciousness’ in its students through particular aspects of, and emphases in, its curriculum, through teaching methods and mediums, and through the ethos and organisation of the institution itself. (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2008:79)

It was the 1870 Elementary Education Act in England that finally brought about the realisation of free compulsory mass schooling for all children. Its main aim was to establish schooling as a tool that would educate the masses in order to ensure and maintain the economic growth and prosperity of the country at that time. Prior to this 1870 Act, schooling was predominantly the preserve of the middle classes, and where it wasn’t it was very much piecemeal and organised by the church (Wrightson, 1982). As a result of the Act, schooling became
organised and managed by the state for the very first time and required all children between the ages of 5 and 13 to attend elementary school. The main objective of the legislation was to get the working classes into school and teach them basic reading, writing and arithmetic (known as the 3Rs) as well as social discipline. For example, the importance of a teacher’s authority and the need for punctuality, obedience, conformity, and so on, in line with the expectations of working in the newly created conurbations (Bereiter, 1974; McLaughlin et al., 2008).

Further legislation that followed this initial 1870 Act finally cemented the idea of schooling as a tool in preparing individuals to actively engage in the processes of democracy, where values of justice, equality and freedom could be realised and achieved by all individuals (Williams, 1961). This move to democratic inclusion via education followed the extension of the franchise to workingmen in towns and cities (in 1867) and to agricultural workers (1884–5). Integral to the achievement of such values was the rise of the progressive schooling movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, prior to the 1944 Act, as opposed to the ‘traditional’ educational model implemented by the elementary schooling Act of 1870. For Sorel (in Berlin, 1971), both ‘progressive’ and ‘traditional’ models of education concerned a journey to improve society by the imposition of a set of particular ‘shared’ values and the establishment of a national identity.

Consequently, schooling was becoming seen not only as a tool for economic necessity but also as a tool in preparing individuals to actively engage in the
processes of democracy. This shift in thinking about what education was about was assisted by the horrifying experiences of the First and Second World Wars. Education became firmly based on ethics and morality and focused more on the experiences and development of the child and the social aspect of education. The promotion of democratic relationships and humanist values was thought paramount in the classroom setting and teacher–child relations (Williams, 1961).

These more ‘progressive’ ideas of education, initially developed among the nurseries and kindergartens of the middle classes, were beginning to have considerable impact by the end of the nineteenth century. Many philosophers and educationalists, at that time including Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori, John Dewey and Margaret McMillan, influenced this more ‘progressive’ model of education and schooling at the expense of the more ‘traditional’ methods of schooling (Gillard, 2009). Finally, in 1911, with the publication of ‘What Is and What Might Be’ (by ex-Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, Edmond Holmes), ‘traditional’ models of elementary schooling were criticised as being over-didactic and anti-humanist in nature (Gillard, 2009).

From 1926–33, William Henry Hadow, a leading educationalist, wrote a series of reports on education. Most notable of these were ‘The Education of the Adolescent’ (1926), ‘The Primary School’ (1931) and ‘Infant and Nursery Schools’ (1933). Hadow argued that a good school ‘is not a place of compulsory instruction, but a community of old and young, engaged in learning by cooperative experiment’ (1931, quoted in Gillard, 2009). He also suggested that
‘the curriculum of the primary school is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored’ (1931: Section 75, quoted in Gillard, 2009). This emphasis on ‘activity and experience’ marked a fundamental change and established an understanding of primary schooling as associated with a separate cognitive stage of child development. These reports were instrumental in the establishment in 1928 of primary schooling as a distinct phase for children from 5–11, and later in the inclusion of infant provision as a separate stage for children between 5 and 7 years of age. However, primary schooling as a separate educational stage was not fully implemented in England until the introduction of the 1944 Education Act.

For Barber (1994), the 1944 Act symbolised a kind of synthesis of thought from both ‘progressive’ and ‘traditional’ educational models, against a backdrop of the desire to rebuild a democratic society based on the ‘social solidarity of wartime’ and the ‘defeat of fascism’ (Barber, 1994:352). Compulsory mass schooling became the tool through which to bring about a homogenised and prosperous post-war society based on the ideals and values of liberal democratic ideology and social justice (Harris & Ranson, 2005). Education and schooling was thus seen as the vehicle responsible for supporting ‘the principles behind the development of a pluralistic democracy, in order to combat such challenges to democratic values as intolerance, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism’ (Osler & Starkey, 1996:40). According to Janusz Symonides, such thinking gave rise to the development of a universal human rights education programme, and suggests that ‘[e]ducation for human rights, which includes respect for others, recognition of plurality, tolerance, non-
discrimination and non-violence, leads to the elimination of sources of conflict and strengthens peace’ (1988:11).

The implementation of human rights forms part of the historical journey for liberal democratic ideas. Such ideas were based around the promotion of a set of ‘international’ standards (or values) of humanitarian beliefs in order to promote and maintain world peace after the Second World War. For the first time, the United Nations Charter (UNC) in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 proposed guidelines for the universal protection of human dignities and freedoms, especially in light of the atrocities experienced by many states during both World Wars and in particular during the holocaust. Schooling was firmly established as part of an international project that would create the possibility to afford all human beings equal rights and promote a universal set of moral principles and values in the name of peace, on which all world communities could base decisions and judgements (Cole, 2000). Furthermore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1994) secured equality and anti-discrimination legislation for all communities (United Nations, 2003).

However, alongside this historical journey for social justice and human rights, mass schooling also became synonymous with the idea of progress and state power and was seen not only to ‘preserve the social order but also to create a new national society’ based on modernity and the development of the nation state (Ramirez & Boli, 1987:10). According to Ramirez and Boli (1987), by the
nineteenth century, the educational focus on the development of the child became linked to the national interest and the production of a national identity. State involvement in education and schooling was thus not only a response to industrialisation and democracy building but part of a wider political project through which state power could be implemented and national boundaries established and protected (1987:3).

For Ward (1973) it is no surprise that compulsory schooling became linked to modernity and the growth of the nation state, and in particular that it encapsulated certain values associated with the ‘market’ model, whereby the integration of commerce, administration and culture was assumed paramount to the survival and prosperity of a national identity and economy. He argues that it is no coincidence that the emergence of mass schooling in England came about as a result of the rise of industrialisation, where there was a need to teach individuals specific skills and impart specific ‘economic’ values and knowledge in order to protect and enhance industrial prosperity and national interest. At the same time, according to Ball (2008), the introduction of state-initiated mass schooling was essential to ‘manage the new urban working classes and to accommodate the social and political aspirations of the new middle classes’ (2008:56). ‘The role of education came to be seen as a central part of the “civilising process” where “it was up to the ‘outsider’” – whether indigenous or incomer – to “fit into” (or be excluded from) a dominant culture, in which “natural insiders” would always possess the upper hand in terms of cultural capital’ (Griffin, 2014:5). Thus those who adopted a Nomadic lifestyle were considered as ‘outside’ the dominant culture of modernity (van Krieken, 1999).
The ‘Othering’ of Gypsy/Travellers

From the moment of their discovery of Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when they spilled into societies the state was seeking to organize and control, Gypsies were seen as intruders, nomads lacking hearth or home amidst local communities rooted in fixed and familiar soil. They aroused mistrust, fear, and rejection. (Liégeois, 1986:87)

As Liégeois points out here, the history of discrimination directed towards Gypsy/Traveller communities in the UK (as elsewhere in many parts of Europe) has been framed by tensions brought about by this historical formation of ‘urbanisation’ and ‘modernity’ and in particular by the creation of nation states and its association with progress. According to Griffin (2014:2), for example:

The advent of modernity brought about even higher levels of discrimination on occasions, together with the effects of urbanisation in shrinking or even erasing the spaces and places where traditional occupations and ways of life could be pursued.

McVeigh (1997) notes that modernism became associated with establishing order and control and the development of the nation state became the vehicle for obtaining this. The successful establishment of the industrialised state favoured a Sedentarised population whereby cultural identity linked people to a particular set of values and geographic location (Okely, 1983), and thus was often at odds with those who adopted a Nomadic way of life. According to Griffin, Nomadism was ‘constructed as inferior, anarchic, utterly “Other” from Sedentarism’ (2014:28). Nomadic communities have thus been historically demonised and ‘othered’, more than any other community, in order to justify
the rejection of their way of life (Bhopal & Myers, 2008). According to Okely, the criminalisation of a Nomadic way of life has been a ‘history marked by attempts to exoticise, disperse, control, assimilate or destroy’ these communities (1983:1). Such attitudes towards Nomadic communities still exist today in many European countries as identified by the Council of Europe (2002) and exemplified by the following quote from the online euobserver:

French President Nicolas Sarkozy on Wednesday [28 August 2010] announced his government is to order police to round up allegedly illegal migrants of Roma ethnicity for expulsion from French territory and destroy their encampments. The president's office put out a statement accusing the camps of being ‘sources of illegal trafficking, of profoundly shocking living standards, of exploitation of children for begging, of prostitution and crime’. (Phillips, 2010)

Sedentarism, then, became synonymous with modernity, respectability and state building, whereby individuals were expected to remain and settle in one place in order to preserve the ideal of a national society and a national identity. McVeigh argues that Sedentarism became associated with the civilising of society and notes ‘with the nation-state came the border – the key metonym for the Sedentarist social formation’ (1997:17). Thus Nomadic communities were often seen as ‘uncivilised’ and in need of assimilation based on ‘establishment fears about the travelling dispossessed and the threat they pose to the moral and political order’ (McVeigh, 1997:8). According to Clark and Greenfields (2006:59), ‘the objective of statutory provisions relating to persons of no fixed abode became explicitly slanted towards settlement and enforced assimilation into the Sedentary community’.
Liégeois (1986) provide us with a detailed overview of the persecution of Gypsies over many centuries, whereby assimilation was used to ‘spatially’ locate them and dissipate their way of life and identity. According to Sibley (1995), parliamentary debates in 1908 and 1911 around proposals for legislation to restrict those who move around marked a more formal move by the state to spatially manage and police Gypsy/Traveller encampments. It was during these early debates that ‘both good and bad images were drawn on’ (1995:104) in order to present Gypsy/Travellers as ‘a part of nature and beyond the margins of civil society’ (1995:102). Many began to see Gypsy/Travellers ‘as an abomination…a criminal minority’ (1995:106), which proved to be a significant stereotype used to criminalise them in a raft of legislation that followed. Liégeois notes that even with the later creation of the Gypsy Council in 1966, set up to represent the interests of Gypsy communities across Europe, the assimilation into a Sedentarised lifestyle was ‘still the main theme’ for Nomadic communities (1986:112).

With the introduction of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (HMSO, 1960), official powers were granted for the removal of individuals occupying caravan sites. The Act required the occupier of land where caravans were situated to apply for a site licence through the local authority (1960:1). Any persons not in possession of a licence could be evicted from the land and the site could be closed down. The Act also attached certain conditions for site licences, including how the caravans had to be positioned, the type of caravans that could be located on the site, the number of caravans allowed on the site, the
availability of correct fire and safety equipment and provision of appropriate sanitary facilities (1960:3–4). As a result, many Gypsy/Traveller communities were constantly moved off unlicensed sites. Even with the further introduction of the Caravan Sites Act (HMSO, 1968), many communities remained on the move. The idea of this subsequent Act was ‘to restrict the eviction from caravan sites of occupiers of caravans’ (1968:1) and place responsibility on local authorities to provide sufficient sites for Gypsy/Traveller communities residing in their local area. However, the Act was never fully enforced, and where it was, the provision of sites was limited, with many being inadequate due to the unsuitability of the site’s location, for example next to busy roads, under motorways or near household and industrial wasteland. Furthermore, the implementation of the 1968 Act also gave local authorities increased powers to evict Gypsy/Travellers from the roadside and non-designated sites, so many communities were constantly evicted from one place after another (Adams, 1975). Therefore, these communities were unable to provide their children with a consistent schooling experience even if they wanted to. According to Bhopal and Myers, the 1968 Act was arguably designed to reverse earlier policy designed to disrupt and move on gypsy communities by requiring local authorities to provide sites. In practice it allowed councils to make a small amount of inadequate provision and legitimised the harassment and dispersal of large numbers of families who were not given a plot. (2008:225)

For Liégeois, this rejection of the Nomad by local authorities is clearly tied up with their historic negative image, which has remained ‘virtually unchanged for
centuries’ (1986:136), and the drive to put pressure on Nomadic communities to accept permanent housing and become Sedentarised.

Subsequent legislation, particularly the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which went on to criminalise further the practice of Nomadism, did nothing to improve or provide adequate site provision, but further restricted and forbade the encampment of Gypsy/Travellers on unauthorised sites. This 1994 Act removed the obligation of local authorities to provide official sites, thus revoking aspects of the 1968 Act (Acton, 1997:61–69). Thus, for example, according to the Department of the Environment, ‘in January 1996, 12,620 Gypsies in England and Wales lacked anywhere lawful to camp’ (as cited in Braid, 1997:62). Furthermore, with its many criminal offences relating to trespass and limited toleration of ‘stopping places’, this 1994 Act again left many Travelling families with little choice than to adopt a settled lifestyle (Donovan, 2005:136). The implementation of this Act was directed in particular at New Age Travellers, who became the ‘subject of an intensifying moral panic in Britain and Ireland’ during the early 1990s (McVeigh, 1997:7). According to McVeigh, the existence and practice of New Age Travellers reignited the historic fears around Nomadic communities and the threats they apparently posed for the Sedentarised state, particularly over place and property.

Such deep-rooted resistance to the practice of Nomadism and the values of such communities, coupled with the production of negative stereotypical images, has led to the ‘othering’ of all Gypsy/Traveller communities in order to justify and legitimate their existence as ‘criminal, backward, deprived etc.’ and therefore a
threat to the dominant Sedentarised ‘norm’ (McVeigh, 1997:28). Drawing on Bauman’s work on the stranger (Bauman, 1989, 1997), Bhopal and Myers (2008) contend that the positioning of Gypsies as the ‘other’ has remained historically constant for over 500 years and positioned the Gypsy as a ‘significantly unsettling figure within contemporary accounts’ (Bhopal & Myers, 2008:3). They suggest that this has been a unique experience compared with the ‘othering’ of other ethnic-minority groups who have traditionally experienced racism yet become increasingly accepted by the dominant ‘white’ culture. They suggest that the irony here is that due to the Sedentarised nature of ‘Black’, ‘Asian’ and other minority ethnic groups, over time these other ‘othered’ groups have experienced a more positive relationship and even ‘become beacons of respectable and ordinary lives alongside their white neighbours’ (Bhopal & Myers, 2008:72).

As Bhopal and Myers point out, such ‘racial’ positioning of Gypsy/Travellers as ‘others’ affords the potential of raising questions around the ambiguous and complex relationship between racism and skin colour. By adopting a black/white approach to racism there is a danger that experiences faced by Gypsy/Traveller are obscured (Garrett, 2002; Power, 2003). As such the racialisation of Gypsy/Travellers from the rest of society is not something that is immediately apparent. Consequently, in framing the ‘othering’ of Gypsy/Travellers within the context of racism, Bhopal and Myers (2008) suggest how the positioning of these communities relates to ideas inside and outside ‘debates about ‘whiteness’ (2008:25). Thus suggesting that the boundaries of ‘whiteness’ are not only produced around skin colour (Garrett, 2003; Holloway,
2005; Power, 2002) but coupled with ideas of ‘white’ respectability and decency (Skeggs, 2004). In this case such boundaries have continued to ‘other’ nomadic groups and their lifestyle.

Similarly, Richardson (2006) argues that the history of ‘othering’ Gypsy/Travellers has been used to continually marginalise the practices of these communities. Analysing, in particular, the work of Lukes (1974, 1986) and Foucault (1977, 1980), Richardson (2006:1) contends that ‘anti-Nomadic discourse continues to act as a device that controls and shapes their treatment by the rest of society’. She asserts that such negative attitudes towards Gypsy/Traveller communities have become firmly embedded in the nuances of legislative and policy discourse and these have subsequently been internalised and are often used to justify the discrimination Gypsy/Travellers continue to experience from the Sedentarised majority. This helps to explain the resurgence of anti-Nomadic feelings and discrimination that was directed towards New Age Travellers in Britain and Ireland, as noted above.

Schools, then, become an example of ‘sites’ where the discrimination of Gypsy/Traveller children is continually played out as a social reality and used to ‘retain a position of “otherness”’ (Bhopal & Myers, 2008:117). As a result, these communities have become suspicious of the culture of mainstream education and concerned that assimilation to the mainstream may lead to the erosion of their way of life and their ‘nomadic’ values (Richardson & Ryer, 2012). According to Liégeois (1986:225):
If school wants the Gypsy child’s presence…it must transform these conflicts into manageable differences. The best means of achieving this is not – as was long, and is still far too often, believed – to force the children into rigid uniformity. On the contrary, it is when the child’s own capacities are welcomed and validated, and his experience drawn on in the classroom, that he has the best conditions for learning.

**Assimilation and Sedentarism**

As Liégeois (1986) notes, the idea of assimilation here is that by engaging with mainstream schooling which ‘values diversity’, children from Gypsy/Traveller communities will encounter other diverse communities. At the same time, their own lifestyle will be respected and afforded positive recognition and regard from other communities. Furthermore, Gypsy/Traveller children are supposed to be able to gain access and enjoy the opportunities on offer at school alongside their Sedentarised peers. However, despite the historical journey of education as a vehicle for equality and democracy, Tyler (2005) questions, like Liégeois, the effectiveness of the schooling process in shifting the historic negative perceptions towards Nomadic communities. According to Richardson and Ryder (2012:62) there remains a perception by some schools that children from these communities need to be rescued ‘from a threatening, debased and under-class existence’ and ‘such schools rationalise their task as compensating for deprivation’. Consequently, Benjamin (2002) asserts that although many schools may appear to be genuinely committed to ‘valuing diversity’, this is merely rhetoric, as their priorities are directed by the dominant culture, which does not recognise ‘positive’ difference in relation to any practice other than Sedentarism. Those following a nomadic lifestyle are thus perceived to be
lacking something and thus in need of integration with the mainstream (Vanderbeck, 2009). Consequently, such thinking does:

not enable us to hold on to difference as a means of illuminating present inequalities and imagining radical alternatives. It thus seeks to do away with ‘difference’ prematurely, and can become complicit in the work of shoring up existing relations of inequality. (Benjamin, 2002:311)

This is all the more pertinent to the inclusion of Gypsy/Traveller groups, due to initiatives being based on ideas from the perspective of Sedentarism. Against this backdrop of perceived ‘deprivation’ and assimilationist educational policies a question is thus raised as to whether schools will ever be able to fully support and respect the norms and values of children from a range of Nomadic backgrounds (Powell, 2010).

Benjamin (2002) also notes that within notions of difference some differences are not accepted, and the politics of difference has the power to conceal certain other differences. Therefore, one of the key problems of Gypsy/Traveller underachievement may lie with the construction of a ‘hierarchy of difference’, which continues to marginalise children from these communities, and where policy discourses and initiatives for inclusion persist to ‘other’ those that adopt Nomadic practices. As a result, Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles continue to be demonised and subsequently deemed unacceptable and unrecognisable within the schooling process (Richardson & Ryder, 2012).

Benjamin (2002:32) asserts that the problems associated with the inclusion of all children need ‘to be understood in terms of social relations of domination and
subordination’, particularly where Sedentarism is the device that ‘others’ some children. This is very much in line with Richardson’s (2006) concerns above, whereby the focus of current initiatives to include Gypsy/Travellers in the education system embeds cultures of Sedentarism. This Sedentarist framing fails to recognise the possibility of different socio-spatial lifestyles. Thus at a practical level, for example, this is illustrated in the prioritisation of school attendance targets as a criteria for ‘success’. For both Benjamin and Richardson, what is lacking is a more structural examination associated with the theories of social control, or, as I see it, spatial control and discourses associated with a Sedentarised mind-set. Levinson and Sparkes (2005:751) found that children from these communities, even those that had settled, possessed uniquely different ‘spatial orientations’ that related to their own cultural experiences and were therefore often at odds with the ‘structured social spaces of the school environment’. They conclude that:

Particularly alien to children coming from home places in which they can wander freely, and choose time to work alongside older family members, is an environment in which boundaries have been erected on age lines, and workplaces constructed for individualised use (Levinson & Sparkes, 2005:764)

Like Richardson and Benjamin, Levinson and Sparkes suggest that what is lacking is a wider structural appreciation of an embedded Nomadic mind-set with its own unique ‘value-system, philosophy and identity’ (2005:753), and the emotional attachment towards Nomadism held by many Gypsy/Traveller communities. So even if they are settled as a result of socio-economic pressures and/or constraints of movement by legislation, many Gypsy/Traveller
communities view Sedentarism as associated with assimilation and thus as representing a lack of recognition of their culture and values. Levinson and Sparkes found that many children in their study would use the social spaces in schools very much like they would in their everyday lives, as an ‘assertion of [their] cultural identity’ by moving around the school and rejecting the norms and rules of school life (2005:759). As a consequence of this, many teachers in their study perceived the actions of these children as deliberately confrontational and often considered them to be out of control and unteachable. Levinson and Sparkes go on to argue that ‘difficulties are exacerbated by suspicions on the part of Gypsy parents that schooling is likely to inculcate youngsters with values and social behaviours that are incompatible with traditional Gypsy life’ (2005:752).

It is precisely for this reason that Judith Okely (1983) contends that entry into the mainstream is a recipe for cultural assimilation that Gypsy/Traveller parents do not want (see also Ivatts, 2005), and which they should resist. Bhopal (2004:51) even ‘questions whether it is possible to achieve integration in mainstream schooling whilst preserving the cultural identity of Gypsy and Traveller groups’. Thus while education and schooling are based on values of Sedentarism, it is questionable whether Nomadic communities will ever be able to enjoy equality of opportunity. As Levinson and Sparkes (2005) go on to assert, entry into mainstream schooling by Gypsy/Traveller children can often be problematic in terms of adapting to a school environment that is so different from the spatial mind-set of their own culture and life experiences:
Schools have connotations with a confined, indoor lifestyle in which relationships are perceived as being marked by competitive, individualistic, goal-orientated working patterns, freedom of movement curtailed by petty rules and regulations, and a locus for conflict with non-Gypsy youngsters...in such a context, Gypsy youngsters perceive schools as potential sites of resistance in which their cultural identities are reaffirmed and those of mainstream society rejected. (2005:759)

Stewart contends that the ‘desire for cultural separation and cultural fears play a crucial role in self-exclusion’ by many Gypsy/Traveller children (1997:51), which is often condoned by their parents, as noted by McCaffery (2014). According to Lloyd and McCluskey (2008), many of these communities are concerned about a school’s lack of recognition of Gypsy/Traveller culture and family values. Because of this they note that many parents feel that they are unable to participate fully in state schooling. McCaffery (2014:46) also notes that ‘there is a real fear that success at school will involve incorporation into mainstream society and result in the loss of their culture’. This is something that is picked up in chapter seven and relates to the patriarchal nature of these communities. As a result, Clark and Greenfields contend that there is a belief among many of these communities ‘that on-site education may be of more benefit to their sons and daughters’ (Clark & Greenfields, 2006:215), or the children are simply pulled out of school. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (DfES, 2006b) has reported a ‘marked increase year-on-year of the number of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller families opting for Elective Home Education (EHE)’ (DfES, 2006b:2). This is despite a growing more positive change in parental attitudes towards the schooling of their children today (Bhopal, 2004; Bedmar & Leon, 2012; Kendall, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2010; Powell, 2010; Smith, 1997)
due to a recognition of ‘changes and growing restrictions on Gypsy Travellers’ traditional lifestyles’ (Bhopal, 2004:48).

According to Ivatts (2005), if Gypsy/Travellers do not want to participate in the state education system, then their decision should be respected, and he cites positively the ways in which ‘new travellers’ have delivered education to their children outside of school. However, in England, all children from the age of 5 until the age of 16 are legally required to receive an education in accordance with the requirements of a national curriculum. In a liberal democracy, this sometimes falls foul of another commitment, that of equality of opportunity, and it goes ‘to the core principles of human rights, namely respect, fairness and the equality of all citizens’ (Osler & Starkey, 1996). This said, Osler and Starkey suggest that the educational system can be used as a tool to learn about and respect cultural differences, thus assimilation of cultural differences in mainstream schooling could be paramount to the human rights agenda for education. However, as already noted, Okely (1997) suggests that Traveller communities are a minority culture that is generally against cultural assimilation, and therefore, in line with the promotion of human rights, should be able to ‘opt’ out of mainstream schooling and be allowed to educate their children in the ‘school of life’, travelling from place to place, outside the confines of the classroom and a national curriculum (Cemlyn et al. 2009).

There seems to be a contradiction here, especially around issues of parental choice and the right to practise one’s cultural traditions. Ivatts (2005:7) concurs with Okely (1997) and suggests that a genuine educational ‘equality of
opportunity’ would include the right of parents to choose exclusion from the mainstream and to home-educate their children in line with Article 26 of the UDHR, wherein ‘parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children’.

However, in work that involved extensive interview material with Gypsy/Traveller parents, Bhopal (2004) found that due mainly to economic changes, there is ‘a general acceptance of the value the education system could bring to the lives and aspirations of their community’s children’. This is particularly true for girls and their ability to read and write in order to engage with institutions outside their communities, and this is picked up in chapter seven. Despite such change, Bhopal (2004) did find that children often felt marginalised by the schools they attended due to the existence of negative stereotypes within such institutions. This is something with which Jordan (2001) concurs:

The overt stereotyping, discrimination and racial prejudice faced mostly by Gypsies and Travellers is said to keep them out of schools and certainly has contributed to low attendance levels and even non-attendance and dropout before the due leaving date. (2001:117)

Bhopal argues that Sedentarised government policy continues to be inadequate in relation to Gypsy/Traveller needs. She suggests that ‘current educational policy has to be re-developed to incorporate more effective and affirmative responses to interrupted and Nomadic learning’ (2004:48). This final section
traces what Sedentarised governments have put in place in order to include children from these communities.

**Nomadic Learning and the Provision of Mainstream Schooling**

Any school, anywhere, may have Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupils on roll. Raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children is the responsibility of everyone within the education system and a significant measure of the effectiveness of policies to combat educational and social exclusion. (DfES, 2005b:7)

In the 1960s, the Plowden Report (Plowden, 1967) considered that Gypsy/Traveller children were ‘probably the most severely deprived in the country’ and that ‘most of them do not even go to school and the potential abilities of those who do are stunted’ (1967:59–60). The Gypsy Council, founded in 1966, set up the Gypsy Council Education Trust in 1969 to address the problems. Later, the National Gypsy Education Council (NGEC) was founded in 1970 and its offshoot, the Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers (ACERT), in 1973 (ACERT, 1993). As a result of pressure from these organisations, the government and local authorities began to look more seriously at the problem of Gypsy/Traveller underachievement. Consequently, a number of different initiatives in the teaching of these children were pursued both within and outside the state sector. These included the implementation of summer schools involving voluntary students and student teachers and mobile caravan schools, and adult education programmes on-site and in mainstream schools (Cemlyn et al. 2009).
Despite these initiatives, the Swann Report (DfES, 1985) on the schooling of ethnic minorities continued to argue for an urgent need for better educational provision for Gypsy/Traveller children. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (1996) estimated that only 15–20 per cent were attending secondary school, with 10,000 Gypsy/Traveller children still not receiving any education, and those that were, were underachieving. According to a Department for Education report on ‘Ethnicity and Education’ published in 2006, this figure has now risen to nearly 12,000 (DfES, 2006a:11), although the actual figure may be higher than this due to many Gypsy/Traveller children concealing their identity for fear of prejudice (Cemlyn et al. 2009; DfE, 2010; Hancock, 1997).

Government reports and publications throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s continued to find that the low attendance at school of Gypsy/Traveller children was still acute and a major obstacle in their educational success and something that needed to be addressed. It was New Labour, in government from 1997-2010, that were instrumental in reinforcing such issues, setting up these communities as a ‘target group’ in a variety of educational policy initiatives (Ofsted, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; DfES, 2003c, 2005b; 2006c; DCSF, 2008, 2009; DfE, 2010). OfSted (2002b) were also provided with guidance to find out about the inclusion and progress of children from Gypsy/Traveller communities in mainstream schools (Tyler, 2005). As a result of this renewed focus and these policy initiatives the Department for Education and Schooling produced a ‘good-practice’ guidance report for all schools (DfES, 2003c).
One important area of intervention in enabling children to access schooling during ‘travelling time’ was by introducing dual registration:

Where pupils have a mobile lifestyle their education can be interrupted in many ways: seasonal movement as a result of work, including on a travelling fair or circus; travelling to attend important family and annual traditional events such as festivals and horse fairs; all year round mobility because of a lack of a secure place due to inadequate site provision nationally. To protect the continuity of learning for Gypsy Traveller pupils Dual Registration is permitted. (DfES, 2003c:7)

According to the DfES (2003c), schools were required to become flexible in their admissions procedures in order to provide stability in provision, thus allowing for and accommodating ‘dual registration’ with other schools:

To protect the continuity of learning for Gypsy Traveller pupils dual registration is permitted. If parents inform their ‘base’ schools or the TESS that the family will be travelling and intend to return by a given time, the school may keep the child’s school place for them and record their absence as authorised. The child can register at other schools whilst the family is travelling. (DfES, 2003c:7)

Subsequent legislation from the current government notes (2016:12):

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.
Therefore, in theory and in law, education authorities were compelled to allocate Gypsy/Traveller children a ‘base’ school in order to ensure their ‘continuity of learning’, and both schools should keep a child’s school place open when the community is travelling and authorise their non-attendance accordingly.

However, within the current school structure this is often very difficult to achieve, especially where there is an emphasis on attendance targets monitored by Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) (Ofsted, 2003:8); and the requirement to attend school regularly if not travelling. Much of the way school life operates, and the way the curriculum is delivered (Tyler, 2005:25), continues to be at odds with a Nomadic existence and mind set. Consequently, despite their legal obligation to secure, allocate and retain a school place for these children, schools continue to terminate school places for Gypsy/Traveller children. Thus, even when enrolled at a school, many children from these communities find themselves disproportionately excluded from state schools for reasons of non-attendance (Ofsted, 1996, 1999; Jordan, 1996, 2001; Lloyd & Norris, 1998; Lloyd et al., 1999).

Although education legislation since the latter part of the 1990s (particularly as implemented by the New Labour Government, 1997–2010) was concerned about the inclusion of all children and the accommodation of their particular needs in schools, the current climate of league tables, test results and standards has created a paradoxical situation that has since been ‘racheted’ up by subsequent governments, whereby schools ‘have the competitiveness of the
examination system uneasily co-existing with overt policies of inclusion and holistic personal growth’ (Kenny, 2014:36). In chapter three, I explore in more detail how this paradoxical situation relates to the development of neo-liberal discourse since the 1980s, since when schooling has increasingly become ‘discursively re-constituted…re-thought’ and ‘made subject to competition and choice’ (Turner-Bisset, 2007:18–19). In such a climate, it is even harder to envisage how Gypsy/Traveller children could be adequately included and accommodated in schools, particularly with the consolidation of education policy that continues to align the market even more with provision where competition and individualism take precedence. Ivatts (2005:5) noted that the climate of British education policy is one of promoting ‘inclusion’, but the emphasis in both central and local government on ‘paper inclusion’, such as acceptable statistics on attendance and achievement, ignores an ‘invisible culture of exclusion’ where Gypsy/Traveller pupils find that they are not genuinely included by many schools and their culture is not visible in what is taught. The latter of which is succinctly summed up here:

The curriculum is neither appealing to young Traveller children, nor flexible enough...There is a feeling that what they are being taught doesn’t reflect their lives – when they’re looking at images they are thinking, ‘where am I in here, where do I fit in?’ The child is left asking what this has to do with them. (Lorna Daymond, head of TESS Norfolk, as cited in The Guardian, 9 December 2005)

So the official curriculum of most schools often fails to recognise the particular cultures of Gypsy/Travellers and to incorporate positive images of these communities in terms of what is delivered in classroom teaching and the
representations in children’s work on display (DfE, 2010). This is despite earlier reports about the benefits of acknowledging Nomadic communities within the school curriculum:

Where the presence of Travelling children is openly acknowledged, and where accurate and positive images of the different Nomadic communities are featured within both the resources of the school and the curriculum, then the response is lively and there is a genuine openness to learning. (Ofsted, 1996)

Bhopal (2004) further contends that despite the positive changes in Gypsy/Traveller culture towards school attendance (as will be discussed shortly), there has not been a concomitant change within educational institutions that embraces the variety of groups that make up these communities. Despite the rhetoric around inclusivity throughout the 1990s, which focused on the promotion and respect of diversity in line with equality of opportunity including the need to ‘reach out to parents and families, communicate high expectations and offer flexible curriculum arrangements’ (DfE, 2010:v), changes in line with these debates have not been forthcoming (Richardson & Ryder, 2012).

Berger and Gross (1999) argue that the Literacy Strategy could contribute to inclusive education, by raising teachers’ expectations of pupils and setting clearer objectives. And indeed, the government have made it clear that the National Curriculum and associated strategies are to be used in a flexible way in order to cater for the range of abilities in a given classroom:
The National Curriculum programmes of study set out what most pupils should be taught at each key stage – but teachers should teach the knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that suit their pupils' abilities. This may mean choosing knowledge, skills and understanding from earlier or later key stages, so that individual pupils can make progress and show what they can achieve. A similarly flexible approach will be needed to take account of any gaps in pupils’ learning resulting from missed or interrupted schooling. (Ofsted, 2003:9)

However, many schools bound by such a national curriculum and associated strategies find it incredibly difficult to deliver them in a flexible way, and they also fail to adapt materials in order to represent the lives of all cultures, particularly Gypsy/Traveller culture (DfE, 2010). What seems to be important, and what schools have become increasingly focused on, is getting each cohort of children to attend school regularly and reach ‘the expected level’ of achievement by the end of each year in order for the school to meet the attendance and attainment targets set by the government (see chapter three). Although schools may understand the need for a flexible and inclusive approach in the teaching of a national curriculum, due to the government’s emphasis on attendance and achievement targets, they often find it problematic when accommodating low-achieving children, especially if these children also fail to attend school regularly. According to Richardson and Ryder (2012:3) part of the problem is that ‘there is frequently a misunderstanding surrounding the legitimacy of the very cultural status of these communities’.

It seems that strategies do shift and change and have increasingly attempted to address the needs of those groups that are underachieving in the educational system (DfES, 2003c; DCSF 2008, 2009; DfE 2010) by promoting teaching and
learning styles that may be more appropriate for Gypsy/Traveller children (Foster & Horton, 2005:21). However, pressure to get results and hit targets often means that teaching and learning is still inflexible for many teachers trying to engage and motivate these children.

Another problem that is often discussed in relation to school attendance is the lack of importance placed on schooling by parents from these communities, particularly around secondary schooling. It is often assumed that the traditional picture of Gypsy/Traveller parental attitudes towards the schooling of their children is a negative one. This traditional view is upheld by the findings from a government report (DfES, 2003c). This report suggests that many Gypsy/Traveller parents have themselves had little or no schooling or have had poor quality experiences, especially in secondary school, and therefore often have few literacy skills, making it difficult for them to know how best to support their children if they decide to withdraw them from school. As a result, the report argues that some of these parents ‘do not appreciate the relevance of the secondary curriculum to their children’s future and see it as undermining their own values and aspirations for their children’ (DfES, 2003c:4). Such aspirations relate to the expectation that boys will leave school by the age of 11 and work alongside their fathers, and girls will leave to look after the ‘homeplace’ with their mothers (Casey, 2014). Such adoption of gender relations at a young age is discussed further in chapter seven.

However, according to Griffin (2014:13), this idea is ‘slowly changing and a greater value is placed on literacy as essential for modern day living, though
secondary education is still frequently regarded as irrelevant’. They go on to argue that

While the primary education sector goes a long way to supporting the Gypsy and Travelling communities, at the secondary level, such children can experience exclusion and bullying and become disaffected...there are still enormous challenges to be met within the education sector in overcoming prejudice and cultural differences between the settled and Travelling communities. (2014:14)

Bhopal (2004) agrees, and suggests there is an emerging body of literature which makes the case that the last ten to fifteen years has witnessed a sea change in parents’ attitudes towards the education system. She notes that the assumptions that Gypsy/Traveller communities are antipathetic, even hostile, to the ‘education of their children’ is unfounded (2004:48).

Gypsy/Traveller occupations in countries like the UK traditionally involved horse dealing, entertainment, seasonal agricultural labour and scrap metal dealing. Such pursuits have been increasingly marginalised, although fruit picking and tarmacking persist in some areas. This, coupled with the increasing disappearance of the ‘grass verge’ on Britain’s roads (Acton, 1974) and the appropriation (usually by the central or local state) of common land, has meant that Gypsy/Travellers have decreasing options for their children to both dwell and make a living in traditional ways (Cemlyn et al, 2009). As a result, parents have had to reassess the possibilities of employment for their children, which has meant an acceptance of education within the mainstream school system. According to ACERT (1993:16),
Schooling has become a fundamental factor in the cultural, social and economic future of Gypsy and Traveller communities, notably through the tools that it can provide to facilitate adaptation to a changing cultural environment. Gypsy and Traveller parents themselves are increasingly aware of this and the demand for schooling is rising accordingly.

This is confirmed by the latest report *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils* (DfE, 2010:iv) which notes that ‘staying on in school to gain qualifications is being recognised as a means of broadening employment opportunities’. Clay (1997:157) also claims that many Travellers are choosing to ‘undertake less seasonal travel’ so as not to disrupt their children’s attendance at school. However, in line with Griffin’s comments above, Bhopal (2004) goes on to argue that although parents are becoming increasingly less antagonistic towards the schooling of their children, due to prejudice, lack of acceptance of their culture within schools, and assimilation into the dominant community, many parents are still quite reluctant to send their children to school, particularly at secondary level.

I would argue that what is missing from much of the existing literature relates to patriarchy and gender equality issues within Gypsy/Traveller cultures and the expectations that children will adopt their gender roles as breadwinners and carers at a young age. Such ideas around gender equality seem to be overlooked bar some significant exceptions (Casey, 2014; Cemlyn et al. 2009; Powell, 2010). In chapter seven, I explore these issues, particularly highlighting the fact that although girls are staying longer in education in order to learn to
read and write, boys are still leaving at 11 years of age or sooner (DfE, 2010; Levison & Sparkes, 2003, Powell, 2010).

**Final Synthesis**

Modern nation states – the dominant global form of territorial political organization today – are less than adequate containers for the full expression of the multiple varieties of competing individual and communal identities found in all parts of the inhabited world, nor do they necessarily facilitate the negotiation and vindication of equal rights and liberties for all. (Griffin, 2014:1)

With the introduction of free mass schooling at the beginning of the twentieth century through to the inclusive aims of the social democratic settlement during and after the Second World War, schooling became established as a vehicle through which the liberal democratic state might pursue the goal of a fairer society based on equality. Schooling was additionally understood as a mechanism to ensure a degree of political, social and economic stability. The realisation of these goals was synonymous with modernity, where progress and the respect of individual rights and freedoms became important issues alongside the prosperity of the country. Educational policy initiatives in the UK have been underpinned by a particular set of values associated with national identity and community improvement. These attempts to ‘improve’ the citizen and secure social justice have also presumed a settled population. This Sedentarised ‘norm’ has resulted in the marginalisation of those communities that follow a Nomadic tradition. The literature on educational policy indicates that Sedentarism is so normative and entrenched in social institutions and
practices that it can be seen as a ‘process’ that shapes the way much of life is organised. This includes the way we school our children, where educational policy continues to marginalise, disrespect and exclude Nomadic children, both implicitly and explicitly.

So, on the one hand, we have the birth of mass schooling as a tool for economic prosperity, progress and the development of a nation state, and on the other, we have schooling as a tool for social justice and human rights. If we consider neo-liberal schooling in a historical trajectory, it is clear that the liberal democratic pursuit of educational improvement, although engaged with the social-justice agenda and human rights, has a firmly established relationship with the international economy. As such, the social justice/human rights agenda has increasingly become mere rhetoric as the market increasingly controls and defines the meaning of schooling (Cole, 2000). It is hard to imagine how schooling can be deployed as a tool for equality and social justice for all children when the historical formation of an education system has also been about the establishment of a Sedentarised nation state and the exclusion of Nomadic communities.

Much of the prejudice that children from Gypsy/Traveller communities encounter in many schools today stems from this history of hostility associated with this concept of Sedentarism. Literature within Gypsy/Traveller studies suggests that the ‘settled’ community perceives Gypsy/Traveller communities as a problem because of their mobility and ‘placelessness’. This problematising of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles is perhaps evidenced by the raft of government
legislation during the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly in terms of town and country planning, the modernisation of the road transport system in the 1970s and the subsequent loss of ‘stopping places’, and the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The collective effect of government policy in various areas has been pressure towards assimilation, achieved through increased forms of surveillance of many Gypsy/Traveller communities, including through educational initiatives. Recent legislation has done little to contest the continued marginalisation of Nomadic groups or challenge much of the prejudice they continue to experience. In the context of debates around ‘whiteness’, there seems to be a correlation between these communities and ‘white’ decency’ that positions such communities as ‘white’ others.

This said, the British state acknowledges the prejudice Gypsy/Traveller children and their parents face in schools in a range of recent reports. The disruption of the schooling of Gypsy/Traveller children through, for example, lack of attendance, has been noted, and various levels of support in schools have been forthcoming. However, as a result of a broken attendance record and an intolerance of their background, the state and many educational institutions perceive Gypsy/Traveller children as problematic. The very notion of continuous attendance at one school presumes settled living. Thus despite a rhetoric of inclusion, human rights, and the promotion and respect of diversity within schools, particularly during the ‘Thirdway’ years of New Labour, a presumption of Sedentarism still inevitably discriminates against Nomadic communities. If Nomadism was accepted as a viable lifeway in contemporary
Britain, then children could move freely from school to school without any restrictions, classrooms would be based on the development of a child/student and not necessarily be classroom cohorts based on age. Furthermore, education would not just be about ‘schooling’, but would encompass a wider learning environment based on the idea that learning can take place more readily outside schools.

The tensions between a Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle and mainstream schooling are clearly evident and continue to marginalise children in many schools. These tensions are exacerbated by educational policies that focus on standards, performativity, and individualism alongside a need to be settled. Therefore, Gypsy/Traveller differences are not reflected in social policy initiatives intended to enhance equality and the schooling experience of many Nomadic communities. It is to this that the next chapter turns in looking at the impact of neo-liberalism on schooling as another key factor in the educational marginalisation of children from these communities.
Chapter Three

Neo-Liberalism and the Privatisation of School and Education: An Erosion of Educational Social Justice?

Over the last 25 years teachers have been subjected to an increasing barrage of instructions, guidance, advice and statutory regulation, all designed by an administration that acts as if the fine details of classroom life can be fully controlled...Governments and the inspectorate behave as if the process of teaching can be reduced to a set of rules, which only require mechanical application. (Adey & Dillon, 2012:xxiii–xxiv)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the erosion of Nomadism as a systemic social arrangement has ‘othered’ those who adopt such a lifestyle, which in turn has had a negative impact on the schooling experiences of many children from these communities. This chapter develops this debate and argues that any structural analysis of educational underachievement for these communities has become further side-lined by the historical ‘ratcheting’ of neo-liberal education policy (Ball, 2008, 2013). To that end, this chapter engages with some of the literature which argues that neo-liberal policy architecture, with its focus on privatisation, individual responsibility and consumer choice has continued to destabilise the egalitarian project of education particularly in terms of class,
'race' and gender. The specific character of the neo-liberal project has been that it supposedly has equality built in as ‘Markets will ultimately distribute resources efficiently and fairly according to effort, thus the best possible mechanism to ensure a better future for all citizens’, irrespective of their social/cultural location (Apple, 2005b:276).

The introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act (abbreviated to 1988 ERA henceforth) symbolises the strengthening of this shift towards the belief that market led education provides for all. Consequently, the emphasis of education policy remains strongly focused on individual outcomes, parental choice and competition between schools. The 1988 ERA marked this discursive shift that has continued to influence and shape educational policy and practice as an ‘outcomes-led’ system ever since. As such, the schooling landscape we have today in England has been reduced to a focus on the performance of children and young people in national assessments in order for the school to secure a strong position in the market. The emphasis on outcomes in national assessments has become a ‘natural’ part of school life and represents the indicators of a ‘quality product’. In turn, this has become synonymous with accountability and a discourse of raising standards (by consumerism) that now dominates education policy (Wrigley, 2003). As a result, schools have diversified with new actors and agencies involved in education via the introduction of city academies and specialist schools (under New Labour); the expansion of academies, the launch of Free schools and the scrapping of education quangos (under the Coalition Government); and the continuation of Academies and development of more Free Schools (under the current
Conservative Government) (Ball, 2013). All of these initiatives have continued to undermine much of the discourse associated with schooling and structural inequalities (Chitty, 2014) and placed underachievement firmly within ‘individual schools, teachers and families’ (Bailey & Ball, 2016:141) and as Apple (2000:71) succinctly observes:

Equality, no matter how limited or broadly conceived, has become redefined. No longer is it seen as linked to past group oppression and disadvantage. It is now simply a case of guaranteeing individual choice under the conditions of a “free market”. Thus, the current emphasis on “excellence”… has shifted educational discourse so that underachievement once again increasingly is seen as largely the fault of the student.

The implementation of the 1988 ERA was passed by a New Right (neo-liberal) Government and underpinned a commitment to embedding market mechanisms across the public services thus minimising state intervention. Such commitment to the positioning of education in line with the market was only partially reconstituted during the subsequent Third Way years, of the New Labour Government from 1997 to 2010, which represented the centre ground of the ‘old’ left and the ‘new’ right. This Third Way embraced globalisation and was keen on ‘marrying together an open, competitive and successful economy with a just, decent and human society’ (Blair, 1997, in Driver and Martell, 2000:148). Third Way education policy thus continued to retain its connection to the competitive (global) market whilst at the same time committed to address the problems of inequality and raising ‘standards’ for all by promoting the values of ‘equal worth; opportunity for all; responsibility; and community’
By continuing to pursue market policies in education, New Labour continued to involve ‘new policy actors from business and the voluntary sector’ (Ball, 2013:178). Consequently, one of New Labour’s concerns was to ‘match rights with responsibilities; and to foster a culture of duty within ‘strong communities’ (Driver & Mitchell, 2000:149). Such concerns were something that was again picked up by the subsequent Coalition Government (2010-2014), where ‘localism’ and the ‘big society’ further promoted individual responsibilities and duties as citizens in order to promote individual opportunities in an age of austerity (McGimpsey, 2016). According to Furlong (2013), this marked a new form of neo-liberalism, whereby ‘…neoliberalism is understood in more traditional terms. It is being presented as the key to localism, with an aim to abolish centralised bureaucracies and allow a wide variety of agencies to deliver state services’ (Furlong, 2013:42). The current Conservative led Government today continues to increase this mantra of localism, individual responsibility and consumer choice through the further promotion of free schools and academies. As such policies put in place by the former New Labour Government have both been continued and changed to strengthen market involvement in the provision of schooling, legitimated now by austerity and further public service cuts since the 2008 financial crisis (Mcgimpsey, 2016).

Education policy has thus become further framed within an ‘economic’ discourse that has justified and perpetuated a particular set of ‘new’ values deemed necessary for the development and engagement with the ‘global’ market (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). These values relate to a need for education to
reflect the potential for the economic success of global economic competition, based on the technological knowledge economy (Ball, 2008, 2013), whilst at the same time enhances individual opportunity and social cohesion. The notion that knowledge and education has become a global ‘business product’ has been firmly embedded within educational policy and achievements, particularly since the Third Way years of New Labour. This means that knowledge has continued to become a commodity and thus something that can be ‘purchased’. As such, everything that is ‘education’ has been reduced to an economic value, with state intervention in terms of social justice, heavily decreased. Consequently, the social value of education that could have provided egalitarianism and equal opportunities for now lies permanently in the hands of individual schools and the individuals themselves.

Drawing on these ideas, this chapter demonstrates how schools – as social institutions – embody and perpetuate a certain belief system, or hegemonic discourse, that is embedded via the structures of neo-liberal educational policy and ideology, and enacted by the agency of educators as individuals. Examining this literature provides the context for chapter four, where I develop my theoretical framework (spatial lens) and argue that neo-liberal educational policy discourse with its focus on individual merit, school improvement, standards, performance and outcomes has become the ‘objective’ of schooling (or in spatial terms: representations of school space). I explain how these dominant discourses act as the ‘spatial veils’ (Soja, 1996) that have made many schools ‘spaces’ that focus on the achievement of tests and thus hides and obscures the idea that education and schooling is a tool for ‘true’ equal opportunities for all.
It is this focus on performance and achievement in tests that has constructed the lived space of the school as a ‘place’ that marginalises certain children, particularly those from minority backgrounds.

This chapter then explores the impact of this (re)positioning of education policy that has become firmly based on the principles of the market and economic individualism since the 1988 ERA. The chapter argues that traditional constructions of structural inequalities based on a child’s social/cultural location, including socio-economic status, ‘race’ and gender, are simply (re)produced as schools compete for certain children in the marketplace. To this end (with the main focus on New Labour education policies) I examine the literature that demonstrates how neo-liberal educational policy has had ‘enormous implications for the way we think about education’ and actually changed ‘the values that underpin education’ (Ball & Youdell, 2008:3) to the continued detriment of equity for all children, none more so than those from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

The 1988 ERA – Laying Neo-Liberal Foundations

The ERA placed schools into a marketplace where they had to compete against others to ensure their survival...In order to facilitate this competition the government devised the idea of league tables for England and Wales where the examination results of all schools were published and ranked. (Skelton, 2001:5)

The passing of the 1988 ERA, implemented by the ‘New Right’ Government of Margaret Thatcher, was part of a wider political and cultural project based on
the economic rationality of neo-conservatism (or neo-liberalism) (Apple, 2005a). It marked a pivotal moment in the political organisation of educational discourse as well as the organisation of public policy more widely (Walsh, 2006). The ERA symbolised ‘a new “economy” of power’ (Ball, 1994:1) that reconceptualised the management of schools increasingly in line with politics, the market, competition and choice. The underlying philosophy behind such thinking was associated with the neo-liberal drive for the privatisation and accountability of public services in a ‘globalised’ world, in which the private sector is seen as more effective and efficient than the public sector and as synonymous with economic growth and progress. As Walford states (1990:66):

The underlying ideology of privatization is based upon a belief that the public sector is wasteful, inefficient, and unproductive, while the private sector is efficient, effective, and responsive to rapid changes that are needed in the modern world.

Such neo-liberal commitment towards the privatisation of the public sector led to a ‘new’ way of thinking about the role and purpose of a ‘modern’ public sector, which resulted in the blurring of boundaries between the ‘old’ public sector based on welfare and the ‘new’ private sector based on the marketplace, where the former was seen ‘as a threat to competitiveness and…modernisation’ (Ball, 2008:15). Such thinking cemented the idea that, alongside other public institutions, schools were economically wasteful – ‘… “black holes” into which money is poured – and then seemingly disappears – but which do not provide anywhere near adequate results’ (Apple, 2005b:273).
Ball (1990, 2007, 2008, 2013) contends that the development of these ideas initially became embedded in political discussions from the late 1960s through to the 1980s. He notes that ‘spending constraints and privatisation were the central themes in policy debate during this period’ (Ball, 2008:78). As a result, a new ‘private sector’ language became embedded within school-improvement rhetoric based on raising educational standards. This eventually led to the reconfiguration of the landscape of schooling to reflect market ideology that remains the thrust of education policy today. Since 1988, this has profoundly influenced ideas of what schooling should be about and what should be achieved, particularly in relation to the role of teachers. As Ball and Youdell (2009:78–79) suggest: ‘Targets, accountability, competition and choice, leadership, entrepreneurism, performance related pay and privatisation articulate new ways of thinking about what teachers do, what they value and what their purposes are.’ The ‘beginnings’ of this discursive shift that led to the eventual implementation of the 1988 ERA can be traced back to the political debates associated with progressive versus traditional education, in particular during the period between 1969 and 1977. Key to these debates was the publication of the ‘Black Papers’ and the delivery of Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan’s infamous speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, when taking up the role of prime minister in 1976 (Ball, 1990, 2008).

The Black Papers consisted of a succession of five right-wing mainstream leaflets that were published between 1969 and 1977. The papers provided a critique of the progressive education and comprehensive schooling that had influenced provision and discussions during the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries and the post-war years of the 1940s, 50s and 60s (Ball, 1990). Progressive education was based on the idea that children should be allowed to develop naturally and, as such, schooling should be child-centred, non-selective and non-competitive, as laid down by the Plowden Report in 1967. The Black Papers, however, argued that the education system was in crisis and that it was egalitarian ideology that was at the heart of the problem. The first paper argued that ‘We must reject the chimera of equality and proclaim the ideal of quality’ (Cox & Dyson, 1969a:8). Thus the underlying message was that:

the most serious danger facing Britain is the threat to the quality of education at all levels. The motive force behind this threat is the ideology of egalitarianism…. In the name of ‘fairness’ and ‘social justice’, sentimentality has gone far to weaken the essential toughness on which quality depends. (1969a:7)

Collectively, the papers were vehemently opposed to all forms of progressivism, mixed-ability classes and comprehensive schooling and argued for a return to the traditional formal teaching methods used by grammar and secondary modern schools at that time, where children were taught in groups with those of similar ability. The second Black Paper asserted that:

The boy of intellectual ability who emerges late tends to be given personal attention in good secondary modern schools and carefully nurtured; in a comprehensive, there is less incentive for teachers to look for such people in a crowd. And the fact remains that possible injustices are inescapable wherever there is excellence; and that to solve this problem by removing competition and grading and by denying excellence is to solve it by denying education itself…The chief sufferers will always be the bright children forced to proceed at a pace too slow
for them, but all the children will suffer to some degree. (Cox & Dyson, 1969b:5)

The papers were also concerned about social order, with the second Black Paper going on to argue that:

if informed, civilized, mature and well-balanced citizens are wanted for the future, we must scrutinise most carefully those educationalists who teach hatred for authority and contempt of tradition; who nurture ignorance and self-indulgence as a point of principle; who disregard the claims or indeed the realities of the social world. (1969b:15)

There was a concern that if ‘We need first-class surgeons, engineers, scientists, mathematicians, lawyers, scholars...these can only show up through a system of elitist training and competitive exams’ (1969b:14). It was argued in the papers that comprehensive schools, which by definition promoted the teaching of children in mixed-ability groups, were seen as preventing the brighter children from excelling in schools:

In a classroom where the pupils vary widely in their abilities the dull quickly become depressed, and are often the butts of their companions, while the brightest become bored and restive. If, with classes of thirty or more, the curriculum and teaching-methods are adapted to the pace of the majority, it is impossible to the latent capacities either of the dull or of the bright. (1969b:20)

The idea was that all ‘bright’ children were inherently ‘bright’ and should be grouped together and not be held back by the other not so ‘bright’ children. This related to ideas at the time that saw intelligence as a measurable concept that was fundamentally inherited and that individual difference had little to do
with the effects of the environment in which children were raised. As such, the papers were in favour of grammar schools, with the third paper focusing on school organisation and how schools could enable ‘brighter’ children to excel (Cox & Dyson, 1970). The final two papers built on the idea that competition, parental choice and control of schools was the next step in facilitating these ideas in order to provide quality provision that would support the ‘bright’ working-class child. The last paper stated (Cox & Boyson, 1977:9) that:

The possibilities for parental choice of secondary (and also primary) schools should be improved via the introduction of the education voucher or some other method. Schools that few wish to attend should then be closed and their staff dispersed. The building could be reopened by a young head, a church or some other body capable of developing a school responsive to parental demand...The direct grant schools should be reabsorbed into the state system and used as super-selective academic schools to keep scholarship alive and show the standards possible with bright children.

According to Ball (1990), although these Black Papers were later dismissed as merely descriptive and rhetorical, they were successful in silencing progressive ideology, which had ‘already swung too far’ (Cox & Dyson, 1969a:8). Although some elements of progressive schooling may have had merit, the Black Papers had been successful in creating a public view, popularised by the media, that progressive education was at the heart of the deterioration in academic standards and that it was responsible for social unrest and was ultimately a threat to the preservation of an ‘English’ national identity.
The ‘Ruskin’ speech by the then Labour leader James Callaghan in 1976 attempted to address the sentiments of the Black Papers by reintroducing education as an important political tool for equity. Callaghan was behind progressive and comprehensive schooling, although he did raise concerns about the decline in standards for reading, writing and arithmetic. Such subsequent comments were seen as supportive of the Black Papers’ call for traditional education and thus the need for an increase in the centralised control of the schooling system. The restructuring of educational discourse in line with neoliberalism had finally been laid, thus cementing particular ways of talking and thinking about schooling and arguably silencing ‘old’ progressive discourses around schooling as an egalitarian project and tool for social justice. What has followed has been the increased scrutiny and accountability of schools and the rise in a managerialist pedagogical framework where ‘achievement’ has become the marker of quality. Schooling as a human social activity for personal growth and egalitarianism has become something that is now rarely discussed by governments (Hodkinson, 1991).

Within the context of this political and cultural project fuelled by the Black Papers, it was the 1988 ERA, eleven years after the last paper had been published, that finally wedded education to the market. The market model of education has continued to influence the accountability of schools and shape the educational policy landscape we have today. The implementation of the National Curriculum in England and Wales associated with the 1988 ERA became part of the discourse by which schools became increasingly controlled by and held accountable to central government and its agencies. What followed
in 1991 was the introduction of national assessments in English, Mathematics and Science, known as SATs (Standardised Assessment Tasks), for 7-year-olds (Year 2). In 1994, these were introduced for 11-year-olds (Year 6) and in 1997 for 14-year-olds (Year 9). Particularly damaging has been the publication of league tables in line with achievement in these tests, which has become the measuring tool of ‘quality’ that is then used to rank a school’s performance and thus judge it as failing or not. Consequently, educational policy has firmly assumed a particular notion of educational ‘quality’ in which performance in these tests has become synonymous with the rhetoric and discourse surrounding school improvement and ‘raising’ standards dominant since the late 1990s. Accordingly, this has led schools to focus more and more on teaching ‘what’ children should think as opposed to ‘how’ they should think, as curriculum content becomes narrowed in line with knowledge that is tested and measured by league tables (Kelly, 2009).

Alongside league tables, a further mechanism in place to scrutinise the ‘performance’ of schools (and teachers) has been the introduction of Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) in 1992, set up to regularly inspect schools against this narrow range of knowledge and attainment targets. As a result of the pressure put on schools to retain a good position in the league tables and satisfy Ofsted, schools have become increasingly evaluated against the output measures of test results. By adopting a measurable-outcomes-based approach ‘The spaces for professional autonomy and judgement are (further) reduced’, with teaching and learning practices becoming standardised as a result (Ball, 1994:49).
It is interesting to note here that in England and Wales, Year 2 SATs were abolished by the New Labour Government in 2004, and Year 9 SATs in 2009, due to concerns over this lack of autonomy and the narrowing of curriculum knowledge. Furthermore, all SATs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have since been abandoned for the same reasons, yet England still continues to administer and publish Year 6 SATs for children at the end of primary schooling (DfEE, 2015). Ironically, in 2015 Year 2 SATs have been reintroduced by the current Conservative Government, which has also introduced a form of testing for younger children at the age of 5. This demonstrates just how strong neo-liberal discourse around school success and ‘standards’ has become firmly focused on measurable outcomes. A new terminology of ‘school readiness’ even prevails in the pre-school environment, where these very young children are expected to have structured teaching sessions in order that when they get to the compulsory schooling age of 5, they are already ‘on track’ to achieve expected outcomes. Those parents who buy in to this neo-liberal discourse and can afford it will then send their child to pre-schools that have a ‘proven’ track record in getting children ‘ready for school’, putting them at an advantage over other children. In effect, the embodiment of neo-liberal values of competition and individualism has created a situation where parents collude with schools in order to get their children ‘ready’ for school. The duty of all parents therefore is to choose the ‘best’ schools for their children according to the league tables, even if that means those who are unable to gain access to such schools may perhaps have less than the ‘best’ education.
Cementing the Neo-liberal Identity

Since 1988, policy makers, influenced by global trends and anxieties about economic competitiveness, have reinvented and reintroduced the principal ingredients of the payment by results system.... Teachers are held accountable for test and examination outcomes by at least twenty different mechanisms. (Barker, 2010:xxi)

So important have school league tables become as the measure of performance and indicator of quality provision, they are now the mechanism on which many parents (particularly the more affluent), seeing themselves as consumers, base the choice of school for their children. If such an affluent parent lives near a school that is seen as ‘failing’ they can simply move to an area where there is an ‘outstanding’ school. As a result, teachers’ and pupils’ performance have become more and more closely scrutinised. Pressure on teachers to get results has moulded particular identities and expectations around their classroom practice based on the attainment of tests. These ‘new’ identities have become closely associated with the neo-liberal drive to improve schools. According to Ball and Olmedo (2013:88):

Neoliberalism requires and enacts a ‘new type of individual’, that is a ‘new type of teacher and head teacher’ formed within the logic of competition. The apparatuses of neoliberalism are seductive, enthralling and overbearingly necessary. It is a ‘new’ moral system that subverts and re-orient us to its truths and ends. It makes us responsible for our performance and for the performance of others. We are burdened with the responsibility to perform, and if we do not we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible.
Consequently, schools have completely transformed the way they manage and organise their teaching and learning, which has been pervaded by self-interest, personal motive and consumerism. Such values, I argue, have reconstituted the representational space of schools and the social relations associated with teachers, pupils, parents, governors, local authorities and government. Such changes, as explained further in chapter four, have ‘spatially’ re-formed what school improvement is about by providing: ‘a new language, a new set of incentives and disciplines and a new set of roles, positions and identities within which what it means to be a teacher, student/learner, parent etc. are all changed’ (Ball & Youdell, 2009:11).

Thus, with market ideology being ever more evident in the language and discourses used in education policy, ‘efficiency and an “ethic” of cost–benefit analysis are the dominant norms’ (Apple, 2005b:273), schools are organised ‘like businesses’ and are required to behave in a ‘more business-like’ way (Ball, 2008:77). As a result, many schools have become even more competitive with each other, constantly ‘competing for certain types of parents and certain types of pupils’ (Walsh, 2006:97). Many schools have also become increasingly concerned about their ‘image’ in order to present an environment that attracts a certain type of parent. Obviously, not all parents are in a position to move house to the locale of particular schools. Rather, it is the affluent parents who have the money and can afford private tuition for their children. So schools and these parents work together to attract certain children that will do well in tests and secure the school a good position in league tables.
The policy discourse of ‘business’ and ‘consumerism’ has become firmly embedded in everything done in schools. As Apple (2005b:212) notes, neoliberalism gets done ‘in the lived connections of actors, both individuals and institutions, that form communities of discourse, people and organisation’. Consequently, the attention of all involved in teaching and learning, including teachers, head teachers and parents, is orientated towards child behaviour and attainment at the expense of the support some children may need. Everyday experiences that take place within schools may differ from one child to the next as schooling becomes about the reinforcing and normalising of this focus on the performance of standardised tests. If children struggle and disrupt lessons they are removed. As Searle puts it:

> As their ‘name’ and ‘image’ became all important to schools competing for parental favour and full rolls, more and more of them began to exclude students whom they saw as disrupting the smooth operation of lessons or causing problems. (2001:28)

So the emphasis on consumerism and measurable attainments has led to a growth in the bureaucratic control and regulation of teachers, children and schools, whose performance has subsequently become more readily scrutinised and held accountable, not just by Ofsted but by a variety of government bodies. These have included: the Department for Education (DfEE), local education authorities (LAs), the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) and the General Teaching Council for England. The latter three were subsumed under the Teaching Agency in 2012, which Ball notes although a ‘small but significant
change...underlines the lack of autonomy for the teaching profession’ (Ball, 2013:161).

As a result of this emphasis on ‘performativity’ and ‘regulation’, children have become subjected to rigorous testing regimes; work in schools has become more prescriptive, and teachers have become less autonomous and less able to provide a wealth of classroom experiences to meet the needs of their diverse classrooms (Walsh, 2006). According to Searle:

> The constant threat of an impending Ofsted inspection is becoming a severe menace to adventure, audacity and experiment in teaching – and the kind of pedagogical risks teachers need to take to stimulate and provoke the imagination and motivation of their most unwilling students. (2001:21)

Consequently, the purpose of schooling today is to get as many children and young people to pass tests, often to the detriment of any understanding of the barriers certain children may face in achieving ‘expected’ performance. Due to a lack of investment of time and resources, schools are either reluctant or find it very difficult to investigate the reasons behind underachievement in order to support the child, who may simply be permanently excluded as a result (Gewirtz et al., 1995). Therefore, ‘the problem’ is removed and passed to another school and as such they no longer place a burden on the school’s profile or their league-table position.
Performativity Versus Social Justice

Exclusions can also help to enhance a school’s league table position by removing from its roll children who are persistently late, absent or who might perform poorly in exams and not continue into further education. (Gewirtz et al., 1995:158)

In this environment, then, many schools find it increasingly difficult to ‘break free’ from the constraints of accountability that continue to drive the way they are organised. The performativity discourse has become so entrenched within the education process that schools have become shaped by its very existence as they submit to the demands of accountability and the controls of competition. In essence, this focus on performance data and accountability has led to ‘a shift from student needs to student performance; from what the school can do for the student to what the student can do for the school’ (Hughes & Lewis, 1998:233).

Consequently, many schools continue to find it increasingly challenging to accommodate children who they feel may not be on track to perform well in tests. In effect, due to the pressures on schools to retain or attain high positions in the league tables, some schools may simply exclude certain children, and/or divert resources to those who they know will produce good results for that school. I argue that this has sustained the traditional educational inequalities associated with a child’s social/cultural location, including, for example, socio-economic status, gender and ‘race’, that are played out in the everyday experiences of life in schools.
A schooling system dependent on individual aspirations, choice and competition, where equality is met via market forces, has replaced the post-war education project that focused on egalitarianism. State-funded schooling was seen to support equality of opportunity for all, albeit initially in terms of social class before gender then ‘race’. For example, the 1944 Education Act that set up compulsory free secondary education for all children was introduced to provide secondary education for working-class children and offer them the ability to gain access to different schools. This concern for social-class equality continued throughout the 1960s and 70s and eventually brought about the idea of comprehensive secondary schooling. This was seen to provide opportunities for any child to do well in any school in any subject. Later, with the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 and the Race Relations Act in 1976, gender equality and ‘race’ equality began to play out in education policy.

The Third Way years of New Labour (1997-2010), which sought to combine social democratic values with neo-liberalism, bought about a renewed commitment to equality of opportunity and the sharing of good practice. Such commitments played out in education policy concerns particularly via their initiatives (DfES, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d) and agenda around ‘Every Child Matters’ (2003a). A series of achievement gaps in test results between groups of children based on their social and cultural location were identified (DfES, 2003c, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d). This commitment by New Labour in raising the ‘standards’ of all children once again highlighted that a child’s social and cultural location remains a key structural factor in school performance. Despite these initiatives, multiple inequalities persist in educational provision and
achievement, as the standards agenda itself remained framed by a market model despite the rhetoric of equality and inclusion under New Labour’s Third Way. With the subsequent elections of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government in 2010 and a single party Conservative Government in 2015, neo-liberal policy architecture has once again become firmly embedded and aligned to the market model and based on ‘outcomes’ and human capital with little, if any, concern with inequalities (Bailey & Ball, 2016). Consequently, children’s differing systemic social/cultural locations is evermore side lined as an important factor when considering education experience and achievement.

For Gillborn (1997, 2008a, 2008b), part of the problem in relation to current underachievement is associated with a particular notion of identity and belonging that he says is deeply embedded within the National Curriculum as well as schools and classrooms. He argues that there has been ‘no serious attention to issues of ethnic diversity’ (Gillborn, 1997:347), despite the Swan Report (DfES, 1985) drawing attention to the prejudice and discrimination that was taking place in schools at that time. Gillborn draws on work within Critical Race Theory to highlight how the pattern of institutional policies and procedures put in place in schools are often implicitly detrimental to children from ethnic-minority communities. He argues that despite New Labour’s concerns with ‘race’ inequalities as evidenced by their Third Way policies:

The failure to address racism as a structural factor that shapes the assumptions of the education system (embodied in notions of selection, ability and discipline) made possible, maybe even inevitable, a situation
where race equality would be sacrificed to the perceived interests and sensitivities of White people (Gillborn, 2008b:713).

As such, schools often operate unintentionally to marginalise many children from non-white communities (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Holloway 2005; Power, 2003). In the case of ‘white’ Gypsy/Traveller children, due to the obscuring of racism they experience as noted in chapter two, the lack of recognition in the curriculum of their cultural way of life further complicates any structural explanations of their situation. And as Ball (2013:191) noted ‘...the national curriculum, despite several updates, does little to address racism or reflect cultural diversity, and the Coalition’s new ‘core knowledge’ curriculum is likely to do even less’.

Likewise, many feminist writers highlight how dominant systems in place throughout society structurally discriminate against women at the micro level (Arnot et al., 1996; Blackmore, 1999; Paechter, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Skelton & Francis, 2009). They highlight how Patriarchally constituted masculine identities embedded within institutions create a major obstacle to gender equality for girls and boys in schools (Blackmore, 1999:128). This is despite the apparent closing of the gender gap in achievement between girls and boys, with some government statistics showing how girls are overtaking boys in some areas (DfEE, 2015).

According to Arnot et al. (1996), although the statistics demonstrate that girls are doing very well in schools today compared to boys, we have to be careful when examining these statistics. She argues that although, on the surface,
things look positive for women, sex segregation of subjects remains, particularly at ‘A’ level, where she points out that ‘Far more men than women take mathematics, physics and technology and the pattern of difference in the performance of the sexes in the various subjects at GCSE is not continued’ (Arnot et al., 1996:64). This disparity in relation to gender-specific subjects reinforces gender hierarchies. According to Gomersall (1994), due to the high status attached to subjects like mathematics, science and technology, where we find more boys, other subjects are seen as less important. So what appears to be happening in schools between boys’ and girls’ subject choices and success has always been dependent on masculine and feminine identities. Gomersall argues that the education system is just one of many patriarchal structures that perpetuate this ideology and therefore affect women’s earning power as compared to men’s – particularly older and working-class women.

According to Skelton (2001:23), ‘schools are regarded as sites where multiple forms of masculinity and femininity are present’. Walby (1997) uses the term ‘gender regimes’ to discuss the arrangement of systemic practices within institutions and wider society that constructs and perpetuates gendered behaviour. Such attention to how the construction of gender identities affects achievement in schools was not really recognised as an issue until the second-wave feminism of the 1970s and relates to how boys and girls ‘experience’ schooling. As Skelton notes:

the interrelationships between members of the school, organizational processes, influences of the local community, wider culture, educational policy and provision all configure to produce various forms of masculinities in any one school site. (Skelton, 2001:23)
For many, including Tomlinson (2005), the structures of the education system still very much serve the interests of the middle classes. She suggests that neo-liberal education policies with an emphasis on choice, individualism, selection, exclusion and attention to results, has resulted in many working-class children ‘underachieving’. This echoes the point made above that those parents with disposable income can move house to a place that has a ‘good’ school based on its achievement in league tables. Such parents can also buy in to other education ‘products’, including resources, clubs and private tuition, in order to help prepare their children for success in tests. According to Gillborn and Mirza (2000)

…the ‘class gap’ remains greater, but receives far less attention in policy, than either of the gaps in ‘race’ or gender performance...Whatever advances may have been made in some aspects of women’s and minority ethnic groups educational achievements, class differences and inequalities seem firmly entrenched and may even be getting worse (as cited in Ball, 2013:197).

Part of the problem according to Gazeley and Dunne (2005), is that some teachers continue to hold negative opinions of working-class pupils and their homes and associate them with lacking ‘something’. This is opposed to their more favourable views towards middle-class pupils, who teachers believe have a positive attitude towards education and support the ‘project’ of the school (Reay, 2006; Reay et al., 2013). Gazeley and Dunne (2005) found that teachers were more likely to address the underachievement of middle-class pupils by providing extension activities and that working-class pupils were seen to lack
confidence and to need tasks providing more reassurance. They also found that teachers believed that working-class pupils were much more likely to be identified as underachievers than middle-class pupils and that the source of a pupil’s underachievement was more likely to be located in the pupil’s home rather than related to any institutional factors. Such thinking has resonances with the work of Skeggs (2004) and issues around white ‘decency’ (as discussed in chapter two); which is exacerbated by current neo-liberal policy that continues to position ‘the individual as responsible for their educational and consequent social achievements’ (Alexiadou, 2002, as cited in Gulson, 2006:260).

More recently, Strand (2008, 2010, 2011) has contended that it is deceptive to assess gaps in achievement relating to structural inequalities in isolation and has shown that there is a complex intersectional relationship between class, gender and ethnicity (Strand, 2011). Bhopal and Preston (2011) note how conceptions of intersectionality have become an increasingly dominant framework within which to consider how differences associated with class, ‘race’ and gender interrelate to impact on the positioning of individuals. However, they argue that while underachievement is dependent on a complex mix of social and cultural locations based on differences, which are often fluid and multi-layered, existing structural explanations of the marginalisation of children on the basis of their ‘race’, social class and/or gender retain significant analytic power. Such an understanding of underachievement drawing on multiple forms of structural inequality allows for a more nuanced understanding of the differences in attainment across social groups. What also
needs to be considered, however, is the role of actors who produce and (re)construct what goes on in educational institutions. Thus, I argue that a spatial analytic could go some way in contributing to our understanding of these important structural explanations. The key here is what actually goes on inside schools i.e how teaching and learning is organised, which is something to which I now wish to turn.

**Can Things Change?**

Black and Wiliam (1990) argue that current educational policy focuses on ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’; the former being the state’s organisation and implementation of the curriculum, strategies and programmes of study, and the latter being tests, SATs and attainment. What is missing, they suggest, is an emphasis on the daily ‘formative’ achievements of children and what actually goes on in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Black and Wiliam refer to how policy is played out on the ground in the individual spaces of schools and classrooms as the ‘black box’. What needs to be considered is what goes on socially inside the classroom; what children and teachers experience in their daily routines of being at school based on what children already know, what they are actually learning now and any barriers that may be affecting their learning or achievements.

The work of Black and Wiliam (1990) highlights how some schools may have the potential to do things differently at the micro level of the classroom to ensure all children become motivated to learn and reach their full potential.
After all, it is in the classroom where teachers can make changes, and in order to achieve this Black and Wiliam (1990:1) note that:

Learning is driven by what teachers and pupils do in classrooms. Here, teachers have to manage complicated and demanding situations, channelling the personal, emotional and social pressures amongst a group of 30 or so youngsters in order to help them to learn now, and to become better learners in the future. Standards can only be raised if teachers can tackle this task more effectively – what is missing from the policies is any direct help with this task.

Black and Wiliam agree that the emphasis on SATs, teaching to test and a focus on summative assessments puts pressures on teachers to focus solely on the curriculum (the input) and the scores in tests (output), as the most important aspects of schooling. They argue for the importance of formative assessment and talk about Assessment for Learning (AfL) as key to the mastery of knowledge, as opposed to summative assessment, which simply grades students and ranks their performance. For Black and Wiliam, then, AfL provides teachers with the potential to re-engage with and motivate individual students to learn.

Consequently, Black and Wiliam argue that AfL allows teachers to gain a better understanding of their learners and focuses their attention on formative assessments: what each child can do now, today, and what teachers can do to support their further learning and understanding of a subject. They suggest that:
Teachers need to know about their pupil’s progress and difficulties with learning so that they can adapt their work to meet their needs – needs which are often unpredictable and which vary from one pupil to another. Teachers can find out what they need in a variety of ways – from observation and discussion in the classroom, and from written work of pupils whether done as homework or in class. (1990:2)

So although educational policy is saturated within dominant discourses associated with neo-liberalism, schools may be able to go some way in organising themselves differently and work towards providing an inclusive environment for all children. As Ball (1994:12) admits: ‘Clearly, inside the school and classroom practice, it is school managers and classroom teachers who must put the bits and pieces together – construct their own subjection if you like’. Therefore, I consider that there is potential for the people working within schools to change things for the better by focusing attention on the experiences of children and their lived realities in the school setting. This would perhaps enable us to explore how a child’s particular social and cultural location impacts on their ability to relate in the classroom setting.

By focusing on summative results, many schools currently direct resources towards those who perhaps just need that little extra bit of support, or ‘boost’, in order to ensure success at the expected level by the end of each year. This is supported by Hughes and Lewis (1998:233), who argue that ‘there is increasing evidence of a shift of resources away from students with special needs and learning difficulties. Resources are being directed more towards those students who are most likely to perform well in tests and exams.’ In this way, the school is seen as keeping children ‘on track’ to ensure the expected achievement by the
end of each key stage (Bowe et al., 1995; West & Pennell, 2000). Individualised learning and supporting AfL therefore may focus on certain cohorts of pupils, namely those who are perceived to have potential to improve the school’s league-table position with minimal effort by the schools themselves, as Burgess et al. (2005:1) explain:

Schools might therefore focus their efforts on the marginal pupils, to the detriment of very low achieving or high achieving pupils, as the former group are a long way from meeting the target and the latter group will meet the target with less input from the school.

One example of this can be seen by the implementation of a number of government ‘catch-up’ programmes introduced by New Labour, known as ‘Springboard’ in primary schools (DfEE, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), which are often run during lunch times. These programmes are commonly known as ‘Booster classes’ and appear in both mathematics and English and run alongside, yet ‘bolted on’ to the standard daily numeracy and literacy lessons. The programmes are aimed at the cohort of children who are considered ‘borderline’ and achieving just below the expected government-required level. According to West and Pennell (2000), further initiatives are put in place to support these cohorts of children, which may include the provision of after-school coaching and revision programmes during the school breaks.

Although this may demonstrate how many schools find it increasingly difficult to avoid the embodiment of the neo-liberal agenda, it also highlights the interplay of policy, practice and social relations. Therefore, I argue that
unravelling what is going on at the micro level of the classroom emphasises how schools and classroom environments represent a complex and multi-layered world of contested and negotiated forms of structural power relations. It demonstrates how schools become the embodiment of dominant hierarchical relations that perpetuate systemic ways of thinking and doing. The result of this is the establishment of the paradoxical situation mentioned earlier, where on the one hand, schools are operating within the context of an equal opportunities agenda, but on the other, the demands placed upon them by a market-driven system mean that many find it difficult to deliver on this. If we can understand what is actually going on within the neo-liberal classroom then we can perhaps begin to unravel how particular identities and social relations interrelate to sustain structural inequalities. This has become even more important considering that current education ‘is an incoherent ad hoc, diverse fragile and evolving network of complex relations…[which] rests on a ‘messy’ combination of regulation, competition and performance management (Bailey & Ball, 2006:145)

**Final Synthesis**

The ecology of education, what it looks like, when and where it happens, is being changed and, as a result, so too is the learner. More generally, the embedding of education in a welfare model of common provision…is being weakened and a shift towards what might be called a neoliberal model of education, in organisation and in practice, is clearly discernible. (Ball, 2013:5)
With education now firmly established as a commodity, schooling has become increasingly dictated and (re)shaped by ‘the invisible hand’ of market forces, where choice, individualism, competition and consumerism pervade the schooling landscape. Yet at the same time governments have continued to position education as a vital aspect of economic competitiveness as well as ‘continued central command and control over knowledge and values, and the…surveillance of the teacher’ (Bailey & Ball, 2006:129). The roots of these changes stem from emerging policy discourse from the late 1970s and with the eventual implementation of the ERA in 1988, which established children and their parents as consumers, free to select from a range of schools of their choosing. The market is understood to open up choice for parents and children as schools compete with each other in the marketplace and where individual worth has replaced debates around the structural terrains of struggle that in the past may have provided ‘answers’ behind issues of equal opportunity for all.

In this context, many schools have become increasingly accountable for the quality of the ‘product’ they provide. Part of the mechanisms in place through which schools are accountable is the publication of league tables based on the achievement in tests which have become to represent the ‘performance’ of a school. A focus by many schools on performance in these tests has resulted in the identification of these results as a measure of the quality of their provision. This narrowing of schooling to simply equip children to pass tests is symptomatic of the neo-liberal project to reduce everything to a measurable outcome. The achievement of good test results has become the marker of success at school. As such, much investment in the individual to achieve results
in tests has become paramount and an expected goal in order to perform in the job market.

Achievement of test results has become the mantra for raising standards; it is the indicator of a successful school. Consequently, schools have had to rethink their ‘image’ in the marketplace in order to attract engaged parents who invest in their children. These children will subsequently ensure that the school attains a strong position in the league tables and therefore the marketplace. This marketability of schools has led not only to a plethora of information about the efficiency of schools but to a focus on the performance profiles of schools, which parents see as extremely important when considering which school to send their children to. As such, results have become the ‘product’ of schooling, and the development of the child an opportunity for capital, where children’s performance has become a commodity. This trend towards consumerism has reorganised schools as places that prioritise self-interest and personal motives above everything else, including educational equity and social justice.

Therefore, despite some of the moves towards more inclusive education and a rhetoric of social justice during the Third Way years of New Labour (1997–2010), policy decisions are increasingly in tune with and shaped by a performativity culture with league tables published as the market mechanism of accountability. Since the implementation of the 1988 ERA, the current education system has continued to be organised away from the ideas of education as a social good and public right and increasingly towards neo-liberal discourses of individuality, improvement, performativity and accountability.
Any commitment to structural inequalities has thus been undermined. This neo-liberal dual approach of devolving control of schools to market competition in the form of league tables whilst retaining a centralised national curriculum, a rigorous testing regime and the surveillance of teachers through performative management has created a system whereby schools find it increasingly difficult to remain inclusive.

So while there still remains a social-justice agenda within neo-liberal education policy, the neo-liberal project has stripped out elements of egalitarianism that tried to address inequalities in relation to the social conditions of individuals. I suggest that we have returned to an unequal education system and a situation that pre-dated the comprehensive reform movement of the 1960s and 70s, which sought to address the inequalities of opportunity related to an individual’s social and cultural location. Such changes are crucial for the case made by this thesis; for many children from a Gypsy/Traveller background permanent exclusions are often pursued as a result of their poor attendance and their lack of ability to do well in tests.

However, I would question whether market-driven education policies have necessarily sealed the fate of every single school and affected the identities of every teacher and every learner. This despite the ‘ratcheting’ of neo-liberal policies that have bought ‘new’ private actors and agencies into the field of education bringing about a diversity of provision in the schooling landscape. In line with the work of Wrigley (2003), Alexander & Potter (2005), and Wrigley, Lingard and Thomas (2012), people working in these schools need to be
innovative and work together to construct knowledge that is ‘grounded in the learner’s lifeworld and rooted in place and identity’ (Wrigley et al., 2012:99). As such, social relations in schools are key to understanding the potential for change, as individual teachers and learners possess the agency to respond, and to create a different socio-spatial culture, which I explore in the next chapter.

I am not suggesting that doing things differently is going to be easy within the current culture of performativity that teachers and pupils find themselves enmeshed. However, it will hopefully not be impossible for every school. By turning my attention to the spatial organisation of schooling, I unpack the power relations implicit in the current educational system, in order to provide awareness that perhaps schools can operate differently. For example, teachers could challenge interpretation of certain policies in order that their school becomes a place of belonging for all children; a place where they are spatially included and feel they can achieve and do well. It is to the spatial understanding of schooling that I now turn as I present my theoretical framework in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework: The Spatial Context of Social Relations

…space is fundamental in any exercise of power. (Foucault, 1984: 252)

Introduction

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework that is deployed in chapters six, Seven and Eight, in which I analyse the policy architecture of neo-liberal schooling and its relationship with the lived ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ spaces of Gypsy/Traveller communities. The chapter will illustrate how such a conceptual tool, the spatial lens, is important in illuminating how relationships are realised and how they come together through relations of power to make place and identities. Whatever place we find ourselves in, whether it be a house, workplace, a street, a club, café, park, school and so on, each location has its own unique signs, symbols and images, something Lefebvre (1991:16) refers to as ‘spatial codes’. These spatial codes influence and (re)produce particular behaviours and power relations often unique to that particular location yet representative of wider socio-spatial ideologies.

The chapter will begin with a brief overview of why a turn to ‘space’ as an epistemological tool has become increasingly popular amongst social scientists
over the last thirty years or so. The chapter then moves on to discuss the conceptual differences between place and space. This is important, as talking about space and using spatial metaphors has become academically fashionable and, as Crang and Thrift (2000:1) have noted, space is ‘the everywhere of modern thought’, it is ‘an all-purpose nostrum to be applied whenever things look sticky’. They go on to suggest that very often the terms place and space are criticised for being conflated and used interchangeably:

the problem of talking about space is not so much that space means very different things – what concepts do not – but that it is used with such abandon that its meanings run into each other before they have been properly interrogated. (Crang & Thrift, 2000:1)

Therefore it is important for me in this chapter to provide my own ‘interrogation’ of how I understand the terms place and space. After doing so, I go on to explain how the study of space can be a useful ‘lens’ through which to examine our contemporary lives and the places we inhabit. In order to achieve this, I present an examination of the work that has emerged in this field, particularly that of Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1989, 1996). Although a variety of renowned academics have written about the importance of place and space (in particular, Heidegger, 1951; Bachelard, 1964; Foucault, 1984; De Certeau, 1984; Harvey, 1991), the work of Lefebvre, and particularly The Production of Space (1991, first published in 1974), is perhaps the most influential text in developing this turn to ‘space’. For instance, Soja (1996:6) notes that Lefebvre ‘has been more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality’. Lefebvre provides us with a ‘spatial lens’ that emphasises the significance of the socio-spatial in
understanding both the structures of our ‘modern’ capitalist world and the lived experiences of our everyday lives. For Lefebvre, the contemporary world has become so complex and fragmented that it hides – even obscures – what is really going on in the variety of ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ we live and work. As such, he argued that ‘to change life…we must first change space’ (Lefebvre, 1991:190). And as Valentine (2001:4) suggests:

space is understood to play an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities; and social identities, meanings and relations are recognized as producing material and symbolic or metaphorical spaces.

After presenting my interpretation of the work within ‘spatial theory’ and the development of my own ‘spatial lens’, this chapter then moves on to examine the spatiality of a particular ‘place’ – the school. The school ‘space’ is an active force in the formation and realisation of a particular set of norms, values, practices, attitudes and identities, co-constituted in and through it by the sociality of life in schools. Distinctive socio-spatial identities and relations are established and become associated with the normal everyday ‘rhythms’ and ‘routines’ of the school landscape (Middleton, 2014). According to Middleton (2014:13), such rhythms ‘of the conceived [space] infuse education’s regulatory bureaucracies: clock time, the school day, the academic year, the packaging of time and knowledge’.

I will demonstrate in this chapter how the spatial environment of a school is not only the context that frames the identities, meanings and practices of teachers and pupils, but it is itself an aspect of those relationships linking adults
and children in certain ways in this particular ‘place’. It is ‘therefore through the 
practice of everyday life that space is remade and place re-inscribed on the 
individual’ (Benson & Jackson, 2012:797–8). I thereby argue that despite being 
structured by the dominant macro norms, values, discourses and networks 
associated with educational policy and practice that can often marginalise 
particular children, the constitution of school as a space has the potential of 
being more fluid and changeable at the more micro level of the place. In 
examining the ideas of Lefebvre’s three dimensions of space and Soja’s (1996) 
Thirdspace (defined below), I set out the conceptual framework that is used to 
analyse the empirical material on the relationship and interface between the 
lived ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ space orientations of Gypsy/Traveller communities 
and the lived ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ spatial orientations of the schools the 
children attend.

The Spatial Turn

Class, gender, and race…happen in space and place. By taking space and 
place seriously…we can provide another tool to demystify and 
understand the forces that effect and manipulate our everyday lives. 
(Cresswell, 2004:27)

Over the last thirty years or so, critical social theory has taken a ‘spatial turn’ in 
order to interrogate the relationships, practices and lived experiences of our 
contemporary social and cultural worlds (Foucault, 1980; Harvey, 1991, 2000; 
Giddens, 1984, hooks, 1990; Rose, 1993; Sibley, 1995; Soja, 1996; McDowell, 1999; 
Gruenewald, 2003; Hubbard et al., 2004; Middleton, 2010, 2014; Massey, 2005; 
Thrift, 2006; Gulson & Symes, 2007a, 2007b; Kitchens, 2009). The common
thread underpinning this work is the social dynamic of the geographical spaces we inhabit and the importance of social relations within them. Until the 1970s, geographers somewhat ironically ‘considered space to be a neutral container, a blank canvas that is filled in by human activity’ (Hubbard et al., 2004:4). However, theories of space and place are becoming increasingly reconceptualised, and there is now an understanding that ‘Spaces are not merely empty stages upon which people act out their lives, but…entwined in the power relations around which societies revolve’ (Jones, 2007:17).

Amidst this spatial turn, ‘time’ and ‘historicism’ are now consequently being challenged as the dominant epistemological devices with which to critically analyse contemporary society. In his theory of Structuration where Giddens (1984) highlights the importance of social agency in reproduction of social structure, he talks about how structures are not something that necessarily constrain individuals but are co-reliant on the establishment of social relationships. He sees structures as a set of rules and resources that individuals ‘continually draw on in the process of social interaction’ (cited in Shilling, 1991:24). The importance of this for space is that it is within the spatial context that such rules and resources are drawn. For example, according to Soja (1996:1), ‘it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the “making of geography” more than the “making of history” that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world’.

According to Thacker, there has always been a connection with ‘space, geography and movement’ (2009:2). He suggests that our lives are, and have always been, structured and organised by the environments we inhabit in our
day-to-day experiences. At the same time, whilst engaging with others in these environments we have been instrumental in structuring and organising what goes on and what takes place, particularly in the built environment. These environments have also played an important role in the constitution of culture, which within each social context ‘defines what is normal and what is not, what is important and what is not, what is acceptable and what is not’ (Hubbard et al., 2004:130).

The key to understanding our lives relates to the production and organisation of the geographical places and spaces we find ourselves in, and which have a social dynamic. Space thus is ‘constituted, physically, socially, historically and discursively for and by’ the environment itself as well as via social relations within it (Foley & Leverett, 2011:1). Consequently, space is not simply a ‘container’, or ‘neutral medium’, for social action to take place but is also a fundamental feature for the constitution and (re)production of social relations and identities. According to Retsikas (2007:982), ‘Social relationships unfold spatially. As such, place is not extrinsic to social relations and identities but rather an active ingredient of their realization.’ As Shilling notes: ‘Spatial settings... serve to produce social relations and personal identities, and are in turn produced by the practices of individuals located within them’ (Shilling, 1991:27).

For Soja, once we understand the organisation of place as a social product where social relations and identities are both ‘space-forming and space-contingent’ (1989:80–81), we can see how our spatiality is integral to the constitution of the places of our wider social framework. Tamboukou (2003:55)
notes that: ‘Since space is conceptualised in terms of the interrelation of certain social forces, place is theorized as an articulation of certain social relations of the spatial at a particular moment.’

By moving away from a physical view of space whereby ‘place’ is simply a container for social relations – out there, abstract, neutral and inevitable – to one where ‘place’ is actually socially co-constituted and organised – a socio-spatial constitution – we can begin to analyse and understand the organisation and meaning of space at a more subjective level. Valentine (2001:5) suggests that using a socio-spatial approach enables us to examine ‘the complexities, multiplicities and ambiguities of the social activities, meanings and behaviours associated with the production of a particular space’. Spatial theory is becoming an increasingly established supporting epistemological tool with which to interpret, unravel and understand the power relations and values associated, absorbed, challenged and produced within a given space but ultimately within the places we inhabit in our daily lives.

It is through Foucault’s (1984) notion that space is power (highlighted in the opening quote for this chapter), and the idea that power is always spatially located that has contributed to thinking about spaces as relations of power (Thacker, 2009). Thacker notes that ‘the use of spatial strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the point at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power’ (2009:23). As Foucault suggested in much of his work, but particularly in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1977), power is everywhere and relational. Thus, power is established and embodied in subtle ways and dispersed in the material spaces of our lives.
via our sociability and our sensibilities. He talked much about how discourses of knowledge (and thus power) are established within institutional spaces which serve to determine and establish certain ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1984:93). These regimes of truth permeate all spatial sites, but in particular institutional sites, to establish and cement ‘truths’ around the practices of that site (or place). As such, certain identities and behaviours become based on these truths and normalised and reinforced as a result. Other ways of thinking and acting in places thus become potentially hidden. Foucault noted that these regimes of truth were:

the articulation of a particular type of discourse and a set of practices, a discourse that, on the one hand, constitutes these practices as a set bound together by an intelligible connection and, on the other hand, legislates and can legislate on these practices in terms of true and false. (as cited in Oksala, 2011:31)

So discourses of truth operate to produce, establish and legitimate certain practices and ways of behaving within places ‘through and on the basis of this association’ with the place (Foucault, 1980:93). Such truths exercise power in that they organise people and influence their agency in certain ways. They operate as disciplinary mechanisms to ensure conformity and consistency of behaviour. In the words of Foucault (1977:167):

…it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality…it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution,); it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so it operates four great techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly in order to obtain the
combination of forces, it arranges ‘tactics’… - coded activities and trained aptitudes.

So, for example, in schools, children and young peoples’ time is spatially organised where they learn how to operate and how to ‘appropriately’ conduct themselves. They begin to internalise what is expected of them in order to be ‘successful’ in the schooling process and self-regulate their behaviours in line with these expectations. In order to understand and begin to examine the ‘truths’ of the schooling process it becomes necessary for me to see schools as ‘spaces’ and as ‘places’ that embody a certain power dynamic.

*Understanding ‘Space’ and ‘Place’*

Space is now more and more seen as having been under-theorised and marginalised in relation to the modernist emphasis on time and history. This emphasis constructed space as neutral, fixed and immobile, unrelated to the social and without impact on the formation of subject identity and biography. (Usher, 2002:41)

In order to clarify the conceptual terminology within spatial theory in this chapter and throughout this thesis, it is necessary to briefly discuss the broad distinction between the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’. According to Thacker, the problem of writing about space lies with the distinction between place ‘as a static sense of location, of being, or of dwelling’ and space as a ‘sense of movement, of history, of becoming’ (2009:13). Where ‘space is out there and dynamic, place is in here and static’ (Gulson, 2008:155). As we will see below, some have privileged place over space whilst others space over place, but ultimately and to varying degrees, I want to argue that irrespective of which
position is adopted, space and place – as Lefebvre would suggest – are clearly interrelated, and that place can be just as dynamic and changeable as space.

For many who have articulated a distinction between space and place (such as Heidegger, 1951 (English translation, 1971); Bachelard, 1964; Seamon, 1979; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977), their starting point has been to look at the home as the first familiar place everyone can associate themselves with. There is a general consensus in this work that the home is a particular kind of place that frames our understanding of how we then go on to think about the wider spaces outside it. For Heidegger (1951:147), the key distinction relates to the idea of ‘dwelling’, which he suggests is the associative characteristic of being human. This relates to one of the fundamental dimensions of universal human existence. Spaces such as buildings are seen to obtain their being, or ‘placeness’, not just from their location but also equally from the experiences of those dwelling in them. For Relph (1976:1), ‘to be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place’. He places emphasis on how the more attached to a place an individual feels, the greater will be their affinity with that place.

Like Heidegger and Relph, Bachelard (1964) recognises this natural instinct for humans to inhabit a space and through existing and engaging with it make it a place. Cresswell draws on this work and notes: ‘When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way…it becomes a place’ (2004:10). Bachelard also considers that ‘all inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of the home’ (1964:4–5). However, he is keener to focus on
the micro level of inhabiting a place and focuses his attention on how inhabited spaces are turned into pleasurable places by the individuals that socialise within them. He bases his work more specifically on breaking down a house from one place we dwell, as Heidegger would see it, into a series of separate places, including the variety of designated rooms in a house and even down to specific corners of particular rooms and specific furniture and so on. He indicates that such places offer individuals a sense of security, where individuals can be themselves. Likewise, Seamon (1979) suggests that the home is seen as a place of rest away from the public domain (public places and mental spaces) of our daily lives and somewhere where we have relative autonomy over what goes on.

For Cresswell (2004:24), such accounts of the home provide us with the idea that ‘home acts as the metaphor for place in general’. Tuan (1977) also puts the home at the centre of his understanding of place, but is more interested in the importance of the emotional attachment and value individuals bestow on their homes, and he notes that ‘hearth, shelter, home or home base are intimate places to human beings everywhere’ (1977:147). Tuan suggests that the importance of place is based on our experiences and in particular on how we experience space via our senses. Like others above, Tuan (1977:6) agrees that from this attachment to our homes we can then begin to think about how ‘undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’ in the same way we do with our homes. Thus the more we feel inside a place, the stronger we will identify with that place and feel a part of it (Relph, 1976).
So, for Tuan, it is the sense of belonging individuals feel about a space that establishes it as a place, a comfortable place where individuals feel ‘at home’ and safe and secure. Therefore, understanding and making sense of how a place (home) becomes meaningful to us allows us to frame our engagement with other spaces, which may be able to afford us with similar feelings of ‘placeness’. According to Tuan (1977:6), ‘From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space, and vice versa.’

So for people like Tuan, it is space that is movement, whereas place is pause: ‘each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place’ (1977:6). Here I believe that Tuan is beginning to discuss the relationship between place and space by understanding these terms as interrelated. Although he would perhaps disagree, I suggest that he is moving away from privileging place over space. I would further suggest that what he is representing here is that place is also movement and thus has the potential to become as transformative as space. It is because of this that Lefebvre uses the notion of ‘lived space’ to encompass the notion of space and place as a single entity.

The key for me, then, is that by situating place in the wider arena of space, we can begin to understand why for some people who do not experience a sense of attachment or belonging to the spaces in which they interact and engage on a day-to-day level, these places will simply remain spaces from which they are detached. The power of the spatial needs to be analysed more carefully in relation to power and how socio-spatial relations construct places through it, as
Cresswell notes: ‘place does not have meanings that are natural and obvious but ones that are created by some people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate’ (Cresswell, 2004:27).

As a place where people can be themselves, the ‘home’ could be seen as kind of refuge from these power relations engrained in other spaces. By looking at Foucault’s work on heterotopias, a term he introduced in his lecture ‘Des Espace Autres’ (Of Other Spaces) in 1967, the home is a place ‘outside of all places’ (Foucault, 1984:3). This idea can be further elaborated in the work of the black feminist author bel hooks (1990). Hooks argues that the home offers emotional attachment and belonging for the black community; the home is seen as ‘a site of resistance’ from the (racist) spaces of the wider world (hooks, 1990:47). Here I suggest she is referring to home as a kind of heterotopia in this instance, a place outside everyday social and institutional spaces. So the home may become a different place for the black community whilst at the same time related to all places.

‘Homeplace’, then, for these communities is experienced differently. It is an empowering place inverting the oppressive spaces of a white world. The home, according to hooks, provides individuals with ‘the feeling of safety…the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls’ (1990:41). Space, according to hooks, is racist, and thus destructive and oppressive for many people. Alternatively, ‘homeplace’ for black communities is a dynamic place that offers individuals inspiration away from the spaces of racism. The home in this context is a place of security and well-being as well as a place of resistance offering a frame of reference to spaces beyond it. Place thus
means somewhere where individuals feel happy to be themselves and able to engage confidently, positively and constructively. I consider that this is similar to the meanings attached by Gypsy/Travellers to their homes, their sites and their lifestyle in opposition to a Sedentarised space, as explored in chapter six.

Using the work of hooks (1990, 1994) we can suggest how individuals may experience the feelings of home differently, in that it becomes an empowering and enriching place away from the wider, often oppressive, spaces beyond. This moves away from a universalistic notion of all homes representing the same experience for everyone. Cresswell suggests that such accounts that focus on a universal experience ‘fail to recognize the differences between people and their relation to place’, suggesting to me that ‘difference has no place’ in this thinking (2004:25). Although hooks’ work is an important reminder of the different experience assigned to the ‘homeplace’ by the black community, other ‘white’ feminist writers have also questioned this idea of home as a fundamental place of security and comfort. Home for some women, for example, is not somewhere where they necessarily feel safe and secure. They experience it as an oppressive place where patriarchal power relations are reproduced, as Rose (2000:90) notes that ‘For many women…the home is a site of hard work and perhaps physical and sexual abuse; for some, only by leaving such homes can they find a place in which to belong.’

Therefore, for many women, the home may not necessarily be a place where they can feel emotionally attached and secure but simply another space wherein they experience male oppression. As such, place and space has become an important area of enquiry for many feminist writers, particularly within
geography (see Rose, 1993; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Valentine, 2001). Such work has noted the importance of the socio-spatial structure in reproducing the unequal gender divisions between men’s and women’s everyday experiences. As Rose (1993:17) notes:

For feminists, the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women. The limits of women’s everyday activities are structured by what society expects women to be and therefore to do. The everyday is the arena through patriarchy is (re)created – and contested.

For those who privilege space over place, then, there is a concern about power. Power relations are constituted through space and place, which interact to embody and reproduce a situation that can often be exclusionary in nature for many individuals. McDowell makes this very clear in suggesting that: ‘Places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial—they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded’ (McDowell, 1999:4).

By privileging space as the arena that encapsulates certain social norms, values, discourse, truths and power relations, we can see how particular environments embody power. Through the myriad spaces individuals engage with, place has the potential to change the power relations and the meanings or established truths. So by understanding how space and place are interrelated, where space produces the power relations that are embodied within place via sociality and practice around regimes of truth, we have the potential to create a different reality and establish different truths. As Foucault reminds us:
We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (1977:194)

This idea of the wider understanding of how space and place are closely interrelated and dependent on social relations is something Lefebvre has written about in his conception of ‘social space’. For Lefebvre, ‘physical space has no “reality” without the energy that is deployed within it’ (1991:13). So by being in a space and relating with others, the space is brought ‘alive’ and afforded value and meaning and thus becomes a product of sociality.

According to Cresswell (2004:12), Lefebvre’s notion of social space, something I debate further in the following section, is a more sophisticated account of space but ‘clearly very close to the definition of place’ in that it is a ‘product of sociality’ and what makes space a place and what goes on:

Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a ‘room’ in an apartment, the ‘corner’ of the street, a ‘marketplace’, a shopping or cultural ‘centre’, a public ‘place’ and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. (Cresswell, 2004:16)

Very much in line with Foucault’s ideas of the construction of truths via knowledge, a key thread in Lefebvre’s work (1991:154) is that space ‘always embodies meaning’ that has been constructed historically, politically and ideologically. Such meaning (or truth) is then translated, reconstituted and
propagated by the places we inhabit as social beings, to produce the social reality of our everyday lives. As Cresswell (1996:16) notes ‘place comes to have meaning through our actions in it – by practice’. Thacker (2009:3) notes how ‘social space’ is ‘produced according to social aims and objectives, and which then, in turn, shapes social life’. For Lefebvre, such social aims and objectives are referred to as ‘spatial codes’ that construct a certain reality of the space, which is then reconstituted in place and constitutes normalised and accepted behaviour. Similarly, Soja uses the term ‘spatial veils’, which he sees as the hidden power relations that perpetuate a dominant way of thinking about space, which is then reconstituted in place and suggests: ‘that the demystification of spatiality and its veiled instrumentality of power is the key to making practical, political, and theoretical sense of the contemporary era’ (Soja, 1989:61).

Sibley (1995) uses the concept of ‘socio-spatial boundaries’ to capture a similar terrain. He argues that such boundaries are set up to construct ‘moral landscapes’ in which to ‘purify’ and govern space in order to exclude certain communities from certain places and suggests that:

> For some, the built environment is to be maintained and reproduced in its existing form if it embodies social values which individuals or groups have both the power and capacity to retain. For others, the built environment constitutes a landscape of domination…In the routines of daily life, most people are not conscious of domination and the socio-spatial system is reproduced with little challenge. (Sibley, 1995:76)

These ‘socio-spatial boundaries’, ‘spatial codes’ or ‘spatial veils’, whatever we want to call them, are arguably little different from the various uses of the
concept of social structures under another name. These structures are ideological constructs enmeshed with a particular power dynamic that could be class based, patriarchal or racial in nature (or a complex synergy of all three). Such structures have created and constructed certain hegemonic discourses that have produced certain truths, norms and values about a space or place and thus negated other ways of thinking or acting. As Massey suggests, this is where the problem for thinking differently about what goes on in a place lies:

We have inherited an imagination so deeply ingrained that it is often not actively thought. Based on assumptions no longer recognised as such, it is an imagination with the implacable force of the patently obvious. That is the trouble. (2005:17)

It is important to emphasise here that it is place where such ideologies are reconstituted, as Cresswell (1996:15) notes, ‘Place can play a role in the maintenance of all ideologies and the power relations they support’. In this instance we can begin to see spaces as abstract and ideological whilst places are ‘real spaces’ dependent on social processes. Place, then, is the practice bestowed in a certain geographical location in space that reconstitutes ideological structures and is thus responsible for the construction of power relations and the subsequent spatial positioning of individuals in place, that is, who is included in a place and who is excluded from it, very much like Sibley’s social-spatial boundaries.

So by examining these ideological structures within space and place, in particular, where via everyday practice particular meanings, truths and power relations are (re)constructed, we can understand more readily how places of
practice become the embodiment of these ideological structures and vice versa. As Pred (1984) suggests, the notion of place is a ‘historically contingent process that emphasizes institutional and individual practices as well as the structural features with which those practices are interwoven’ (1984:280).

As such, the structural meanings and power relations in a geographical setting can be understood as being co-constituted and perpetuated, legitimated and justified by individuals who socialise and ‘dwell’ in these places. This in turn legitimates the established meaning of place and the structures and ideologies embodied within. By interrogating space then place (or place then space), we can begin to examine the relationship between spatial structures, social relations, practice and social in/exclusions at a more subjective level. Equally, by unpacking what goes on in a place in terms of sociability, or practice, we can interrogate how a particular way of understanding the world has been created and reproduced. As Cresswell notes this is, ‘as much about epistemology as it is about ontology’ (2004:12).

When viewed in this way, we can see the potential of places to change the ideas and meaning produced in spaces via individual and/or communal practice. And it is following this line of thinking that place can be seen as just as dynamic and becoming as space.

Space and place, then, interact to produce particular meanings, or ontologies, and truths of the world. Space and place interact to produce particular meanings, or ontologies, and truths of the world. Space encapsulates particular macro power relations that in turn are played out and replicated in the places of
our everyday lives. That is to say that places are arenas of social interaction and practice that are co-constituent of these power relations and thus the embodiment of wider power relations (Massey, 2004). Space encapsulates particular macro power relations that in turn are played out and replicated in the places of our everyday lives. That is to say that places are arenas of social interaction and practice that are co-constituent of these power relations and thus the embodiment of wider power relations. As products of sociality, then, places determine the formation of particular types of identities and hierarchical positions that are required to reproduce the wider structural notions of relations in space; for example, in the case of women and patriarchy. It is by understanding these power relations in absolute space that individuals have the capacity to change what goes on and the identities that they construct and play out in a particular place.

**The Conception of Social Space**

Knowledge of space cannot be limited.... If indeed spatial codes have existed, each characterising a particular spatial/social practice and if these codifications have been produced along with the space corresponding to them, then the job of theory is to elucidate their rise, their role, and their demise. (Lefebvre, 1991:17)

Lefebvre (1991) refers to ‘space’ as a trilogy of the physical (perceived), mental (conceived) and social (lived) spheres in which we live and operate. There is a complex relationship between space, time and knowledge that produces and constructs what goes on in a given place. Although history and physical geography have indeed played a major role in this production, it is looking at the ‘social energy’ of everyday life – both conscious and unconscious thought
and action – that Lefebvre believed could provide us with a more critical understanding of the way spaces and places are (re)produced. By examining this ‘lived’ and ‘social’ dimension, Lefebvre implied a complex interplay between how the material world produces consciousness as well as how consciousness produces the material world, something he considered was missing from contemporary Marxist analysis. This is where I consider that, on the one hand, Lefebvre offers an extension to Marxist thought, yet at the same time, parts company with Marxist epistemologies. The complex understanding and linkages with human action, everyday experience and thought within spaces provide us with a more complex and alternative epistemological theory, a ‘socio-spatial theory’.

For Lefebvre, then, ‘space’, whether this is a particular open geographical area or a particular place or building (such as a school), is a social product, actively and ideologically constructed by those that operate and interact within it. He notes that individuals are social beings, so that through day-to-day interactions they produce consciousness and therefore ideology. This ideology determines and sustains the meaning of space, and defines what goes on within a place. Following classical Marxism, Lefebvre contends that capitalist ideology is entrenched with the power relations inherent in a market economy, and thus space sustains and perpetuates the norms and values associated with the dominant class, and therefore capitalism. He sees a place as historically embedded with the social, cultural, economic and political ideas of any given period, and notes:
actors are collective as well as individual subjects in as much as the individuals are always members of groups or classes seeking to appropriate the space in question. This pre-existence of space conditions the subject’s presence, action and discourse, his competence and performance; yet the subject’s presence, action and discourse, at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it. (1991:85)

This is perhaps one of the central, and most well-known, concepts of Lefebvre’s analysis of space (1991: 38–41) insofar as space is a social and political product. In order to unpack the underlying ‘forces’ behind its production, Lefebvre believed that space needs to be analysed as part of three distinct dimensions: perceived space (everyday social practice), conceived space (conceptualised or representations of space) and lived space (real or imagined or representational space). Lefebvre’s three dimensions of space provide us with a heuristic tool in order to understand and analyse the place of social practice and experience, something he terms ‘logico-epistemological space’ (1991: 38–41), where we need to see these dimensions as interrelated and interdependent upon each other.

‘Perceived’ space (spatial practice) is real space, the physical dimension of the place we find ourselves in and which we experience. It encapsulates how we engage practically with the outside world. So the physical layout of schools and classrooms constructs how we engage in these places. This includes how classrooms are organised to accommodate the daily reality and routines of the school; the way the desks and chairs are organised; where the whiteboard is positioned; the way the classroom is zoned by other furniture; or the size and shape of corridors. We develop our understanding of a space via our social relations and relationships with others, and we also experience space through
our bodies, or more specifically via our senses. Space is constructed via the cyclic rhythms of the body (breathing, pulse, blood circulation, as well as our biological needs as human animals for food, water, shelter, protection and companionship) and our experiences of the rhythms of nature (including day–night, weather, seasons, plants and non-human animals). Perceived space is somewhere we can live ‘real’ time, time associated with the cycles of nature where ‘time was thus inscribed in space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time’ (1991:95).

‘Conceived’ space (representations of space) is mental space, such as the space of the cartographer or urban planner, space that has been conceptualised and thus discursively or ideologically constructed via signs, codes, images and symbols, which is then perpetuated via our social interactions with others. School discourse constructs ideas of what knowledge is to be learnt and which is less important. The ideology of teaching and learning becomes associated with notions of good practice, which then supports the neo-liberal schooling process.

The rhythms associated with conceived space are more linear and connected to our economic activity and thus include those rhythms associated with capitalist production, including work processes organised around a clock, for example, and dogmatic bureaucracy. Lefebvre argues that with the development of modernity, ‘lived’ time has vanished from social space, and is now something that is simply ‘recorded solely on measuring instruments, on clocks’ (1991:95). Time also becomes a commodity, something that can be bought; time is money. Schools organise the day around the clock to maximise the opportunities for
learning time. The yearly calendar is structured around three terms with breaks in between, and cyclic activities associated with the seasons, but particularly the Christian calendar of Christmas and Easter.

‘Lived’ space (*representation space*) relates to the social nature of space, where we interact and relate with each other. It is the space as lived through its associated images and symbols and thus a mixture of the perceived and the conceived, where everything is played out and comes together as a whole to reinforce meaning to that place. It can become the embodiment of imagined space by individuals and is often connected with artists or writers. It refers to the ‘dominated…space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate’ (1991:39). ‘It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations’ (1991:42). So the daily routines of school life, as lived through the experiences of those who interact in schools, constitute lived space.

Lefebvre also talked about the way in which social practice is made up of the lived ‘rhythms’ of everyday life and how each place constructs its own rhythms. These rhythms structure our time and become part of the routines of our social lives, or ‘lived space’, and normalise our socio-spatial behaviour in such places. For Lefebvre:

A rhythm invests places, but is not itself a place; it is not a thing, nor an aggregation of things, nor yet a simple flow. It embodies its own law, its own regularity, which it derives from space – from its own space – and from a relationship between space and time. (1991:206)
Such rhythms associated with our everyday lives are linear and cyclical and combine rhythms of body and of nature with the rhythms associated with industry and bureaucracy that become ‘regular, measureable and relentless’ (Middleton, 2014:13). Such ideas feature in Seamon’s work (1979), which is particularly interested in bodily movements in space, mainly related to this cyclical nature of rhythms or our habitual and automatic preconscious human actions. For Seamon, it is by engaging in the daily practices and cyclical nature of a place that individuals get to really understand a place and begin to feel part of it and therefore ultimately an ‘insider’. Over time, certain accepted and expected activities and functions of places become established and normalised by social action and these rhythms of everyday life, that normalise everyday practices, become fundamental to the reproduction of that place as a whole. This normalising of practice produced by the rhythms of the everyday becomes complicated and less natural, and it is this that Lefebvre suggests is how certain rhythms become more dominant over others in order to structure the ‘spatial codes’ of a place (Lefebvre, 2004).

In using these ideas, Soja (1989:50) adopts the term ‘spatial veil’ to illustrate how certain modes of thinking and rhythms of the everyday become obscured in order to perpetuate a certain way of operating and thinking. Similar to Lefebvre’s spatial codes, Soja suggests that the ‘spatial veil’ of capitalism needs to be unravelled in order to understand the relationship between space, knowledge and power and ‘reveal what is hidden behind’ (1989:50). These ‘spatial veils’ can consist of ideology, policy and the normalised rhythms of a place which act to legitimate and guide particular types of social action (or
activities) whilst restricting, or ignoring, others. Soja talks about the ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ dimensions of ‘being’ (1989: 11, 78), where the former relates to the historical production of capitalist spaces (both structurally and mentally), and the latter to the sorts of relations we develop between ourselves as social beings on all sorts of cultural and emotional levels in the places we inhabit (actual lived spaces); something he refers to as ‘real’ (vertical) and ‘imagined’ (horizontal) spaces in his later work (Soja, 1996).

Capitalist ideology dominates the formation of contemporary spaces and their rhythms. As a Neo-Marxist, Lefebvre talks about the importance of three key concepts of a capitalist society (production, product and labour) in understanding the impact that conceived space has on the overall construction or production of a given place. He argues that such concepts ideologically ‘produce’ places rather than ‘create’ places, and therefore they control spaces for specific ends, such as where surplus value can be produced. If something is ‘created’, it is a very spontaneous activity, it just happens, like natural processes such as the creation of a flower, or a fruit or a tree. Nature’s space is not staged. If something is ‘produced’, on the other hand, some sort of intervention has taken place; something has been created by a particular activity and is therefore staged. Social space thus becomes a space that is very much produced and controlled by capitalist ideology, discourse, signs and images. It is then this ideology, discourse, signs and images that dictate, and construct, the meaning behind a social place and how one should act in such a place, giving meaning to this particular place where ultimately ‘language becomes practice’ (Lefebvre, 1991:5). Thus:
Capitalism and neo-capitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the ‘world of commodities’, its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state. This space is founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices. (1991:53)

For Lefebvre, the mode of production plays a key role in the constitution of how we experience space, the ideological nature of space, and how we imagine space, which ultimately sets up certain power relations and thus constructs, and ultimately controls, the spatial order of space (1991:71). Few would dispute the idea that global capitalism has subsumed every aspect of our lives and constructed the way we experience, think and operate in a social space as well as produced the very places of our environment to this end. According to Lefebvre, our lives have become organised around a particular objective or goal, relating to what is to be produced, which becomes the epitome of ‘normalised’ human action.

Relating this to education, the goal of schooling is about the achievement of test results, which has become its ‘product’. As we have seen in chapter three, everything done in schools increasingly relates to the performance of children in these tests, which then becomes synonymous with ‘standards’ and the ‘quality’ of this product. Therefore, how things are organised in schools, whether that be resources, teachers or children, and social relations all work together to ensure the ‘product’ is ‘delivered’ to achieve the best result.
The Socio-Spatial Dimension of School

Educational policies are structured by and seek to structure macro-level spaces. However, it would be too limiting to think that space only matters in this domain. To the contrary, the construction, manipulation and experience of space have equally important implications at the micro-level of classrooms and corridors, as well as more abstract spaces such as the curriculum. (Ferrare & Apple, 2010:214)

Schools contribute to the reinforcement of certain norms and practices associated with ‘acceptable forms of identity’ (Foley & Leverett, 2011:30) and behaviours that become entrenched in the everyday experiences of individuals in schools (Bourdieu, 1977). Such experiences produce, and in turn reproduce, certain types of ‘accepted’ relations and practices, which are ‘socio-spatially co-specified’ with the everyday rhythms and routines of the school landscape (Mannion, 2007:406). This is the idea that both the physical (perceived) and mental (conceived) landscape of schooling organises how we operate and can shape our identities, attitudes and behaviours, while at the same time, our experiences and relations with others in school (lived) also play a major part in influencing our behaviours in school and what we achieve.

Often these ‘accepted’ types of behaviour might be at odds with the identities and culture of many children that attend school. With a focus on the identities and culture of Gypsy/Traveller children, it is by adopting a socio-spatial approach that this section seeks to understand schools as places infused with specific power relations, where the spatial is a ‘mechanism through which “othering” takes place’ (Sagan, 2008:176). This section analyses both the
symbolic systems through which ‘schooling’ is constructed (by examining policies and other government literature that set up what goes on in schools) and the material practices, procedures, behaviours and relations that establish everyday life in schools (by examining the stories of teachers, other professionals, parents and children). The symbolic and material aspects of schooling are examined in order to discover the possible employment of dominant ideas and ideologies (or discourses) around behaviour. Thompson (1999:106) talks about how:

the classroom assumes social properties which signal to participants (pupils, parents, other teachers and professionals) a predetermined range of possible permitted and appropriate social interactions and behaviours that can take place within that setting. These organisational features can also signal expected patterns of permissible behaviours. They contain ‘signals of expectation’ that is, they signal to new pupils the teacher’s expectations of appropriate behaviours.

Such ideologies may reinforce a particular ‘school’ identity, which in turn may ‘other’ and therefore marginalise some children. As far as educational policy and research is concerned, there has been little engagement in the ‘spatial’ aspect of schooling. According to Gulson and Symes (2007a), traditional ideas of space and education simply reflected a concern that rested with the physical composition of schools in terms of architectural plans and floor layouts (see HMSO, 1999; DfEE, 1996) and the regulation of school populations by local authorities and councils. Gulson and Symes (2007a:105) suggest that ‘the life inside schools’ is rarely considered by scholars of school architecture. They merely see schools as physical buildings and far removed from any association with policy construction, power and pedagogy. School as a place has thus
characteristically been understood ‘as a “container” within which education simply “takes (its) place”, with varying degrees of effectiveness and efficiency’ (Green & Letts, 2007:58).

Those scholars who have considered life inside the classroom understood that this ‘clearly had spatial implications’, but that what was missing was a theoretical narrative to situate it. Two cases in point are classic pieces of educational sociology: Paul Willis’s (1977) Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs and Stephen Ball’s (1981) Beachside Comprehensive. However, as more scholars have become interested in the spatial dimensions of our everyday lives, education enquiry is becoming increasingly interested in understanding school within the context of a spatial lens (Shilling, 1991; Levinson & Sparkes, 2005; Gulson, 2005, 2008; Gulson & Symes, 2007a, 2007b; Barker, 2010; Vadeboncoeur, 2009; Veck, 2009; Loxley et al., 2011). By focusing on the spatiality of school life, this work is seen as providing another tool to rearticulate existing problems, and as Vadeboncoeur suggests:

Returning to space and spatial arrangements has reinvigorated research that considers the effects of educational spaces, like classrooms, schools, and community contexts, on participants engaged within them, as well as the social construction of these spaces by the participants through their engagement. (2009:281)

But it is perhaps the sole book on the subject, edited by Gulson and Symes (2007b), Spatial Theories of Education, which provides us with the most comprehensive attempt to relate the significance of ‘space’ and ‘place’ within educational policy and practice. And as they suggest in their opening chapter:
examining education policy from a spatial perspective is not about creating ‘new’ problems as such, but rather it is about providing explanatory frameworks that, perhaps, disrupt understandings in, and posit new possibilities for, ‘mainstream’ education policy studies. (2007b:2)

The space of school acts as a disciplinary site for the inculcation of certain behaviours and ways of thinking. Such attitudes are further legitimated and constructed by macro discourses of performativity for both teachers and children, where attainment, achievement and test results in certain subjects are paramount (as argued in chapter three). Such discourses become markers for success and create the ‘truths’ of what schooling is about. These truths become normalised and embedded within the wider spaces of educational policy architecture, which is then played out in school places by the sociality and practice of individuals. The expected behaviours, identities and attitudes are normalised and internalised by individuals in order to facilitate success of these truths. As Foucault noted, ‘discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile bodies”’ (1977:138).

Through the disciplinary regimes and practices of schooling, the body is worked and coerced into behaving in certain ways in order to conform to these truths and ways of thinking about what schooling and education is. Thus bodies are policed:

In today’s schools no less than earlier ones, the abiding concern is with accounting for the location of bodies and not the development of minds. Scholastic progress is checked sporadically but the location of the bodies is accounted for several times daily. (Oldenburg, 1999:278)
What follows, then, in relation to neo-liberal mainstream schooling, is that educational policy and practice continues to be produced at the macro level. What goes on in schools at the physical, material and mental level, both nationally and increasingly internationally, is often at odds with requirements at a more local level. With the focus of school based on all children reaching certain levels of achievement, passing tests and exams and being taught certain prescribed bodies of knowledge, the lived experiences of the school space for all children are constructed accordingly. The ‘conceived’ and ‘perceived’ notions are therefore re-consolidated and reaffirmed simply by these constructed social relations inherent within the interactions that take place in the places of school: ‘New voices are given space within policy talk, and the spaces of policy are diversified and disassociated. New narratives about what counts as a “good” education are articulated and validated’ (Ball, 2007:134).

According to Green and Letts (2007:61), in their work on rural education, the centralisation of education has dissolved localised provision. This suggests that ‘space simply doesn’t matter’. By drawing on the work of Soja’s ‘trialectic’ and Lefebvre’s ‘spatial triad’ they recommend that a socio-spatial framework is required to unpack the distinctive character and cultural understanding of schools in different locations, for ‘space is an arena for cultures to interact – to collide, to enmesh, to resist, to coexist’ (2007:72). And it is this idea of our everyday interactions or, as Lefebvre would say, the social agency of our everyday lives, that becomes an important aspect of our spatial re-understanding; after all, ‘energy has to deployed within a space’ (Lefebvre, 1991:12). Armstrong (2007) is also interested in the ‘local’ and the disparity
between how schools implement and interpret education policies. She notes how a spatial understanding of the education system provides us with a framework in which to appreciate the processes of how children are included and excluded from mainstream schools, particularly if they are ‘othered’ on the bases of difference. Basing her ideas on Soja’s ‘Thirdspace’ she emphasises that ‘We cannot separate the spatial from the social...because social roles and identities, relationships and practices, are produced by, productive of cultures, geographies, and the social lives of places and communities’ (Armstrong, 2007:100).

Thus it becomes clear that the production of school space is determined by the ideological (conceived) function of schooling. As we have seen in chapter three, schooling has become increasingly embedded with the rhetoric of ‘economism’, whereby education becomes about servicing the economy at the expense of any other function. Such ideology is embedded within the conceived space of educational policy and ideas, which in turn is constituted through and in the perceived space of schools and consequently shapes the day-to-day ‘lived space’ of school life in the form of school routines, uniforms, disciplinary regimes, attitudes and teacher–pupil relationships. According to Gulson and Symes (2007a:106), such ideology becomes:

central to the administration of the school population, providing the fabric of a disciplinary technology that, through the spectre of unremitting inspection and surveillance, enabled it to be normalized and classified on a day-to-day basis.
In their work interrogating the cultural rhythms of a particular primary school, Thomson et al. (2007) provide us with evidence of how school space is produced ideologically. Examining the context of children’s work on display, they concluded that:

Schools are highly routinised places, with well-defined rhythms provided by patterns of holidays, beginning and closing times, dinnertime, and scheduled lessons. Classrooms too have their own rhythms which are pedagogically produced through patterns of teacher instruction and individual and whole class work’. (2007:395)

More recently, with the neo-liberal emphasis on school improvements, standards and performance associated with the conceived spaces of the global knowledge economy, educational policy has become standardised. Such policy ideologically constructs what all schools should focus on: teaching and learning particular bodies of knowledge; testing that knowledge via SATs and GCSEs; working towards a good attendance profile; and maintaining a strong position in the league tables. Educational policy has become increasingly based on creating schools where children’s and young people’s learning is heavily scrutinised and focused on the achievement of good examination results, at the expense of all other learning or understanding of how children learn. There is perhaps no recognition that places are different and that therefore schools in different places may be spatially different. According to Harris and Ranson, however, ‘we need forms of school improvement that are localised, contextualised and above all accountable to the local needs of the community and the young who live there’ (2005:584).
According to Searle, ‘classrooms are becoming “delivery rooms” for state-licensed knowledge; as such they are policed and contained by Ofsted’ (Searle, 2001:21). The policy architecture has turned schools into business ‘spaces’. Searle goes on to talk about the dual approach of decentralising control of schools to the market, on the one hand, and a centralised curriculum, on the other. He argues that such a dynamic has created a situation whereby schools find it increasingly difficult to create an inclusive place and are therefore unable to operate within a social-justice framework. The ‘spatial veils’ of ‘privatisation’, ‘performance’, and ‘targets’ embedded within educational policy at the conceived level have led many schools to prioritise achievement in tests above everything else. Such social experiences (re)produce and (re)enforce certain types of activities, attitudes, identities and behaviours, which ultimately exclude other ways of thinking about or doing things in school.

I consider that everyone involved in the teaching, learning and management of schools – including parents, governors, teachers, the local education authorities, Ofsted and central government – plays their part in developing and constructing the expected socio-spatial behaviours, values and norms of school life. Many thinkers use spatial or geographical metaphors in their writing to discuss the same idea. Valentine (2001) refers to this as the construction and development of ‘moral geographies’, similar to Sibley’s (1995) ‘moral landscapes’. This parallels Bourdieu’s theory of ‘social fields’ (1977), whereby certain children will occupy the place of a classroom with the ‘culturally’ approved attitudes and character teachers expect. Through their daily interactions and relations with other children and staff, teachers are
instrumental in forging and reinforcing these norms, values and attitudes about how children should behave and how they should conduct themselves inside the spaces of a school. Via their interactions with other children, teachers and other adults, all children and young people learn how to operate, act and interrelate appropriately within the lived spaces of school. Ultimately, their interactions provide them with meanings and begin to ‘structure the structure’ of school (Loxley et al., 2011:55) by setting up a normalised moral framework of beliefs and practices. Fielding (2000) argues this moral framework begins to define ‘what it means to be a good teacher and...what it means to be a good learner’ (2000:202). This is then standardised across the schooling system. Consequently, the role of the ‘good’ teacher has become about tracking children’s yearly progress in tests, and the role of the ‘good’ learner is to stay on track and pass numerous tests. Schools have thus become ‘places’ where children are regularly tested, held accountable and often disadvantaged by a narrow standardised education (Baker, 2010).

Children who appear different from the ‘norm’, who do not conform or critically engage or who rebel and fail to achieve expected grades will not fit in and are thus less likely to adopt a sense of attachment or belonging to the school. School for these children will simply remain a space they engage in but not a place they experience positively or feel a sense of connection to. By understanding the school as a transformative place, and not fixed on the truths established by a performativity culture, I believe people within schools can reconstitute the space of school to create a different set of truths that accepts different identities (or persons) in order to produce a place where all children
and adults feel connected; a place that seeks to motivate and develop children through their particular strengths, and not simply to judge them on their performance and achievement in tests. If Gypsy/Traveller children are welcomed and accepted in schools they may accept it as a place of belonging and begin to achieve and realise their full potential.

A Time for Change

[T]he concept of space is no longer ‘fixed’, it is also true of the populations that occupy them: they are on the move; boundaries are increasingly porous and the flow and circulation of ideas, capital, labour, knowledge and cultural forms cannot easily be restricted. (Gulson & Symes, 2007a:106)

In turning our attention to Lefebvre’s third, integrated, dimension of space – lived space – which extends beyond the perceived and conceived, we are provided with the potential to challenge and even alter the constructed spatial arrangements of space and place. Lived space relates to the ‘space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomenon, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias’ (Lefebvre, 1991:12). For Lefebvre, it is this third dimension of space that brings together the idea that space is fluid and capable of transforming itself. Lefebvre suggests that particular rhythms are associated with this third space, and these include those constructed around the seasonal rituals, holidays and festivals and also those associated with an unconscious emotion or behaviour spontaneously produced. This third aspect of space therefore also includes the unconscious and imaginary space, which can be passively experienced. This includes the
media, art and literature, where imagery and symbolism play a major role in the production of space. However, where imagery and symbols can subconsciously legitimate the ideological construction, and control, of mental space without question, lived space incorporates lived experiences (or social action) and thus it is within this third space that individuals have the power to confront and challenge the often restricted nature of both perceived and mental spaces (Middleton, 2010).

For Soja, the key lies with the combination of Lefebvre’s perceived and conceived, or ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ spaces and lived space, something he terms the ‘trialectics of spatiality’ (Soja, 1996:8). Here, Soja distinguishes between the concept of ‘Firstspace’ (similar to perceived space) ‘that can be empirically mapped’ and ‘Seconddspace’ (similar to conceived space) which relates to the ‘ideas about space’ (1996:10). Then, by building on from Lefebvre’s ideas around ‘lived space’, Soja comes up with the term ‘Thirdspace’, which he suggests is where ‘Everything comes together’, and defines it as:

The space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an ‘unimaginable universe’. (1996:56)

I argue that it is within the realm of the lived space, or more specifically the Thirdspace of schools, that individuals, both teachers and students, are provided with the opportunity to operate differently and thus challenge the expected ‘norms’, ‘behaviour’ and culture of a school’s conceived (mental) space, which has up until now rendered them ‘docile bodies’. Thomson
(2007:123) alludes to this and argues that excluded students within certain places of a school can create ‘Counter-Public spaces’. Such spaces provide excluded students with a ‘collectively appropriate space through which they can oppose damaging stereotypes, and create alternative identities, narratives, and knowledge’.

This idea relates to Lefebvre’s notion that space is not fixed, and it is via the lived space that individuals can ‘change and appropriate’ (Lefebvre, 1991:39). Massey (2005:14) concurs and suggests:

space is equally lively and equally challenging, and that, far from it being dead and fixed, the very enormity of its challenges has meant that the strategies for taming it have been many, varied and persistent.

I consider that Lefebvre and Massey are optimistic about the abilities of individuals to challenge the reproduction of space. However, if we follow this analysis, it could be argued that Gypsy/Traveller children could be appropriately accommodated in the places of the school and classroom if the contemporary production of space is challenged and reality thus changed. For example, children might be allowed to move more freely around school, pick and choose what classes they want to attend, activities might be provided for all age groups and non-authoritarian teacher–child relationships could be promoted. This, however, would suggest a more progressive style of schooling that incorporates more democratic styles of teaching and learning (see Summerhill School as the archetype example of a democratic ‘progressive’ model). Why Lefebvre and Massey are optimists is that they perhaps
underestimate the ability of the neo-liberal education space to reproduce itself and to counter alternative models of schooling (see chapter three).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where Freire (1996) initially looked at the education of illiterate adults in developing nations, once individuals are allowed to engage in learning they begin to equip themselves with the ability to engage with and look more critically at their social situation, or using Lefebvre’s terms, the mental space they inhabit. Through their agency and their consciousness they begin to challenge and transform this mental space in order to include themselves as the subjects within a lived space and not merely the objects constructed through it. Freire suggests that learning should be about the perception of the ‘social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality’ (1996:17), and thus to challenge the relationships of power that have been absorbed in a given place.

My interpretation here is that, arguably, teachers and pupils, by their actions within the lived places and mental spaces of a school, might challenge and change the cultural context of that school, in order to question common-sense assumptions of what schooling is about. This therefore suggests that the structural production of ‘space’ is a fluid entity. Schools are locations where challenges to contemporary policy (discursive notions) that frame the power relations of educational pedagogy can be critically perceived and influenced by the agency of actors within school spaces.

I therefore argue that schools are able, via human experiences and their interactions and relations developed therein, to create the possibilities for
change, where every individual within the spaces of schools becomes the subject and not just the object. Adopting a similar position to Lefebvre, where space is both shaped by social relations and the product of social relations, Massey (2004, 2005) is helpful in realising this potential. Thus I argue that where policy, discourse and ideology produce a classroom as a place to establish a certain pedagogy, that is, the way teachers and children operate and behave within a school, teacher and child interactions at the same time can challenge and thus produce a different, more liberating, pedagogy.

**Final Synopsis**

Lefebvre (1991) refers to three dimensions of space: the physical, the mental and the social; or, as he puts it, the perceived, the conceived and the lived. Perceived or real space is the physical dimension of the place we find ourselves in, the taken-for-granted world we live in, and an element of this space is how it shapes our bodies to interact with it, how we use our hands, where we stand, where we sit and so on. Conceived space, or mental space, is the imagined dimension, the abstract, what we think that place is – it is conceptualised space, discursively constructed. And lived space, is the social – where we interact and relate with each other. It is the space as lived through its associated images and symbols and thus is a mixture of the perceived and conceived, where everything is played out and comes together as a whole to give meaning to that space.

These three dimensions of space are interrelated and co-constituent of each other, and what Lefebvre does in this heuristic tool of the perceived, conceived
and lived is to produce a sociological lens in which to unpack what is going on in terms of the power relations embedded within the contemporary spaces we occupy in our daily lives. For some, it is important to highlight that spaces do not become places until social interaction takes place. The term space relates to the encapsulation of particular macro power relations that in turn are played out and replicated in specific places by social beings. However, for Lefebvre, there is no such distinction. For him, space and place are undifferentiated, and both produce particular meanings, or ontologies, and truths of the environment we inhabit. However, in order to unpack the power relations in a given environment, it is places that act as arenas of social interaction and practice that are co-constituent of the power relations that embody the wider power relations of space. As products of sociality, places determine the formation of the particular types of identities and hierarchical positions that are required to reproduce the wider structural notions of relations and discourses in space.

Lefebvre refers to the term ‘spatial codes’ that construct a certain reality of the space, which is then reconstituted in place and constitutes normalised and accepted behaviour. Similarly, Soja (1989) uses the term ‘spatial veil’ in order to illustrate how certain modes of thinking and activity become obscured over time and place, in order to perpetuate a dominant way of operating and thinking. And it is by seeing ‘spatiality’ in terms of space, time and social being that we can begin to reveal the hidden power relations that have become obscured by spatial veils of ideology. Sibley (1995) uses the concept of ‘socio-spatial boundaries’ to refer to such power relations, which he argues are used unconsciously to govern space in order to exclude certain communities from
certain places. These ‘socio-spatial boundaries’, ‘spatial codes’ or ‘spatial veils’ are similar to the concept of social structures, which embed certain hegemonic discourses and particular power relations in a given place. These discourses are ideological and construct certain truths about a space or place and thus negate other ways of doing things. Massey (2005) suggests that this is where the problem lies, as particular patterns of behaviour and practice have become normalised and deeply embedded in our imaginations about the ‘true’ nature of the existence of certain spaces and places.

In the context of neo-liberal schooling, I argue that the ‘objective’ of schooling, or the conceived dimension, has become focused around the performance and accountability of teachers and children. As such, schooling has become spatially organised around the teaching and learning of particular bodies of knowledge and the testing of that knowledge. The spatial imagination of educational policy has become increasingly focused and organised around shaping particular practices that facilitate this activity and thinking. Consequently, the ‘representations’ of the school environment have changed to reflect dominant discourses around managerialism, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and performativity. I argue that these dominant discourses act as the ‘spatial veils’ that have produced schools as places where everyone focuses on the achievement of outcomes and this hides and obscures any other thinking about anything else that education and schooling could offer children.

However, Lefebvre suggests that space is not fixed, and it is via the lived space that individuals can change the ways things are done. Soja also sees spaces as
fluid and suggests that individuals operating in these places and spaces have
the potential to unravel the spatial veils and transform themselves and the
spaces they operate in. So by using a spatial lens to understand what is going
on here, I argue that individuals can go some way in adapting their behaviour
in schools to create a more conducive environment for children and young
people. In line with this thinking, the lived spaces of schools provide
individuals, including teachers, staff and learners, with the potential to operate
differently. Although often very difficult, the suggestion is that by creating their
own unique educational ethos, schools may be able to establish the socio-spatial
conditions necessary to enable Gypsy/Traveller children to develop a sense of
belonging to the schools that they attend; somewhere they feel included and
safe.

So, thinking about the schooling process in spatial terms provides us with an
additional analytical tool with which to consider people’s schooling experiences
from the premise that the issues that many children face in the schooling system
relate to the ‘spatial’ organisation of the school environment.
Chapter Five

Methodology

In the last two decades, narrative has acquired an increasingly high profile in social research. It often seems as if all social researchers are doing narrative research in one way or another…as [a] material, method or route to understanding…social phenomena, or all of these. (Andrews et al., 2008:1,4)

Introduction

As well as describing the design and associated methods employed for the empirical research undertaken for this thesis, this chapter attempts to theorise and reflect on the relationship between the aims (and questions) of the thesis and my theoretical position as the researcher. As implied by Sayer (1992), methodology should involve not only thinking about the empirical tools adopted and their appropriateness to the study but, equally importantly, reflecting on the theoretical implications of one’s ontological position and epistemological perspective in researching the social world. In Sayer’s words:

It is my belief that there is a method not only in empirical research but in theorizing, and we need to reflect on this…arguments have a philosophical character, involving thinking about thinking. (1992:2,3)
Some thirty years ago, this philosophical discussion was often seen as irrelevant to social scientists, or was considered as something that should be avoided by empirical researchers. Consequently, discussion of the decisions behind the methodological tools adopted bore more relevance. I do not wish to enter too deeply into debates here about the reasons behind such sentiments, as it seems obvious to me that thinking about methods ‘shape[s] the course of research long before’ the choice of particular methodological tools is made (Sayer, 1992:2). All I want to say here in relation to this is to note that there is a difference in understanding between the natural sciences and the social sciences. This understanding relates to whether we adopt a positivist or interpretivist paradigm in which to explain and interpret social reality which is underpinned by an appreciation of one’s ontological and epistemological positions (Basit, 2010), which I need to make clear in this chapter.

As everyone knows, for natural scientists, the research process is usually considered to be fairly straightforward and based on cause and effect of the natural world as well as the regularity and patterns of events. On the whole, quantitative methodological tools are used to collect data within this model. The research process adopted for this model will often involve the testing of a hypothesis, where one can separate out a particular phenomenon in a given ‘experiment’. This is very much a positivist (or normative) research paradigm where knowledge is often seen as objective and tangible and human behaviour is regarded as passive. In adopting this approach, ‘truth can only be seen to be discovered by observing, experimenting on, or interrogating a large number of subjects, resulting in findings that can be statistically analysed, and are
therefore believed to be generalizable’ (Basit, 2010:14). Therefore, the social world is seen as fixed and external to the individual; it is out there and occurs independently of one’s understanding. This particular research approach has incurred much criticism as it fails to recognise human agency and maintains a ‘mechanistic and reductionist view of nature which, by definition, excludes notions of choice, freedom, individuality, and moral responsibility’ (Cohen et al., 2000:17).

For the social scientist, the social world is less fixed and ‘can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the on going action being investigated’ (Cohen et al., 2000:19). The social world is therefore far more complex and it is not so easy to isolate the phenomena under study by simply conducting closed experiments. As Sayer notes: ‘Social systems are open because of the capacity of people to change their own nature and their environment; hence closed system experiments are impossible’ (in Gregory & Urry, 1985:56). Studying the social world within this model and gaining knowledge may be less straightforward and frequently more complex and irregular; this is where a more qualititative approach to collecting data and gaining knowledge becomes necessary. To that end, as a social scientist I adopt a qualitative approach in my work here as ‘Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:6).
As such, this research uses an interpretivist research paradigm, which assumes reality is socially constructed and thus seeks an understanding of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world. Such an approach is not without its critics, particularly in relation to the ‘relative neglect of the power of external – structural – forces to shape behaviour and events’ (Cohen et al., 2000:27). I do not wish to reject an understanding of the impact of structural forces on individuals. Far from it, and, as I note below, for me this relates to the sociological ideas of social structures and agency. The way I see it is that in order to gain knowledge of the extent to which structural influences shape the production of schooling, it is important to speak with the actors involved and gain knowledge about their experiences within such structures and their relationship with these structures. An interpretive paradigm for me involves a complex interplay of structure and agency and I argue is very much in line with a socio-spatial ontology that focuses on the importance of investigating the experiences of the everyday in relation to external factors.

Before returning to the epistemological and ontological position I adopt this chapter will initially revisit the aims and questions that have underpinned this research and my thinking behind such ideas. The chapter then proceeds to make clearer my theoretical position in terms of the socio-spatial before describing why the adoption of narrative analysis was used to consider the knowledge gained. Finally the chapter discusses the methodological tools adopted and the ethical issues involved in such a study.
Aims and Objectives of the Study

One of the major interests behind this project for me was the perception that children with ‘travelling’, or Nomadic, lifestyles are continually ‘underachieving’ in schools as compared to children from the dominant ‘non-travelling’, or Sedentarised, communities (the introductory chapter considers the notion of ‘underachievement’). This situation has persisted since it was first identified in the UK some forty years ago. As discussed in chapters two and three, this is despite a commitment over this period towards equal opportunities and educational equality in the UK. In chapter three, for example, I refer in particular to the educational policy architecture implemented during the Neo-Conservative Government since 1988 and New Labour’s term in office from 1997 to 2010. It is important to note here that this period is the main focus of this study, where Third Way policies were (re)introduced to reignite and re-embed educational equality and social justice for all children once again.

Considering that, for many Gypsy/Traveller children, primary schooling is often the first time they encounter a Sedentarised world, I began to wonder about their ontological position, as well as that of the staff and professionals who work with these children in schools and classrooms. To that end, in chapter two I explored the literature that argues that schooling has internalised a particular Sedentarised view and imagery of the world that might be at odds with the social reality and imagery of children coming from Gypsy/Traveller communities. This could perhaps begin to explain why, after more than fifty years, the schooling experience of these children has changed little.
In contemplating this phenomenon, it was obvious that I needed to find out the extent to which the ‘culture’ of neo-liberal schooling could be alienating Gypsy/Traveller children through the way educational environments are organised. By then comparing the culture of schooling with the culture of Gypsy/Traveller communities I could examine the differences and similarities between educational spaces and domestic spaces. Consequently, this thesis forms part of an investigation into the extent to which tensions between a Traveller lifestyle and the normative presumptions of the mainstream schooling process contribute to the educational (under)achievement of Gypsy/Traveller children. Therefore one of the main aims of this thesis was to:

- evaluate the extent to which a mismatch and conflict between the culture of school and the culture of Gypsy/Travellers’ everyday lives has contributed to their underachievement and lack of involvement in schooling.

In order to address such an aim, I needed to examine at the macro level (see chapter three) educational policies and literature surrounding the ‘process’ of neo-liberal schooling. I then needed to relate this literature to actual classroom practice in order to understand how educational policies were being ‘played out’ at the micro level of the school and the classroom and the impact this had on Gypsy/Traveller children’s experiences of schooling. Most importantly, I needed to get into schools and observe what goes on during a typical day and also listen to the stories of these young people and their parents, as well as those of the people that teach and support them in schools. This led to the
choice of data collection, namely participant observations in schools, where I taught these children alongside the teachers, and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with staff, parents and young people. The idea was that these individuals could tell me about their own feelings, attitudes, experiences, and understanding of the schooling process from their own perspective. The specifics of this methodological approach are discussed further below in this chapter, but just to note here that the idea behind such approaches was to:

- think about how policies, discourses and the structures of schooling play a part in influencing the behaviours and attitudes adopted in schools that produce and perpetuate certain ‘truths’ about what schooling is about and therefore what goes on in schools.

I was interested in the idea that I had gleaned from literature in chapter two that argues how neo-liberal policy architecture was at odds with more equality in educational practice. As Searle argues (2001:27), ‘the institution of market processes each exert pressures which tend to make schools less inclusive’. To that end, chapter three has provided a literature review that investigates how neo-liberal schooling has become increasingly ‘driven’ by targets and standards, at the expense of a commitment towards educational social justice for all children. I wanted to find out how far a preoccupation with performativity data leads to the rationing of education and as such erodes inclusive practice for certain children in the educational system. Therefore, a further aim of this project was to:
- understand how contemporary educational policy and practice has become reproduced by the mechanisms of the market, particularly in terms of a neo-liberal focus on performativity at the expense of educational equality.

I became more and more intrigued about this idea that teachers, parents and children could be conditioned to act and think in certain ways by the internalisation of educational policies that focus on neo-liberal ideas around performativity and particular notions of what achievement is. How does this happen? What of human agency and action? How do human consciousness and experiences figure in this? Is there a power dynamic at play? By contemplating these questions I came back to the sociological issues of structure and agency. School is a social structure produced and perpetuated by a network of policies and discourses as well as by human interactions, experiences and relationships within schools; the question is which has more influence on the way things are done in schools? Who has the power?

In adopting an interpretive position, I accept that there are multiple realities and interpretations of phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:9) and so I was keen to understand each actor’s experiences of the impact of performativity, that is, from the perspectives of parents, children, teachers and other education professionals. Schools are social spaces and I became interested in thinking about how the physical set-up of schools accommodates a performativity agenda and how this is negotiated and even resisted by these actors. This led me to the work of Lefebvre and spatial theory, which became the theoretical lens through which I went on to analyse my data in the three chapters which
follow. This interest in spatial theory led me to the final aims of the thesis, which were:

- to explore the extent to which the socio-spatial structures, practices and organisation of the wider education process continue to operate in producing and maintaining educational inequalities for children from Gypsy/Traveller communities;

- to investigate how social relations within schools could operate in producing a schooling experience that could adequately support children from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds.

**My Ontological Position – Critical Social Research**

For me schooling is a ‘structure’ or a ‘system’ in place to support the configuration, production and perpetuation of a particular society and social arrangement. As such, I consider that in order to understand and examine changes in schools, we need to think about their historical formation and their relationship with wider society and look at changes to educational policy over time. Ontologically I thus position myself as a critical researcher; I am concerned with how structures can often marginalise certain groups of people and interested to ‘generate knowledge that aims to challenge and transform unequal power relationships’ (Humphries, 1997, in Henn et al., 2006:28). It is the job of the critical researcher to expose the mechanisms within structures that ‘maintain and perpetuate an unequal distribution of resources and power, resulting in the exploitation and oppression of the majority by an elite minority’ (Henn et al., 2006:29). Consequently, this thesis is about investigating how the
structure of schooling embeds unequal power relations that may have the potential to marginalise children from Gypsy/Traveller communities, by ultimately excluding them; yet at the same time how social relations can change and adapt practice to include them.

Since the mid-1980s, contemporary society has seen the ‘loosening’ of financial control by the state, with many areas becoming increasingly influenced by neoliberalism and associated market forces; none more so than education and schooling. Thus, the market I see is a mechanism that increasingly shapes the social reality of the school in terms of the organisation of its physical landscape and what goes on in the environment of school buildings between the individuals and others that occupy such places. To that end, what takes place in schools and classrooms is partially socially constructed and based on the unequal distribution of power relations both within and outside of the school. The impact of this influences particular social relations that take place on a day-to-day basis. This is why in chapter three I have traced the historical development of schooling from the birth of mass schooling at the end of the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century.

I situate myself more specifically as a critical educational sociologist whereby I consider schooling as a system embedded in discourses that perpetuate certain power relations that are required in order to support market ideology and the wider society, and in this case, parental choice, competition between schools and league tables. These power relations begin to shape the activities, experiences and the agency of teachers, parents and children in order that
schools support the perpetuation of the education market. So by looking at schooling from the perspective of a critical educational sociologist I want to unpack the relationship between societal thought and group interest in shaping the schooling process (macro), but also assess empirically the possible significance and effects of such a schooling system on individuals wrapped up within it (micro).

So for me, in charting both the concrete impact of macro changes (in education policy and policy frameworks) in the everyday spaces of educational encounter, and in considering possibilities for shifts and the possibility of change, it is important for me that knowledge is still very much required at the micro level, that is, in the school and the classroom. Here, everyday agency can be understood and analysed against macro ideologies. Therefore, the philosophical position that I adopt relates to this relationship between systems (or institutions, structures and so on) and individuals and the extent to which systems and/or individuals exert the most power in configuring and organising the reality of the social world.

Accordingly, overall I position myself as a critical social researcher interested in ‘how the social institution of school is structured such that the interests of some members and classes of society are preserved and perpetuated at the expense of others’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:13). In so doing I am interested in locating concepts of power into this enquiry and as Henn et al. (2006) note, and I concur:
research is a moral-political activity, not an academic pursuit, and the researcher’s skills in the field of knowledge creation should be used to advance political goals...For example, social research can become a powerful vehicle in challenging the existence of racial prejudice, campaigning for the removal of gender inequalities, and fighting for the emancipation of the working class (Henn et al.:29)

Consequently, in the remaining chapters of this thesis, I generate knowledge about the situation and experiences of Gypsy/Traveller children and schooling by exposing the unequal power relations that often exist to exclude, or spatially divide, these children. By raising critical questions, this thesis thinks about how all individuals working in schools could make it a more accommodating place for Gypsy/Traveller children and somewhere they could feel included alongside all other children from different communities.

For example, both of the case-study schools where I spent some time observing and teaching had a good reputation for including and accommodating Gypsy/Traveller children. This was evidenced by the interviews I had with parents, who were more than happy to send their children to these schools, as well as the positive attitudes of the staff towards these children and their communities. And although these children and their communities were not fully included and accepted within the wider community itself, I believe that schools can sow the seeds for a more understanding community and, hopefully, society as a whole.

In order to examine the power relations embedded within the schooling process, this thesis examines the subjective perceptions and experiences of
individuals in relation to the phenomenon, that is, the schooling of Gypsy/Traveller children. Consequently, when thinking about collecting data for this thesis, I needed to examine the experiences of the schooling process from the perspective of those on the ‘ground’ and ‘wrapped up’ in the ‘system’ and ‘landscape’ of schooling. If I was going to get a reliable picture of the phenomena it was important for this thesis that the data represented three perspectives. The first from those of practitioners working in schools engaging with policy and practice; secondly, from those of the community; and thirdly, from those practitioners working alongside the communities. The first group I note are ‘insiders’, the second group ‘outsiders’ and the third group ‘insider/outsiders’; the cultural mediators between nomadism and sedentarism. This was particularly important in terms of the triangulation of data, which I discuss below. It was crucial to see how teachers bring policy alive in their classrooms and the extent to which they critically engage with it. I was particularly interested in how much influence individuals have on what goes on in the schools and classrooms that Gypsy/Traveller children attend, as well as how parents made sense of the school environment and how teachers made sense of their work.

By examining stories from interviews and focus groups and carrying out participant observations in schools, I was able to gain knowledge of how policy is enacted pedagogically in classrooms and experienced in practice. It was important to investigate how teachers (and children) went about constructing and making sense of what they do. In terms of how I went about collecting this knowledge and understanding, it was important for me to make use of a variety
of qualitative methodological tools. One such method involved semi-structured interviews, which provide personal and subjective accounts of what individuals think is going on from how they understand it (Basit, 2010). Interviews with parents would also enable me to find out what they felt was important from their perspective and any beliefs they held about the schooling of their children. Equally important, and somewhat obvious really, was the need also to carry out some participant observations in schools so that I could relate what was told to me by individuals to what I saw going on in schools. This data would then allow me to unpack the challenges of schooling Gypsy/Traveller children from the perspectives of professionals and parents as well as to examine the extent to which teacher agency and the physical organisation of schools contributed to their experiences. I discuss these methods in more detail below but want now to present my epistemological understanding.

My Epistemological Perspective

When thinking about and sharing one’s ontological position or view of the world in relation to a particular study, as I have done above, of equal importance is to be clear about one’s epistemological perspective. Epistemology relates to the nature and scope of knowledge and how that knowledge is ‘attained and conveyed to others’ (Basit, 2010). For example, how knowledge is produced, formed, collected, analysed, realised and transmitted in relation to the phenomenon under study. In regards to this thesis I develop knowledge that seeks to understand the struggles associated with the marginalisation and educational inequality of Gypsy/Traveller communities. Part of the
contextualisation of one’s epistemological perspective overlaps with one’s ontology, or theoretical, position. It is therefore important to make clear the theoretical structure of a study in order to provide the ‘lens’ being used to analyse and produce knowledge.

In this thesis, as I noted above, I adopt a critical perspective when analysing social lives and thus suggest an epistemological perspective that relates to a radical theory of knowledge formulation. This fits with my ontological position noted above, where social action, or agency, is often constrained at the macro level by the historical formulation of the institutions and structures of contemporary capitalist society as well as by individuals via social relations and the physical environment they find themselves in. However, at the same time, at the micro level of these social relationships with others and the physical environment or landscape where these take place, individuals do have a certain capacity to ‘change their own nature and their environment’ (Sayer, 1985:56). Therefore, I foreground an understanding of social relations that take place in specific places and consider that the relationship between these and the institutions and the physical environments becomes ever more important to explore. I regard knowledge as subjective and very personal, so, in order to explore people’s perceptions of phenomena, interviews and focus groups are important.

This thinking lends itself to the epistemological significance of the spatial organisation of society, and I agree with Soja (1996:1) that ‘we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial
beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatiality’. For Soja (1989, 1996), spatiality relates to our geographical imagination, how we understand the function of the spaces we occupy and how we engage with them both physically and mentally, as well as the capacity to construct or change what goes on. Consequently, it is in thinking about the school as a space that has been historically, politically, culturally and socially produced over time, with social relations congruent with that process, that this thesis embraces the emerging body of work within cultural geography. That is, I am using ‘spatial theory’ to make sense of the spaces we operate. I therefore argue that by exploring theories of space and place, this thesis is able to examine the complex relationships concerning individuals and the cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of the contemporary spaces of our daily lives.

**Spatiality – the Theoretical Lens**

Space and place are basic components of the lived worlds; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask. (Tuan, 1977:3)

As Gregory and Urry (1985:3) assert: ‘spatial structure is now seen not merely as an arena in which social life unfolds, but rather as a medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced’. Therefore, what goes on in a particular space (or place) is socially constructed. Putting space at the centre of this thesis further develops my ontological and epistemological positions. I consider that this study is able to investigate the nuances of power that
influence the configuration and organisation of schools within the structures and systems, or processes, of schooling. That is to say, it looks at how schools are set up and how they produce what goes on in the ‘spaces’ of schools at the macro level and the ‘places’ of classrooms at the micro level. Consequently, this work provides an analysis of the relationships between ideology, teachers and children in order to expose the power relations embedded within these spaces. Such relations are responsible for the configuration and organisation of schools as they determine what schools provide for children, which ultimately has the potential to exclude certain children. As Shilling (1991:24) tells us:

Space is a resource which simultaneously structures and is structured by individuals in the course of their day-to-day lives. As such, it is central to the production and reproduction of social relationships and the life-chances of different groups of people.

By deploying a spatial lens, this thesis moves away from the traditional social-justice concepts of ethnicity, class and gender as critical and complex interrelated sites, which have continued to explore key factors behind educational inequalities. My thesis offers an additional interpretative concept or ‘theoretical lens’ through which to analyse the educational inequality of Gypsy/Traveller children. That is not to say that these traditional sites or terrains of struggle are not important and do not have any relevance here. Far from it. The idea of this thesis is to add a ‘spatial’ dimension to these structural inequalities. As Giddens clearly noted some years ago:

Most forms of social theory have failed to take seriously enough not only the temporality of social conduct but also its spatial attributes...neither
time nor space have been incorporated into the centre of social theory, they are ordinarily treated more as ‘environments’ in which social conduct is enacted….rather than integral to its occurrence. (1984:202)

According to Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1989, 1996), as discussed in the previous chapter, there are three dimensions of ‘space’ that are unified and interdependent. These dimensions consist of ‘perceived space’, ‘conceived space’ and ‘lived’ or ‘Thirdspace’. In chapter four I explored these dimensions in order to develop my theoretical framework, or ‘spatial’ lens, of how these three dimensions work together as one unified whole. Although the dimensions are intrinsically linked, by breaking up and exploring each dimension of space in turn, this thesis develops a heuristic device in relation to my data so as to gain knowledge of what is going on ‘spatially’ in schools, and how the dimensions often work together to marginalise Gypsy/Traveller children in some schools. In order to clarify my thinking here, I need to very briefly summarise how I develop such a heuristic device as a lens through which to analyse my data. Although I do this in chapter four, it is important to revisit my thinking in this chapter in order to further demonstrate and join up my ontological and epistemological standpoints.

**The Heuristic Model of the Spatial Trilogy**

In chapters six, seven and eight where I apply my theoretical lens, I frame my empirical data within the configuration of Firstspace (perceived space) in order to investigate the physical landscape of the school and our geographical understanding of the built environment of the school. Using interview material
and Field Notes I include details of how schools are organised (and configured), which incorporates the disciplinary organisation of school space – for example, how the physical space of the school is organised during the day, the year, the rhythms of the school, time, boundaries and limits, rules, routines and so on. Drawing mainly from material collected from parental interviews, I then juxtapose the Firstspace of the school with the Firstspace of the Gypsy/Traveller child; the space they occupy outside the school. This enables me to illustrate how physical space is organised and conceptualised in very different settings. For example, Gypsy/Traveller children often have limited boundaries, predominantly playing outside and in each other’s caravans; they do not necessarily belong to or yearn for a particular place; they have internalised a Nomadic imaginary and are ready to move at any time, whether voluntarily or by force. This is then discussed in relation to Secondspace (conceived space), which includes ideology and discourse around educational policy and practice and how this produces and constructs the geographical imagination of what goes on in the school space; for example, teachers’ perceptions of what is important and should be going on in schools and Gypsy/Travellers’ perceptions of why they must perform and achieve in certain ways. Then, finally, the discussion turns to Thirdspace (or for Lefebvre, lived space), which is where the first and second dimensions of space are played out and brought together with the focus on relations in schools. The data suggests that Thirdspace consists of a Sedentarised ideology that remains dominant within any school, which then goes on to create certain spatial conditions that fail to adequately include or accommodate Gypsy/Traveller children. Furthermore, a focus on performativity exacerbates this situation as ideas of equal opportunities are eroded.
Narrative Analysis

By focusing on narrative, we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted. (Andrews et al., 2008:2)

In order to analyse my data in chapters six, seven and eight, I initially began to go through my transcripts with the idea of locating patterns or themes that linked these transcripts together in relation to the aims and questions of my study. I came up with 23 initial themes (see appendix 2) which I used to originally organise and code my data. Creswell (2005:237) defines coding as a ‘process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data’. From these codes I was then able to ‘collapse these…into broad themes’ (Creswell, 2005:237), which I related to the distinctive factors associated with the issues that came out of my literature review and included prejudice directed towards the community; pressure on schools to achieve government targets; implementation of education policy; and the cultural norms of school versus community and inclusion.

However, after re-reading my transcripts and attaching material to each theme, I realised that perhaps I had fostered ‘a culture of fragmentation’ (Atkinson, 1992, cited in Punch & Oancea, 2014:238) that structured the way I engaged with my interview material and focused my attention on abstract theories, a problem associated with grounded-theory approaches (Creswell, 2005).
Adopting such an approach did help me organise my data, which I found very useful at the beginning. However, I started to consider whether I was being prevented from thinking about other more interesting or relevant issues relating to the micro picture of the phenomena that I could explore. This is a problem often faced by qualitative researchers, as Punch and Oancea (2014:238) suggest:

Data analysis approaches based on segmenting, coding and categorisation are valuable in attempts to find and conceptualise regularities in the data. But they by no means exhaust the data or possibilities for their exploration.

After all, I had chosen semi-structured interviews to collect my data in order to allow interviewees to literally tell their stories. As such, a grounded-theory approach seemed incongruous with what I was trying to achieve by carrying out this study; namely, to gain knowledge of people’s individual experiences of schooling and what they thought and felt about these experiences at the micro level. In relation to the spatial organisation of schooling, I wanted to understand how teachers interpreted policy and turned this into practice in their classrooms and what they thought children should be learning. I proceeded to re-read the data as collected under my themes and think about how these themes represented how schools organised what went on and how they went about establishing certain practices and how perhaps this might be adding to the situation facing Gypsy/Traveller children.

After a few months, I came back to my data and would often carry a number of my transcripts around with me during my normal daily routines and when the opportunity arose would read and re-read them. Not thinking about any
particular codes or themes, I would immerse myself in the detail, something Creswell suggests is ‘the first step in data analysis’ prior to coding (Creswell, 2005:237). As ‘people live storied lives’ (2005:473), it occurred to me that what I had collected were actually personal stories from individuals willing to tell me about their thoughts and feelings about a marginalised community. I was mindful at this stage, as noted by Punch and Oancea (2014:248), that this would perhaps allow me to ‘deal more holistically with [my] data’ which, as they further note, I possibly should have done ‘right from the start’, which is often associated with the analysis of narratives and stories. After discussions with one of my supervisors, I was inspired to think more carefully about narrative research, whereby ‘the narrative researcher provides a voice for seldom-heard individuals in educational research’ (Creswell, 2005:477). Indeed, this relates to my ontological position as a critical social researcher and the idea of challenging unequal power relations. After the focus-group discussion with the four teenage girls (discussed in chapter eight), for example, they told me how they had looked forward to meeting me so that they could tell me their stories, as nobody in the educational centre was interested in problems associated with their previous schooling experience. Accordingly, narratives are stories that contain a variety of elements, including an examination of issues of power as experienced in everyday lives. It was clear to me at this stage, that the focus-group discussion with these four young women was characterised by narratives around issues of Gender, and in particular stories around the power dynamics of gender norms. Furthermore, on thinking more broadly about my data, allowed me to think about the focus of each of my analysis chapters; chapter six would highlight problems associated with a cultural clash and bring in the
community voice; chapter seven would focus on the impact of educational policy on teaching and practice and bring in the practitioner voice; and chapter seven would discuss the gender dynamic and bring in the young persons voice.

I became interested in the potential of thinking about my transcripts as stories, and how story can be a tool for analysis. As Creswell (2005:473) notes, people:

tell stories to share their lives with others and to provide their personal accounts about classrooms, schools, educational issues, and the settings in which they work. When people tell stories to researchers they feel listened to, and their information brings researchers closer to the actual practice of education. Thus, stories reported in qualitative narrative research enrich the lives of both the researcher and the participant.

Andrews et al. (2008) *Doing Narrative Research* provided me with an insightful overview of the potential of narrative research and enabled me to understand the merits of such a tool for analysis. It is to these merits of using narrative research as my analytical tool that I now wish to turn, by presenting my ideas and justifications of its use here in my thesis.

Andrews et al. (2008) discuss three main theoretical positions within narrative research that include event-centred, experience-centred and socially constructed narratives. The main difference between the first two approaches relates to an individual’s representation of phenomena. Event-centred approaches consider that phenomena are on the whole constant and structured by events, whilst experience-centred approaches see phenomena as fluid and changeable over time. For socially constructed narrative accounts, ‘stories are expressions of
internal cognitive or affective states’ and often ‘co-constructed’ with others (Andrews et al., 2008:5). The main divergences in narrative approach lie in whether narratives embody an individual’s internal state or whether external social conditions have more effect on an individual’s experience of a given phenomenon. Consequently, event- and experience-centred approaches are concerned with an individual’s ‘internal representations of phenomena’ (2008:5), while the socially constructed narrative is concerned with how narratives are socially produced and represent external social circumstances. Those researchers who are interested in narratives as individualised accounts of experience tend to view the significance of stories as building and expressing personal identity and agency. Event narratives, on the other hand, tend not to be interested in agency – these are just stories recounting historical events, the person talking about where they were and what they were doing at a certain time.

I am clearly interested in experience-centred socially orientated narratives – how the socially produced Sedentarised world is perceived by the Gypsy/Travellers, and vice versa. As such, what is important here is the impact of the Sedentarised world on the everyday lives of Gypsy/Traveller communities and what they think about this. However, I also argue that my narratives actually embody elements of all three approaches in that they are based on individual experiences of a social phenomenon which is schooling/education. The narrative collected from practitioners in particular included reference to socially constructed ideas of what schooling was about and how it had changed with the focus on performance and outcomes. As such,
the stories I was told by the interviewees represented their ‘social reality as text’ (Punch & Oancea, 2014:241). By positioning such stories within social reality allows one to think about that reality as produced and ‘located within power structures and social milieu’ that represent that reality (2014:241).

My narratives were event centred in that they included the implementation of educational policy and how this constructed practice. They were experience centred in that they included experiences of how individuals engaged with such practice and what they thought about it. And they were socially centred, in that they included reference to the construction of what goes on in schools with others and in the way policy is interpreted into practice. In collecting narratives for this thesis, I was interested in how they were ‘tied up with the performance and negotiation of social identities in a common space of meaning’ (Andrews et al., 2008:6). A key characteristic of narrative research relates to situating the ‘story within its place or setting’ (Creswell, 2005:478), which is key when thinking about the impact of the spatial environment or landscape which produces stories.

Narrative research therefore strongly underpinned the theoretical lens I adopted throughout this thesis as it relates to Lefebvre’s spatial triad. I would argue that while my narratives represent the individuals’ internal understanding of the schooling system and how they engaged with it, at the same time, by experiencing the schooling process, their narratives also represented the external characteristics of being part of that schooling process; that is, their stories were socially co-constructed. The spatial lens enabled me to
evaluate my narratives within the perceived, conceived and lived dimensions of an individual’s experiences of the schooling process. I argue that narrative research lends itself to analysing stories via a spatial perspective in order to examine the power dynamic. Consequently, I agree with Gulson and Symes (2007a:98) when they suggest that ‘stories and narratives mediate the way space is apprehended and comprehended. The language of exclusion is, by and large, spatial; who’s in, who’s out, at the heart, on the margins.’

**Methodological Tools**

In order to find out how schools were or were not supporting and accommodating Gypsy/Traveller children in their classrooms, I needed to get into schools and collect the stories, or narratives, from teachers and professionals who teach and work with these children and their communities. I also needed to find out what the communities felt; what they thought of schooling and to hear their narratives about the experiences of their children in schools.

Thus, in order to gather these narratives it was necessary for me to undertake a phenomenological study and collect qualitative data around people’s experiences and ideas of the schooling process. In order to collect such data, the tools I adopted consisted of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observations in two case-study primary schools. The reason for such a ‘mixed’ qualitative approach relates to my ontological and epistemological positions, as noted above. To me, it is clear that such methods strive to
understand ‘what people think about a particular phenomena’ from their perspective (Brannen, 2005:11); to get their voice, as it were. As Geertz (1973, as cited in Smith, 2008) suggests ‘qualitative research aims to provide rich or “thick” descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation’. The specific qualitative methods initially used for this study consequently consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews (with staff in schools, other professionals including Traveller Education Support Staff (TESS), parents and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities) and participant observations in two primary schools.

However, later on, while immersed in the empirical side of this study, I adopted another qualitative tool in the form of focus groups that happened to present themselves by chance (as discussed below). This was an important opportunity for me to find out ‘collectively’ what a group of teachers thought about the challenges of teaching Gypsy/Traveller children in their classrooms; how a group of parents viewed the challenges of schooling their children; and how a group of Gypsy/Traveller teenagers experienced the schooling system. Thus, data collected from these discussions came from a ‘shared understanding’ (Creswell, 2005:215).

In adopting such a ‘mixed’ qualitative approach I was able to gain information about the experiences of a range of Gypsy/Traveller groups from three key perspectives. The first perspective was from practitioners, inside the schooling system; the second from practitioners inside/outside the schooling system; and the third from the communities themselves. The focus groups represented these
three perspectives. The first group comprised a group of four teachers from a school that had recently accepted three Roma pupils on roll. The second consisted of two (English Romany Heritage) Gypsy/Traveller parents and two support workers from a home-schooling project set up, although not exclusively, to support Gypsy/Traveller children who had experienced problems with mainstream schooling. The third involved four teenage women of English Romany Gypsy heritage who attended an alternative education centre. The semi-structured one-to-one interviews consisted of head teachers (2 – from the case-study schools), classroom teachers (6), teacher educators (2), trainee teachers (2), members of TESS (3 from London, 2 from the Midlands), an outreach worker for adult Gypsy/Travellers (1), English Romany Heritage parents (4) and English Romany Heritage teenage women (2) (see Appendix 1 for further details of the sample).

This opportunity to carry out interviews, focus-group discussions and participant observations afforded methodological ‘triangulation’, as it enabled me to collect complementary data from the three different perspectives, and then cross-match it. This provided a further complexity and validity to the data collected. In their defence of triangulation, Cohen et al. (2007:141) argue that such ‘techniques…attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint…demonstrating concurrent validity’. Therefore, collecting the narratives from a variety of professionals, parents and young people via interviews, focus groups and observations in schools and making links across the three perspectives increased the credibility of my findings. As further
suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016:265), ‘the extent to which research findings are credible – is addressed by using triangulation’.

Due to my previous experiences as an ex-primary schoolteacher of seven years, I had already established positive relationships with many teachers who over the years had worked with Gypsy/Traveller children in their classrooms. Many of these teachers became friends who I remain in contact with today. As such, they were more than willing to share their experiences with me. Furthermore, during my experiences as a teacher educator, I was able to visit a vast number of primary schools where I would sit at the back of a classroom and observe trainee teachers grapple with policy and practice. Over the five years I worked as a teacher educator I was able to establish positive relationships with trainee teachers and teachers in placement schools for trainees, and I drew upon these links. This is very much in line with feminist methodology, as when setting up interviews with appropriate participants such an approach seeks to establish ‘more reciprocal relationships’ by ‘treating people as people, rather than exploiting them as information giving beings’ (Henn et al., 2006:35).

In establishing genuine relationships with my research participants I would often be open about my own background as somebody who attained very little academically from school. On meeting parents for the first time I would make my position very clear from the outset, often alerting them to the criticisms I have of the current schooling situation in light of discussions with others’ and my own experiences. Where appropriate, I would talk about some of the literature that suggests the focus on schools is about passing tests, particularly
the SATs, and how everything is geared up to deliver a structured prescribed curriculum in order to achieve this, a discussion presented in chapters two and Three. By offering my ‘subjective expression up-front’ I was able to ensure my participants felt relaxed enough to tell me whatever they wanted, which led to the collection of some rich data and ultimately to the ‘objectivity’ of my research (Henn et al., 2006:32). That said, I am aware that the closeness I established with the people I spoke with could provide ‘scope for the interviewer to influence the interviewee’s responses in terms of revealing their own views on the matter; the questioning style; and the body language displayed’ (2006:161). Thus my thesis could be in danger of being criticised for lacking validity. However, as I note below, in establishing a close bond with my participants my intention was to assure them that my research directly relates to practice. As Creswell (2005:474) notes, there is a ‘commonly held perception by practitioners in the field that research is distinct from practice and has little direct application’.

All the professionals I interviewed had worked closely with Gypsy/Traveller children and their parents in an educational setting. They had ‘inside’ information about the educational experiences of children and the schools they were enrolled at, and therefore were able to provide a wealth of rich data that comprised accounts of any problems or difficulties such children needed to overcome in order to fully engage with the education system. The TESS, in particular, were key in providing an insight into the problems Gypsy/Traveller children faced in terms of access and attendance. These people work very closely with Gypsies’/Travellers’ families and schools, offering support and advice, and act as a ‘go-between’ between home and school. They work very
hard to establish positive relationships with the children and parents and as a result have gained the trust of these communities. Therefore, these people were well placed in providing a picture about the interface between the community and the school, albeit from their perspectives. And this is why interviews from parents and young people from the community were key to this study. They would be able to put across their perspective, which would then allow me to cross-match narratives.

It could be argued that narratives from the professionals far outweighed those from the community and therefore could constitute an imbalance in the type of data collected. However, when looking at the data sets collectively, the professionals themselves comprised a diverse group of people with varying opinions on the schooling system. For example, all but one of the professionals working with children and parents were sympathetic towards the challenges faced by Gypsy/Traveller communities, almost colluding with the cultural reasons for non-attendance of their children at school. The majority of teachers I spoke with were less sympathetic towards such challenges. So, in effect, my data set consisted of three fairly representative groups when considering their views and attitudes of the schooling process and the challenges involved. Even when this is taken into account, it could be argued that the total number of interviews may not be a representative sample. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2005) suggest, when using qualitative methods, the important criterion is to obtain a detailed understanding of frames of reference or world views gleaned from a small sample. Furthermore, my participant observations in two primary schools, where I had the opportunity to teach Gypsy/Traveller
children, provided me with an additional qualitative tool that complemented the other data collected.

In adopting narrative research as my method, narratives become ‘individualised accounts of experience…[and] ways of expressing and building personal identity and agency’ (Andrews et al., 2008:6). Therefore, such a choice of analysis provides a rich account of a social phenomenon from the perspective of those involved and embedded within that phenomenon in order to gather a ‘micro-analytic picture’ (Creswell, 2005:474). Below, I consider in more detail the three different tools of data collection.

**Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews**

The interviews for this study represent first-person accounts, or stories, of the informants’ experiences of the phenomenon under study, and it is these narratives that initially became the object of my investigations (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Such narratives could be analysed for patterns and connections in order to identify key themes that could be used to explain and understand the phenomenon under study. In analysing narratives from ‘the professionals’ outside Gypsy/Traveller culture alongside those of parents and children ‘inside’ the culture, I wanted to be able to examine any ‘contingent power relations’ that may exist between the two groups (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003:5). I would then be able to gain an understanding of the extent to which the ‘power-knowledge relations in a local and specific setting’ is contributing to the problems under study (2003:5).
Each semi-structured interview, or as Burgess et al. (2005:102) put it, ‘conversations with a purpose’, lasted between one to one and half hours, during which time I was able to gain knowledge about the school environment and what was understood as important in terms of what goes on in schools and classrooms from firstly the perspective of staff in the schools and secondly from the parents of the Gypsy/Traveller children on roll in the school. These in-depth face-to-face interviews were minimally structured in order to allow participants to tell their stories. As suggested by McCracken (1988:9), the long interview:

is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world.

Being conscious that I wanted to provide my interviewees with the space to tell their own stories, questions during all my interviews were used only to guide the ‘discussion’ as appropriate. Questions were not asked in any particular order, and some questions were omitted altogether, depending on how the interview progressed. This allowed me to ‘respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:111). At the beginning of each interview, I asked neutral questions in order to ease individuals into the interview and make them feel responsible. For example, I asked one head teacher ‘what is the favourite aspect of your job?’ followed by ‘what is the most difficult part of your job?’ This allowed me very quickly to begin to get at her ‘perceptions, opinions, values, emotions, and so on’ about the schooling process (2016: 125). In
addition, I was able to collect some rich and detailed material of people’s experiences, which Burgess et al. (2005) argues is a key advantage with these types of interviews.

I was also able to pick up on any related language used in these discussions and ask respondents to tell me what they understood by terms used. This was particularly important when thinking about ideas around educational opportunities, equality and diversity. I wanted to understand the respondents’ experiences of what this might look like, how it was interpreted and how schools were dealing with it or not. Consequently, semi-structured interviews as a tool enabled me to collect individual experiences of the schooling process and what they understood the problems to be from their own perspective and subjectivity. As Basit (2010:100) notes, a further advantage of such interviews is that they

are embedded in human experience and flagrantly draw on the participants’ objectivities. They seek the participants’ perceptions of the social world as it is experienced and lived by them and those around them. These are highly personalised portrayals of social phenomena.

It is well known that there is a high level of suspicion among Gypsy/Traveller communities towards anybody not part of their culture, so it was important for me to establish their trust. In light of this, I had to build positive relationships with TESS in the first instance, and they acted as ‘gate-keepers’ between myself and the parents. On one occasion, a TESS teacher remained present during the interview. Having this ‘gate-keeper’ present at the interview may have affected this parent’s response. However, the establishment of trust that I gained with
one particular professional enabled me to speak to other parents without them being present. This ‘key gate-keeper’ informed the parents of my work, and informed them that I was sympathetic to their situation regarding the schooling of their children. I would be introduced to parents via this person’s workplace and then was left alone in an office to speak privately with the parent. It was during one visit to this workplace that I obtained written consent from one parent to interview her daughter, who just happened to be visiting with her.

With these interviews I did not use many questions and would simply ask about their children and their experiences of the schools that they attended. During these interviews, all the parents I spoke with would talk about the differing reception they received at certain schools when trying to school their children, as well as talking about their own experiences as a child.

**Participant Observation – The Case-Study Schools**

To complement the data collected from the interview material, I chose to investigate in detail the experience of teaching Gypsy/Traveller children from an educationalist’s point of view. I carried out some ethnographic work as a participant observer by teaching in two primary schools. Both of the case-study schools were mainstream primary schools and, for the purposes of anonymity, I have changed their names, so in this thesis these schools are referred to as Oak Tree Primary and Green Acre Primary. I spent a total of two days in Oak Tree, situated just outside London, and a week in Green Acre, situated in Leicestershire. In both schools I taught and worked with children as part of the staff team.
Researchers often experience ‘difficulty developing rapport with individuals…if individuals are unaccustomed to formal research (e.g. a non-university setting)’ (Creswell, 2005:211). However, as an ex-primary schoolteacher and former lecturer on a primary PGCE programme I have much experience of how schools are run and how they are configured on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, this enabled me to ‘fit in’ very easily as a teacher and develop a good relationship with the (fellow) teachers. In fact, it was because of my background as a primary school teacher that I decided to become a participant observer in both these schools and actually do some teaching. That way I could organise my own materials and activities, tailoring them to get the best out of this research opportunity. For my Field Notes I kept sketchy notes at break times and lunch times and wrote these up every evening, straight after leaving the schools. It was important ‘that full notes in a narrative format be written…as soon after the observation as possible’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:149).

Oak Tree Primary (pseudonym)

Oak Tree Primary School is situated in a village not far from London. In the last eight years or so, this school had seen both a significant increase in the numbers of children on roll from Travelling families, and (relatedly) a withdrawal of children from the settled community, to the extent that ‘all the children are Travellers except two’ (head teacher). In 2002, there were 160 on roll in this school, with only 15 per cent Travellers. The Gypsies’/Travellers’ children at that time were English Travellers who had been attending the school for quite a
few years, living on an authorised site nearby and having been accepted by the community. When the Travellers of Irish Heritage arrived, they moved onto a nearby unauthorised site, settled their trailers and started to build homes, and their children were admitted to the local school. Their arrival prompted some village parents to withdraw children from the school, and eventually the majority of children in the school consisted of Irish Travellers, which proved to be very unpopular within the community. The number of Travelling children on roll varies from ‘about sixty’ down to the forties when families are on the move – ‘it is one thing that is not predictable’ (head teacher). The head of this school was very resistant to what I felt she saw as the ‘labelling’ of her school as a ‘Traveller school’ by the local community and was keen to stress the school was ‘mainstream’ and thus open to children from any background. This was very important to the head teacher due to the prejudice an ‘all-Traveller school’ invoked in the minds, or spatial imaginations, of many local parents, and which had resulted in the withdrawal of their children from the school. Therefore, I would suggest that this head teacher was keen to promote a particular ‘spatial imagination’ of this all-inclusive school as an ‘ordinary’ state-run mainstream school that happened to accommodate a particular majority of children from the local Gypsy/Traveller community.

I initially knew the school in my capacity as a PGCE lecturer, where the school was one of our partnership schools and thus attended by some of our student teachers. Therefore access was easily established after arranging a meeting with the head teacher, who then became my gate-keeper. On visiting the school, I met with the head teacher and talked about my research as well as providing a
general idea of what my study was about. During the interview on my second visit to the school, I suggested that I would like to spend some time in the school teaching and working with the children. The head was keen to pursue this idea and also suggested that this would enable some teachers to spend some time away from the classroom whilst I was teaching the children in their classrooms. I soon gained the trust of the head teacher and was very quickly able to establish a positive rapport with her. Once in the school, this trust was extended to the staff and children of the school, to whom I was introduced as their supply teacher. The head teacher informed me that she had established complete trust with the Traveller community and as such they respected and trusted all individuals that the head teacher allowed in the school.

I spent a total of two days in the school as a participant observer, teaching and working with children as part of the staff team. Being familiar with the routines of school life, it was very easy for me to ‘fit in’ and gain the respect and trust of the people who worked in the school. This enabled me to talk to key informants and get involved in informal discussions in the staff room. These people were able to ‘provide information and insights relevant to the research questions’ (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:137) in a relaxed environment. These discussions provided further opportunities to gain more insights into the experiences from the views of participants. On both days I also spent part of my lunchtime eating and chatting with the children whilst they were relaxed and eating their lunch. Thus, I was also able to gain knowledge of their experiences. This allowed me to totally immerse myself in this particular setting and establish myself as an ‘insider’. That said, in order to get the best out of this research opportunity and
'assess the situation accurately', I was conscious that I had to remain objective and as detached as possible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:137).

**Green Acre Primary (pseudonym)**

Green Acre Primary School is situated in a village just outside the city of Leicester. The school is one-form entry with approximately 150 children on roll. Unlike Oak Tree Primary, the Gypsy/Traveller community usually only make up, on average, 10 per cent of the total number of children at any one time, although this figure does vary from one year to the next. At one stage, for example, the numbers of Gypsy/Traveller children on roll rose to twenty-five. The majority of Gypsy/Traveller children that attend this school are English Gypsies living on two local sites not far from the village. The head teacher took over the school in 2001, which at that time was ‘on its knees and behaviour was a massive problem’ (head teacher). Talking to parents, this head teacher soon discovered that the ‘Traveller children were being blamed for the problems of the school but it wasn’t the Traveller children, it was the whole school; the way the school had been led and managed.’ Over the 10 years since taking over the school, this head teacher has established and gained the trust of both the Gypsies/Travellers and non-Traveller parents, and the school is now perceived as a ‘beacon school for including and accommodating Gypsy/Traveller children’ (interview: TESS Leicestershire). As such, the non-Traveller parents have not withdrawn their children from the school, as was the case at Oak Tree. Such is the trust that this head teacher and the school experiences from the Gypsy/Traveller communities that the school has gained a good reputation as a
place that includes and accommodates Gypsy/Traveller children. As she told me in her interview:

...as our reputation has grown we’ve built really good relationships with the Traveller Parents ...um... we’ve found that travelling, you know Travellers who travel will come and they are recommended to bring their children here, so we have admitted two today and we find that these families will come back to us time and time again, so that the two that have come in today were here 18 months ago. And we have some families where you know they’ll be here in October they’ll go in December they’ll be back in May.

In terms of access, this school was made known to me by a colleague I worked with when I first started my post as a Senior Lecturer on the Education Studies degree programme at De Montfort University, Leicester. After I had been introduced to the head teacher of the school, they assumed a gate-keeper role where I was afforded access to the school itself and its staff. On an initial meeting with the head teacher I spoke about my research and my background as an ex-primary teacher and teacher trainer as well as my interest in working in the school as a supply teacher. Like the head teacher at Oak Tree Primary, this head teacher was very keen for me to spend some time in the school as it would allow teachers to spend some time away from their classrooms on other activities. Once again, due to my teaching background and experience, I was welcomed by the staff team and treated as a fellow teacher in the school.

In both schools I became a respected ‘insider’. I was able to fit in with the daily rhythms of the schools and, having the knowledge and experience of a teacher’s role, I was accepted as ‘one of them’ by both staff and parents. Being conscious
of the potential danger that such an ‘insider’ status could afford, I had to be careful not to become subjectively involved. Due to the nature of my particular situation as a participant observer, I was able to remove myself from the school each day and therefore from the actual experience. On leaving the schools each day I spent the evening detaching myself from my experiences, writing up my Field Notes and reflecting on the day. That way I was able to constantly refocus on my research aims, objectives and questions to ensure these were at the forefront of my thinking before re-entering the field setting each day. During both experiences I was fortunate to arrange suitable accommodation away from my family and other work commitments in order to spend quality time, ensuring I remained focused and objective. Being able to switch roles from ‘insider’ to ‘outsider’ enabled me to see the setting both subjectively and objectively and thus proved a more robust study.

What was also interesting about carrying out observations in two different schools in terms of their demographic make-up was the opportunity to compare and contrast and examine patterns of good practice. As noted above, at Oak Tree, Irish Travellers comprised the majority of children, whereas at Green Acre, English Gypsies were the minority. In both schools it became clear that they worked hard to include all children and provided practical teaching and learning opportunities. These schools also worked very hard to understand Gypsy/Traveller communities and would often visit sites to establish a relationship with parents. As such, observations, interviews and discussions with participants confirmed the importance of social relations and the positive accommodation of Gypsy/Travellers in schools.
Focus Groups

Focus-group discussion consisted of individuals from each perspective, as noted above, i.e. from practitioners inside mainstream schooling, practitioners outside mainstream schooling but inside education, and the community outside schooling. My rationale was to gain an understanding of the issues from a ‘group of people who have knowledge of the topic’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:114) from each of these perspectives. Such a method, as Cohen et al. (2000:288) note, can support participants to interact ‘with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge’ and ‘it is from the interaction of the group that the data emerge’. Therefore, I was able to take the lead from the individuals in the group and simply let the discussion develop between them.

The first focus group comprised a group of teachers and represented the ‘practitioner as insider’ perspective. This group discussion arose via two of my initial interviews in a school that had recently enrolled three Gypsy/Traveller children from the Roma community across three different classes in the school. I was subsequently invited to talk to the three teachers and the deputy head (also responsible for Special Educational Needs) as a group.

The second focus group consisted of parents and staff as part of a home education programme aimed at supporting Gypsy/Traveller children. This group represented a ‘practitioners as outsiders’ perspective. I contacted a particular home-schooling organisation via telephone to find out what they did,
and was subsequently invited to come along to their centre and speak to one of the parents from the English Romany community whose child visited the centre. During this visit, I first interviewed the parent in a separate room, then the programme organiser invited me to talk to the group at the end of the day. This group comprised two parents, three support staff and two young people who attended the centre (these young people did not contribute to the discussion, however).

The final focus group represented the outsiders’ perspective. This discussion came about via a university contact who had been doing some work in an alternative educational centre that specialised in supporting those children who had left school with limited or no qualifications. After contacting the principle of this centre to discuss my work, I was subsequently invited to talk to four teenage women from the English Romany community. Therefore the methods adopted for my thesis became a mixed qualitative methods approach.

This opportunity provided me with an insight into what individuals thought and how these thoughts related to those of others, and how they worked through their thoughts as a group. As Fielding notes, group discussions are useful when you ‘want to assess how several people work out a common view or the range of views, about some topic’ (as cited in Henn et al., 2006:141). When talking with the home-schooling group that included two Gypsy/Traveller parents, there was very little disagreement but more of a consensus about the children’s education. They had both experienced difficulties when approaching schools to enrol their children, including what they considered to be racism.
They all recognised the importance of being able to read and write, and were happy to enable children to continue through primary education as long as they enjoyed it. But as soon as a child complained about school, usually to do with name calling, the parent would condone their absence and this was the reason they were involved in this unit.

When talking to the teacher group who had just had three Roma children enrol at their school, they were all very keen to talk about the children’s abilities. The deputy head, who also adopted the role of Special Education Needs Coordinator for the school, was keen for me to speak with this group of teachers, as she was excited that the children had settled into the school fairly well. It was interesting to hear the teachers talking positively about these children with each other.

When talking to the teenage women, it became clear that they were all very keen to get the most out of their educational experience at the alternative education centre. What was interesting with this particular discussion was how these teenage women wanted to get an education in order to get a job to ensure their independence, which they all agreed was important for them. Undertaking this particular discussion resonated with some of the literature that suggested a shift in attitudes towards education and schooling amongst girls in particular (see chapter two). It seemed that these teenage women were keen to delay the adoption of their gender roles as expected by their communities. It became clear to me that part of the situation facing the
schooling of children from these communities related to a gender dynamic, which I go on to explore in detail in chapter eight.

**Ethical Issues**

In order to collect the type of data I was interested in for this thesis it was important to first gain ethical approval from my university, which was granted. Part of the process included me thinking carefully about following British Education Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines, as my data collection included young people. As an ex-fully qualified primary school teacher of seven years and teacher educator of five years, I was fully aware of the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda (DfES, 2003a), the Children’s Act (2004) and children’s rights under the United Nations Agreed Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), and as such understood my responsibility to uphold and respect these throughout all stages of this project. I also renewed my Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check (now known as the DBS), a requirement when working in an environment with children. As a researcher attending and presenting at the annual BERA conferences, I am also fully aware of the BERA codes of research ethics.

Prior to the interviews and focus group discussions, all participants were provided with a participant information sheet that informed them about the purpose of the study, which was to investigate how children from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds can be positively accommodated and supported in primary schools and examine any difficulties they may experience. In terms
of the participant observations in the two case-study schools, the head teachers also provided consent in their capacity ‘in loco parentis’ for children to take part in the participant-observations.

All participants in the focus groups and those interviewed were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without giving a reason; nobody decided to withdraw. I obtained informed consent from all participants before conducting each interview, where I also informally introduced my research and obtained the participant’s signature on the consent form that included their consent for non-identifiable quotes to be published in articles and/or conference presentations. Furthermore, all participants gave informed consent for the interviews to be digitally recorded and they were notified that these would be deleted from the recorder once transcription had taken place. Finally they were informed that these transcripts would be anonymised and would be kept on a password protected computer.

In the case of the focus group with the four young women, the principal of the education centre discussed my work with the four parents prior to my visit. The parents then signed a consent form for their daughters to take part in the focus group discussion. After the interviews and focus group discussions all participants were offered their transcripts to read, or be read to them as necessary, in order to verify it represented their ‘truth’. They were given the right to withdraw any data from their personal interviews as necessary. No participants withdrew information and those who responded were happy that
the transcripts represented a true record of the interview/focus group discussion.

All participants were interviewed in places of their choosing. This allowed them to feel relaxed and safe in their own environment, and this was reflected in the richness of the data I was able to collect. For example, some practitioners chose to be interviewed in their work place, whilst others in their homes or public places including the pub and coffee shops. One parent was interviewed in her caravan on site; one at the outreach centre and another one at the home school setting. Focus groups took place in the educational settings i.e. a primary school; home-schooling centre and alternative education centre.

I established positive relationships with the professionals and TESS in both London and Leicestershire, and these initially acted as my gatekeepers to the parents I interviewed. Gaining access to the two case-study schools where I carried out my participant observation work was gained via the head teachers, with whom I had already established relationships. I assured head teachers that their school, staff and children would remain anonymous in order to protect their identity. Therefore, the name, location and any further information about the school, as well as the names of staff and children involved, are not provided in this thesis. Both schools have been given pseudonyms for the purposes of this thesis. I recorded Field Notes of my observations and discussions whilst in these schools and then afterwards each day away from the setting. These Field Notes remain in my possession and will be destroyed once I have completed
my thesis. Finally, I plan to revisit the schools and share my findings with them after I have submitted my thesis.
Chapter Six

Contesting Cultures I: Gypsy/Traveller Lifeways and the Schooling Process

The language of the school and the language of the site are different. (Midlands TESS teacher)

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Introduction

By deploying the conceptual framework outlined in chapter four, the following three chapters draw on Lefebvre’s spatial trilogy of the perceived, conceived and the lived in order to provide a spatial lens through which to analyse the data collected for this thesis. As discussed in chapter four, both the physical (perceived) and mental (conceived) landscapes organise how we operate in the places we inhabit and can shape our identities therein. At the same time, our experiences and social relations with others in a location (lived) also play a major part in influencing who we become, how we behave and what we achieve in these places we inhabit. That is to say, whatever place we find ourselves in, whether it be a house, workplace, street, club, café, park, doctor’s surgery or, of course, a school, each location has its own unique signs, symbols and images (spatial codes or spatial veils) which influence and (re)produce particular behaviours often unique to that particular location, yet representative of wider ideologies and regimes of disciplinary power.
In this context, everyone involved in the teaching, learning and management of schools – including pupils, parents, teachers, governors, the local education authorities, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), central government and outside agencies – plays their part in developing and constructing the expected socio-spatial behaviours, values, attitudes and norms of school life, as well as the wider spaces of society. The interactions that take place within schools on a day-to-day basis provide those in schools, and beyond, with a moral framework of what teaching and learning in schools is about and thus begin to ‘structure the structure’ of school for everybody (Loxley et al., 2011:55). This moral framework can begin to define ‘what it means to be a good teacher and...what it means to be a good learner’ (Fielding, 2000:202), which is then constituted, maintained and played out by everyone associated with schools and the schooling process.

Our identities are thus not only a ‘product of discourses, representations and material practices’ that shape a given place, but are produced by the interactions and social relations we establish and develop therein (Valentine, 2001:20). So through their daily interactions with other staff and children, teachers are instrumental in establishing and reinforcing a particular identity of what it means to be a pupil and a member of the wider society. Through their interactions with teachers, other children and adults, all children and young people learn how to operate and interrelate within the lived spaces of school in order to be considered a ‘successful’ individual in and out of school. Pupils from backgrounds that support this identity and the values therein, and who view their engagement in schooling as important to their educational trajectory,
will on the whole do well and become engaged appropriately in schools and wider society. Alternatively, pupils from backgrounds that attach less priority to schooling, and whose identity and cultural values are often at odds with the schooling culture, will not do so well.

By thinking spatially, that is, about how the ‘rhythms’ and ‘routines’ of our everyday lives spatially organise our time and our behaviours in a place, this chapter examines the cultural aspects of Gypsy/Traveller communities and their unique relationship with both the schooling process and education more widely. The chapter focuses on how contemporary cultural norms and values of schooling based on Sedentarism often conflict with the cultural mind-set of Nomadic communities when engaging with the schooling process. This chapter examines how the culture of school life can often produce a constrained space focused on attendance, outcomes and certain practices and, as such, becomes a place that finds it increasingly difficult to adequately accommodate children from these communities. However, I also provide examples in the next chapter of how in some schools, by challenging dominant educational ideology and adopting different practices, teachers are often able to produce relatively embracing spaces for Gypsy/Traveller children.

**Absenteeism**

As described in chapter two, one of the key factors associated with the poor achievement of Gypsy/Traveller children relates to their prolonged absenteeism from school as they often adopt a sporadic attendance pattern. The Sedentarised
community regards regular school attendance as important in order for children to stay on ‘track’ and reach the required ‘levels’ of the National Curriculum and programmes of study by the end of each school year. It is understood that those with a sporadic attendance pattern are unable to keep up with work that has already been covered and are thus unable to reach their full potential. For example, according to the Department for Education (DfE, 2016:3):

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind.

Notice the reference here to ‘falling behind’ and the terminology ‘vulnerable’. This is powerful spatial rhetoric as school organises children’s time. Think of the so-called ‘school run’, for example, where parents are expected to ensure their child(ren) are ‘delivered’ to school at a particular time (DfE, 2016). Rigid attendance targets that schools must meet encourage a disciplinary discourse around attendance for both parents and pupils. Attending school every day becomes associated with normalised childhood behaviour and family organisation, which then embodies certain ritualistic rhythms associated with a typical school day. There is no flexibility around what children could and may be learning as an alternative to attending a school; such thinking is rarely entertained. All childhood learning is associated with attending a recognised school building. It has become a legal responsibility for parents to ensure ‘their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend
regularly’ (DfE, 2016:4). In many schools, failure to do so may result in parents being prosecuted and even fined (DfE, 2016b). Schools in England are under legally bound to provide annual admissions and attendance data, which is monitored by the Department of Education (DfE, 2016). If schools do not meet a 97 per cent target they are often disciplined and may even face a financial penalty. Schools are thus encouraged to reduce the number of pupil absences. As a result, many schools award children with certificates and other rewards for 100 per cent attendance each term, to encourage them to attend school regularly. This has become very much part of the rhythms of particular school days and at particular points in the school calendar, where children receive these awards during assemblies and so on.

The Coalition Government, through initiatives in September 2014, and subsequently the current Conservative Government in 2016 (DFE, 2016), strengthened part of the legislation associated with school attendance targets. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 legislation (HMSO, 2006) was amended to remove the ability of a head teacher to grant leave of absence for anything other than ‘exceptional circumstances’ (DfE, 2016:11). Prior to these amendments, head teachers could grant families up to ‘ten school days leave of absence in any school year’ (HMSO, 2006). Examples of authorised non-attendance usually related to holidays, religious observance, as well as attendance at cultural and family events. However, since these new regulations, no such authorisation is deemed as ‘exceptional circumstances’. Thus, in the conceived dimension, regular attendance at school has become
even more internalised to represent a ‘good’ pupil as someone who is learning and on track to ‘achieve’ expected outcomes.

I argue that ensuring children attend school regularly has become another ‘spatial’ organising tool in that a school is deemed successful if its attendance profile is met. As such, attendance profiles are another example of a disciplinary spatial mechanism at the conceived level that has normalised the belief that if children are not inside school following a prescribed national curriculum and strategies on a day-to-day basis they are not learning and will therefore ‘underachieve’ and be ‘vulnerable’. With a reputation of absenteeism, children from Gypsy/Traveller communities are further spatially marginalised by some schools, who will often refuse these children a place as they believe they will skew their attendance target or be unlikely to achieve expected targets.

The head teacher from Green Acre Primary School confirmed that absenteeism amongst children from Gypsy/Traveller communities at her school was high due to the expected presence of children at both family and cultural events. She told me that the children in her school ‘travel quite frequently in order to attend funerals, and celebrate births and marriages as family events are very significant to the Traveller community’. The head teacher at Oak Tree Primary concurred, noting that ‘Family events are very significant to the Traveller community and family and culture take precedence over education’.
This was further confirmed by all of the TESS teachers I spoke with. In addition to rituals and celebrations, any illness within the family is a collective affair, as one noted: ‘If somebody in the family is very ill the whole family will go and that’s very much part and parcel of it’ (Midlands TESS teacher). A TESS teacher from London told me that

...if somebody in the family had to go to the dentist then the whole family take the day off to go and that’s why you won’t be in school and that’s the way it goes, because that is the key family issue of the moment, and it’s not planned, everything is for the day.

Consequently, much of the way life is organised in the Gypsy/Traveller community focuses on the centrality of the family above school attendance. So if a family member needs to go to hospital or the dentist then the whole family will support the person and go with them, even if it is during a school day. Thus, family and community commitments spatially organise children’s time away from school. Here is another example noted by the TESS teacher from the Midlands. Notice the reference to spatial metaphors:

We had somebody coming to stay because her sister-in-law is having a baby and she wanted to be there in case she had to whizz off to hospital in the night to look after the younger children because her parents aren’t around and her in-laws are quite a way away...she couldn’t leave her boys on their own on the site...I tried to get the child into school for two weeks to cover this.

Although the parent was willing to send their child to school for the two weeks, I was told that the local school was not prepared to take the child for just the two-week duration.
During the focus group with the Gypsy/Traveller teenagers who attended an alternative education setting, it became clear that, for these young people, particularly the girls, family responsibilities organised their time away from school. Such responsibilities often affected their attendance, but most usually would result in them arriving at school late. For example, one of the teenage women told me that she was a carer for her mother and noted the responsibilities that this entailed:

I am my mam’s carer…and the people in here don’t see why I’m late and why…it’s because I’ve got to go to council offices, and all these different places where my mum needs to go, but I’ve got to go for her…book dentist appointments, I’ve got to keep re-booking them because she can’t make it, and I go to doctors to pick up her medicine, and I’ve got to get my own food, my own dentist appointments, my own college thing.

So, as the main carer for her mum, this individual’s ‘lived space’ requires her to visit ‘different places’ that in turn organises her time away from attending school on time.

As part of their culture, children and young people would also often be absent due to their involvement in annual cultural events, including the Stow Horse Fair (May), the Epsom Derby (June), the Appleby Horse Fair (June) and the Cambridge Fair (June). Such events were seen as crucial to the cultural survival of Gypsy/Traveller communities and have become very much part of their ‘lived space’. For the four Gypsy/Traveller teenage women in the focus group, it was clear that such events were important to them as a way of meeting with
other Gypsy/Travellers. They told me that they ‘go to Cambridge, Stow and Ecclestone fair’, with one of the teenage women noting that ‘Ecclestone’s me favourite fair because it’s quiet, everything’s there that you need. Now, all the girls and boys are there and they’ve got little stalls.’ They told me that during these fairs, they are pretty much free to wander around on their own, as everyone is from the community, and their parents are thus less suspicious about their behaviour than when they are involved with people from outside the community. This ‘spatial freedom’ the teenage women attained via attendance at such fairs was something that was otherwise not permitted.

A particular problem associated with Stow fair, from the perspective of a school, is that it usually coincides with SATs week. As one of the Midlands TESS teachers told me: ‘Stow fair coincides usually with SATs week anyway, so children are not there on Thursday fair day, anyway they won’t come to school if they’ve got Stow fair to go to whether it’s SATs or not.’ The focus on performance in tests which frames the representational space of school, as discussed in chapter three, means that absence from test weeks is perceived as irresponsible.

The head teacher at Oak Tree suggested that a further issue that affected attendance at school related to the economic status of the father and the need to travel for work. She told me that ‘there were fewer children attending the school during the summer term, as their families tended to travel either back to Ireland or work in Spain’. One of the Midlands TESS teachers concurred and told me that ‘attendance figures are not going to be good because Travellers travel and even the ones that are settled onto sites, at some point in the year,
they will travel to find work elsewhere because you can’t just keep working the same area’.

This TESS teacher went on to tell me a story which perhaps epitomises the situation from a cultural perspective. She talked about a conversation she had had with a head teacher who was annoyed that Traveller children were ‘pulled out’ of her school when their fathers had to travel for work. This head teacher noted that her husband worked away from home during the week yet she did not go with him and ‘pull’ her children out of school. The TESS teacher told this head teacher ‘you don’t take your house with you when you go away for work purposes…when they go for work purposes, the caravan goes, the trailer goes as well. Your house doesn’t go because your husband’s away Monday to Friday’. Receiving comments like this from a head teacher demonstrates a lack of cultural understanding within the dominant Sedentarised culture, and illustrates the representational space of Gypsy/Traveller lifeways.

The priority that the Gypsy/Traveller community places on family, attendance at cultural events and the need to find work over school attendance demonstrates a different attitude, or mind-set towards education and the purpose of schooling at the conceived level. For example, one TESS worker from the London told me that

Education has not been a main priority. When you didn’t have a site and you were on the road all the time, the first thing you’re worried about is where you were going to stay for the night, the second thing, or probably alongside the first is how you’re going to earn your money for that day,
because, as you will know, it was very much a day-to-day existence and um very very low on your list, I mean there is your health care and things but low low low on the list was well should we get the children into school if we’re here for a couple of days.

Despite many Gypsy/Traveller communities now living on permanent sites, this internalised itinerant lifestyle has normalised certain cultural rhythms that are often not in sync with the rhythms of school life. Consequently, family, community, and economic needs are still afforded higher priority than school attendance. With a particular spatial orientation towards the family, culture and community, Gypsy/Traveller communities’ ‘homeplace’ operates for them as a safe space, a place away from the often hostile spaces of the public domain. With the priorities placed on attendance at cultural and family events, greater emphasis is thus afforded to the rhythms of the here and now – or the ‘lived’ space – dealing with the everyday; what is actually going on in the moment. The daily routines and rhythms of getting ready and heading off to school from Monday to Friday have not become a necessary part of their daily experience and sit outside the rhythms of their culture. As such, regular attendance at school for these communities has never really been seen as a problem from their perspective when they enrol their children in a particular school, so ‘If something crops up and children don’t attend school many Travellers can’t understand why it’s a big deal’ (Midlands TESS teacher).

With more pressure on schools to monitor attendance more closely, and power taken away from head teachers to authorise non-attendance, it has become increasingly more challenging to accommodate Gypsy/Traveller children.
within the lived spaces of schools. On speaking to one of the London TESS teachers, it was clear how, for some parents, school is seen as something that restricts the cultural rhythms of these communities, particularly attendance at cultural events:

...going off for the horse fair. For many families that’s part and parcel of their whole lifestyle, and when they’re there they’re meeting families and friends and people and the horse-trading and it’s something that’s actually enabling that culture to survive. If you stop it that cultural bit will die out, like the stories round the campfire and things like that because that’s gradually going and the older Travellers are saying even the language is gradually dying out because they’re not using it, so something like that I think is fair enough, they can put it down as a holiday, but I think something like that is acceptable.

What I find interesting in relation to this was the role of the TESS, as well as some teachers, as ‘cultural mediators’ (Derrington & Kendall, 2004:67). At times in their role, the TESS questioned their own understanding of the dominant society’s values. Being close to these communities and developing positive social relations perhaps affords them this position, which is often against the spatial practices of school life. This London TESS teacher clearly demonstrates this in this extract.

It’s liberating actually, if you think [about it], we’re really constrained by everything like mortgage, and getting the car serviced and earn the money to pay this and that, well it’s, particularly if you are in a caravan, everything you’ve got is there, you know your wealth is stored in the things like the gold and that’s your bank, and everything is cash, you don’t owe anybody any money, you haven’t got any tax forms to fill out and worrying about all that stuff...you can get up and go tomorrow.
For me, this demonstrates the ‘insider, outsider’ position of the TESS. By working with and visiting these communities (as an outsider), in order to support the children in accessing school (as an insider), they gain a unique insight from the perspective of the communities. This does often position the TESS as a mediator between those that wish to maintain a Nomadic lifestyle and the expectations of a Sedentarised schooling system. This positioning is particularly important when trying to gain the trust of these communities and is therefore key in reinforcing the importance of school attendance for their children.

**Nomadism Versus Sedentarism**

As a result of the tensions brought about by the cultural differences between these communities and the expectations of schooling, particularly in today’s performance climate, there are cultural tensions between Nomadism and Sedentarism within ‘Third Space’. As one of the Midlands TESS teachers told me, ‘you’re actually fighting against the here and now with Travellers, aren’t you. With Travellers it’s immediate “we’ve got to do this and we’re doing it now”, often school attendance would get in the way’. The presumptions of a settled schooling process mean that ‘living in and for the moment’ like this presents various kinds of difficulties for schools. One of the Midlands TESS teachers went on to say that ‘schools are fighting against things that are in-built over many, many, many, many, years; you can’t change things over night and school systems are not flexible enough to accommodate that, I think’. So the representational space of the school is unable to adapt its spatial practices in
order to assist in the inclusion of children from these communities whose values conflict with the conceived space of schooling. That is to say, as discussed in chapter two, and in particular in reference to the work of Levinson and Sparkes (2005), by adopting a more Nomadic lifestyle (whether lived or aspirational), Gypsy/Traveller communities internalise a different socio-spatial reality than those from a Sedentarised background. Education and schooling for Sedentarised communities becomes focused on a particular educational trajectory that involves consistent attendance at school. For many Gypsy/Traveller parents, however, the purpose of education and schooling is seen differently, and parents would often value learning away from school. For example, one parent told me that ‘in our culture, they [children] do learn a lot because they are always doing something. They’re never ever in…. They are always still learning something’. This parent went on to tell me how her child ‘loves animals and has learnt how to look after horses’. Referring to an old tractor that was on her site, she also told me that ‘the kids are always in there with screwdrivers and spanners, I don’t know if it still works but it used to’. Another parent talking about their child told me that ‘he’s a very hands-on child, now he loves mechanics and he can take things apart and put them together’. This more practical understanding of education and its relevance to the lived space of these communities was also evidenced by one of the TESS teachers I spoke with:

I was working with this boy in a secondary DT [design & technology] lesson and they were making these wiring things... but this kid wasn’t interested in that, he had this bit of wire and what he was showing me
was how you make a rabbit snare... it is something that most people would not know about, but he knew about it. (London TESS teacher)

In schools, children’s time is organised inside classrooms and the teaching and learning is more structured. Children’s bodies and behaviour are increasingly spatially controlled, with children sitting at desks in groups and often not allowed to move around the classroom. As Middleton (2014:10) notes, ‘Schoolchildren’s everyday activities include (habitual) spatial practices – walking well-trodden paths to school, switching on computers, sitting on chairs, reaching for books’. Such practices and experiences might provide a challenging environment for many children, particularly those from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

I consider that such tensions are exacerbated as Gypsy/Traveller parents are becoming increasing supportive of their children accessing primary school in order for them to learn to read and write. Parents understand that the world is changing and the ability to read and write has become a key issue for employability (Cemlyn et al., 2009), particularly with the introduction of a written driving theory test, as this TESS teacher told me:

I think that they are realising that for their own children it’s getting less and less possible to access work if you can’t pass the driving theory test because you can’t read and write and the forms that you have to do and the waste licence to tip at the tip. There’s all sorts of things that have changed that I think that the more settled are starting to take on board that this is difficult, we need to be equipping our children. (Midlands TESS teacher)
This was reiterated by the parents I spoke with, with one parent I interviewed telling me how it was important for her mum to send her to school when she was young so that she could learn to read and write:

My mum, she wanted us girls to read and write. Because my dad’s got a lot of health issues and she’s had to mix with the most educated specialists across the board and I think in her feeling inferior to some of them because she can’t even read at all, so you know to give her letters with medical jargon in it was so horrendous for my mum, she had a really hard time of it and she just did not want us to ever feel the way she was feeling in the company of specialists.

It is interesting that this participant’s mother felt ‘inferior’ around medical professionals. This mother clearly could not engage with the conceived discourse of ‘specialists’, and she did not want her children to feel like this when relating with these people – they would go to school and learn to read and write so that they could perhaps engage with ‘specialists’ within the lived dimension of mainstream society.

Another parent talking about her children shows clearly this change in attitude towards the importance of attending primary school:

…no matter where I go, he goes to school, whether it’s for a week, it’s been the same for all the children. Some schools they have only been in for a week and they have gone to a different school because I do know that they do need to learn, things is changing. It does help them, they need it.
For children from these communities, adopting a different sense of the world, sitting and working in a classroom, is often alien to their normal everyday experiences of being a Gypsy/Traveller. Adopting a different perception of how to operate in a place can be challenging for these children as well as for the teachers and other children around them. So, although parents are becoming more comfortable for their children to attend school, particularly in order for them to learn to read and write, the wider concept of schooling is often still difficult. Kendall (1997) has noted in her work that although many parents are becoming more than happy for their children to attend school, ‘the benefits of literacy are acknowledged but not necessarily the benefits of schooling’. Therefore, while many parents may be happy to send their children to primary school to learn to read and write, they do not often engage their children in secondary schools. According to one of the TESS teachers I spoke with, secondary education is often not seen as so important, as many parents are looking for their children to develop more practical skills in order to find employment:

What they would be happy to do would be to go into primary school, possibly go onto the next stage if it is applicable and the curriculum is appropriate to them, but then from about 13 they want them doing vocational stuff, they want them doing building or mechanics or what have you and the system doesn’t really help that in any way. (Midlands TESS teacher)

One of the parents I spoke with confirmed that her boy would leave school at 11 (the end of primary school) and go off to work. This becomes expected and is a normalised experience for boys in particular. She confirmed that boys are
generally expected to follow in the footsteps of their dads, and she went on to say that ‘They normally come out of school go to work with their dads....they all learn the same job you know, all the Travellers...they’ve got no need to go outside that’. So gender here becomes a spatial practice that prevents boys continuing with their schooling. This was confirmed during the focus group at the alternative education centre, where the teenage women told me that the boys in their communities are expected to go to work at the age of 10 and ‘if they do go to school in primary they leave...because they are expected to go off and work’. One of the teenage women went on further to tell me that her brother has ‘been working with my dad since, since he was about 10...They are expected to be a man at 10 and they have to drive’. However, the mothers of these teenage women want them to become more independent, which means staying on longer in school and gaining qualifications to secure employment for themselves. The experiences of children from these communities, then, are associated with gender, which becomes a further tool by which children are spatially organised according to their sex. This is something I explore in more depth in chapter eight.

**Fear of Assimilation**

One of the most frustrating aspects of the work of the TESS is trying to bridge this gap between home and school in order that parents understand the benefits of schooling for their children. One of the TESS teachers in the Midlands, for example, noted that it was important for children to experience the ‘representational space’ of the school in order that they can begin to influence
change. They told me that ‘Our problem I feel is that we don’t get the Travellers in to enable us to work with the systems, to try them out and it’s a bit “chicken and egg”…you’ve got to have parents on side to understand that you’ve got to be in there to make this work’. The last sentiments I have noted in italics relate to the ‘power’ of social relations. The TESS teacher shows how, by being in a school, the relationships established by these children with teachers and their peers could offer them the potential of operating differently.

However, the reason parents are reluctant to be ‘on side’ is precisely to do with this concern that their children will be mixing with non-Traveler children, particularly if they go on to secondary school. According to Kendall (1997:86), schooling is often viewed by these communities ‘as a vehicle by which the cultural norms of the dominant group are imposed on the marginal group’. Since school attendance removes children from the spatial arena of the ‘homeplace’ with its cultural and cyclical influence, many parents are concerned that schooling, but particularly secondary schooling, may erode their own culture as their children become enmeshed within the rhythms and relations of the schooling system (O’Hanlon, 2010). Okely (1983) argues that Gypsy/Traveler culture is unique and as such should even resist assimilation by the mainstream.

However, I argue that amidst these parental fears, coupled with a sporadic attendance pattern and limited engagement in schooling beyond primary education, many children from these communities are unable to become familiar with the ‘representations’ of school life and thus the ‘representational
space’ within schools remains alien to them. Consequently, without some engagement with schooling, these children are unlikely to ever be able to build an attachment to the school, and thus cultivate a sense of belonging.

As noted in chapter four with respect to the work of Tuan (1977), the social relations we establish within our daily lives can have a major impact on the construction of our identity and therefore on how we see ourselves and who we ‘become’ in the places we occupy. Such identity construction and becoming can be fluid and interchangeable depending on the places we become attached to, the people we socialise and interact with and the influence we have. This sense of identity and belonging is particularly acute when individuals feel connected to a place and are able to develop a sense of affinity with it, much like they would with their attachments to their homes. So, for Gypsy/Traveller parents, their children’s home life becomes crucial for their children’s identity development and the perpetuation of their culture away from the expectations of schooling.

*Gypsy/Traveller Identity*

Gypsy/Traveller sites are open and informal spaces. At the perceived dimension of the Gypsy/Traveller site, caravans and mobile homes are organised to facilitate free movement of children and adults. In this way, children are used to a certain amount of freedom on their sites where all families know each other and are constantly in and out of each other’s ‘homes’; as one parent told me ‘We don’t have door bells, they are useless to us. Anybody that comes to us can
open the door “are you home?”; that’s how people come in, we don’t make
appointments to visit each other’. Another parent told me:

We’re always in each other’s places; either I’ve got 15 children screaming
or she’s got them all in one running over the place – it’s dead nice. I think
all Travellers are like that though on any site. They all look out for each
other’s kids.

So at the conceived dimension of the site, children’s agency is structured by the
socio-spatial dynamics of their site, which becomes conceptualised and thus
normalised as open, communal and a place to support each other and mix with
all ages. In relation to ‘Thirdspace’, children of all ages are always outside
playing, interacting with younger and older children alike (as well as adults).
One parent I spoke with told me that ‘Our kids are never in, they are never ever
in…99% of the Travelling children are always outside busying themselves…. They spend most of the time outside doing something…they would rather be
outside’.

Gypsy/Traveller children are also expected to look after each other, with older
siblings being awarded early adult status from their parents (Powell, 2010). It is
the responsibility of these older siblings to look after and keep an eye on the
younger members of their family. During my focus group with the young
people from these communities, they were very clear of their responsibilities
towards their younger siblings:

Break times he’d [older brother] come and find me…. Have my planner
in the morning time, see what lessons I’ve got and then at break times
he’d come in and get me…At dinner, I’d be in the canteen he’d come and sit with me.

I’m the older sister; I’ve got to watch her.

I’m like a second mam, like if they got sick I have to get up and take the blankets out, if they started crying if they had tummy or belly ache or whatever, you know what I mean, I’d have to get up and treat them so like. People say to me all the time, isn’t it weird like, all of them sleeping with you; and I say ‘no’ because me Mam is the Mam for the day and I’m the Mam for the night and I’m that used to it and I have done it for that many years that they have been brought up with me.

I’ve had responsibility from a young age…I come back from college I’ve got to go home and clean up and then put the food on, pick the kids up from school time that comes, wash the dishes and it’s bed time...

As noted in the last quote, older siblings are often responsible for taking their siblings to school and picking them up. For the settled community, such responsibility placed on the shoulders of children is often viewed negatively (Powell, 2010). During a focus-group discussion with the teachers whose school had recently accepted three Roma children on roll, I was told about the responsibility of the 10-year-old over his younger siblings:

Every morning you’d see the three of them walking to school, when they did not live very far, and obviously that breaks all the rules…four year olds without an adult…. But clearly culturally it is seen as acceptable to them. So that’s caused a bit of a hazard when they have gone off and run away and gone up on the bus to XXXXX (new address). But they have got that incredible sense of each other, haven’t they? (other members of the group concur)
Furthermore, during this discussion one of the teachers noted:

And he also helps, doesn’t he, without even being asked?… Like certain things are expected perhaps if you are part of this family. It’s kind of a version of street smart that they’ve got right; I would describe it as, wouldn’t you? (sounds of agreement). You know how to cope with life ‘cause you have to.

For such children accorded early adult status in their communities, primary school, where children are organised according to their age and remain in one room for pretty much all of the day, and where adults are in charge, becomes a place that can often feel at odds with the spatial orientations of their own communities. As noted by Levinson and Sparkes (2005), schools are institutional spaces that are structured and formalised by adults. In the constrained spaces of the school, freedom of movement is restricted for children. For example, many primary schools have separate playgrounds for KS1 (5–7-year-old) and KS2 (7–11-year-old) children, and so older siblings find it difficult to ‘check up’ on their younger siblings. One parent told me that she did not know her older boy was not allowed to check up on his younger sister at lunch break, and she found this hard to comprehend:

…it’s good duty to do that, he is big brother…I didn’t know that wasn’t allowed in schools…If it was assembly, I’d accept that and understand but in their free time of a lunch break and it is his choice if he wants to check up on his sister.
This parent was very well aware of the spatial restrictions school placed on her children, and it is clear from the following how she has herself conceptualised the constrained space of the school:

What is the biggest shock I found for Gypsy children, if you looked across the board and spoke to a lot of Gypsy mums or Gypsy parents I should say, what is the most thing they hate about school, they will answer we don’t like the idea that a teacher is trying to train our children as if they were a dog to go to the loo 3 times a day. That sends every Gypsy parent wild, and it has done me. You’re training the kids to be domesticated, they’re not animals, everybody’s bladder and kidney function works differently, you can’t train all these children to visit the loo at a one given time because it suits you better.

During the focus-group discussion with parents there was much talk about the formality of the school, which is summed up here by these two quotes:

Schools unfortunately are too formal, gone are the days when you can just pop into the office and grab a quick word…I don’t believe that once a term meeting with the teacher for 10 minutes is anywhere enough.

Schools are everything about the system, and the school is formal.

It is clear that for many of these parents schooling is a constrained space that organises their children in a certain way, restricting their movement, and this goes against the relatively safe spaces of their ‘homeplace’. That is to say that in their homeplace, space is ‘communal and open’, as noted earlier, so the constrained space of school can often prevent children from establishing a sense of belonging to the school. However, as I discuss in more detail below, schools can become more embracing for these children, as I experienced in the schools I
carried out my study. The following extract from my Field Notes highlights how small changes to established and traditional disciplinary mechanisms in schools can go some way in providing a more open space:

[In the dinner hall] I notice that two tables are taken up by a bunch of mainly boys and the other mainly girls. X [a boy] is sitting with the girls. Everyone is quietly chatting and eating their packed lunches and school dinners...this is interesting I think as all other schools that I have either worked in or visited separate those children with packed lunches from those eating school dinners. Once each child is finished they get up and put their lunch boxes away on a trolley or clear their plates on the table near the kitchen and come and sit back down and continue chatting – this is also unusual as they are free to do this and not simply exit the dining room once finished; most schools are quite strict about not letting children get up until everyone is finished. They have the freedom to do this which is great; they are trusted and there is a very calm atmosphere in the dinner hall.

This highlights that slight adjustments to how children are organised at lunch times can provide a less constrained space for children where their movements are less restricted by disciplinary regimes. A further extract from my Field Notes highlights this further:

I have noticed that children are very responsible and are fairly free to go to the toilet when they want; leave the classroom to collect things, they are not really expected to do much lining up when they go out for play and when they come back in. This is great I think; they don’t push and barge each other, nobody tells them to be quite, and they talk quietly – I believe that this gives the children a sense that the teachers trust them and this works.
Gypsy/Traveller parents are also often suspicious that schooling is likely to ‘inculcate youngsters with values and social behaviours that are incompatible with traditional Gypsy life’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2005:752). Such parental fears reflect what goes on within the lived space of the school that incorporates interactions with others in the school. I was made even more aware of this during the focus-group discussion with the young people, who talked about how their parents were concerned with what they are ‘picking up’ from non-Traveller children in schools. This ranged from the use of different language to ideas relating to particular norms and values of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles. For example, one girl told me that she would call her mother ‘Mum’ instead of ‘Mam’, and her mother would say ‘What did you call me? You’ve been in that school too long.’ Another girl noted that her parents preferred there to be other Travellers in the school ‘so you don’t forget who you are’ when mixing ‘with your own’. A particular concern from parents was that if their children, particularly the girls, were mixing with non- Travellers, they might get involved with non-Traveller boys ‘and that’s why they don’t want to send you to big school’. There was a fear that children would ‘start getting cheeky and use filth and bad words and your parents don’t like that’. Another one of the teenage women told me during the focus-group discussion:

In high school, you know, the non-Travellers in there, like the girls, they don’t care if they talk dirty things in front of the boys and things like that. And when we first went in, it was shameful...You’re quite shocked to hear what they are saying.

She went on to say:
...when we found out what the words meant it was all exciting because they were new words that we wouldn’t normally say, but when we come out of school we wouldn’t be able to forget ourselves and you get told off by your parents.

What is interesting here is the creation of almost different spaces for different language worlds and social compartments for swearing and sex. There is a kind of coded literacy to the school and Sedentarised family, which is at odds with what the Gypsy/Traveller children are used to. It is unlikely that Sedentarised children would use such language in their homes in front of their parents, yet for Gypsy/Traveller children, this distinction between ‘homeplace’ language and outside space language seems unclear. Perhaps it is because these children spend more time with their parents, particularly their mothers, whilst their Sedentarised peers spend a lot of time in schools building relationships with people their own age. Being afforded adult status at an early age, as noted above, these Gypsy/Traveller children may also be more open and familiar during discussions with their parents.

*Prejudice*

Parents also spoke about the racism that their children experienced from other children in schools, which has also been cited as another reason why parents are sometimes reluctant to send their children to school. According to Padfield and Cameron (2009), this wish not to attend school as a result of bullying, which is then endorsed by parents, is a result of the fear parents feel for the safety of their children whilst attending mainstream schools. They concluded
that ‘Many Gypsy/Traveller parents, moreover, fear for the security of their children; they think (often correctly) that their children will be socially excluded, bullied and subjected to racist treatment at school’ (Padfield & Cameron, 2009:35).

This fear for the well-being of their children was certainly something I found to be true from the parents I spoke with, who would often tell me about the anxiety they felt when sending their children to school. Parental fears of bullying are not necessarily restricted to certain communities. I would argue that this is something that many parents become concerned about, even from Sedentarised communities. However, the difference is that due to the historic conceived racism directed towards Gypsy/Traveller communities, fuelled by the media and the dominant Sedentarised ideology, Gypsy/Traveller communities become a more vulnerable target. As noted in chapter two this is a unique and complex situation often relating to racism and skin colour (Bhopal & Myers, 2008; Garrett 2002; Power, 2003) and debates about ‘white’ respectability (Skeggs, 2004) where the positioning of Gypsies as ‘white others’ has segregated them from the mainstream for over 500 years. It is interesting to note here that schools that intervene to counter bullying between Gypsy/Travellers and non-Gypsy/Travellers do not see such bullying in the context of racism, as this TESS participant told me:

We’ve also had a situation in a secondary school where a traveller girl was being bullied, but staff don’t see it as a racist issue because she’s white and the person bullying her was white. Unfortunately it does go on and is quite common, we hear stories all the time.
Such sentiments perhaps highlight the complex nature of the prejudice faced by Gypsy/Travellers. This TESS participant went on to conclude that:

There is a big deal about how can you be racist because you’re white. And the whole thing about a recognised group under the CRE and all of that stuff, you know, it’s important, and we have to do a lot of reminding about that.

All the parents I spoke with cited prejudice within schools from teachers and other staff as a major issue that concerned them. For example:

…there’s one now who won’t look at our kids or talk to us, she [School Admin Office Staff] works in the office and she don’t like Travellers, it’s ‘You lot, you kind’; that’s the way she talks to us.

The people at school really don’t like us, really deep down.

Teachers used to have more digs at them [the children] it was really the worst school for racism I have ever been to. They went to a certain school in [Leicestershire] and they have never, ever been through so much racism…. They were the first Gypsy children to ever be at that school, and there was only my two and there was no other one. Even the teachers, it was ridiculous how they were treated.

She was a supply teacher in my little boy’s class, I think it was year 5 at the time, and she was so racist towards the kids and carried on so bad throughout the day another teacher came from the next class and took um, went to the Headmistress and said can I have them kids out of the class because she’s so racist that we don’t want them in there.
These quotes perhaps highlight this deep-rooted distrust of people that move around and adopt a Nomadic mind-set. As noted above, their ‘mobility’ may not be viewed as ‘respectable’ from the Sedentarised teacher, but something that is done to avoid being ‘governable’ (Shubin, 2011).

However, it is probably important to briefly note here that these quotes do not provide us with what the prejudice consisted of, and we only have the parents’ story here. For example, children may go home and inform parents that adults are being racist towards them and their parents may simply internalise the way their children are being treated based on how they were treated when they were children. So we do have to be careful how we interpret how these parents feel, as schools supposedly take acts of racism very seriously. For example, one of the Midlands TESS said she was ‘not convinced that it’s as rife as they [parents] think because they haven’t been in there to find out’. Referring to outdated notions of what school is like, based on their own childhood experiences, this interviewee suggested that many parents lack the knowledge and understanding that schools today are more inclusive, and therefore more accepting of children from different cultures. She went on to clarify her thinking by noting that as parents do not come into school, they are unaware of the lived environment and what goes on there on a daily basis. However, at the same time, you could argue that this particular TESS teacher no longer visited schools or the communities she represented as she was managing the TESS and nearing retirement. Furthermore, as noted in earlier chapters, this also may demonstrate how bullying directed from a white person towards another white person sets
up a complex dynamic of racism within the schools attended by Gypsy/Traveller children.

In not being part of the ‘lived space’ of any school herself this TESS manager was also unfamiliar with the lived environment of the school and equally unable to develop any concept of what was really going on in the daily lives of many young people in schools. She was not there ‘taking it every day’, as one of the teenage women referred to the racism she had experienced (see below). I would argue that her absence from the everyday experiences and understanding of what goes on in schools today provides this TESS professional with the opportunity to construct a narrative about inclusiveness based on a ‘conceived’ rhetoric of contemporary schooling. The more detached people are from the lived experience of the children, the more readily they are likely to produce officially sanctioned narratives of inclusiveness and diversity, which is aided by the way that they have disarticulated themselves from the inhabited spaces of classrooms and caravan sites.

Two other TESS teachers I spoke with had a different story to tell and they verified that prejudice directed towards Gypsy/Traveller children from the teachers was something that went on. As one of them told me, ‘it is not just the children….Unfortunately it does go on and is quite common, we hear stories all the time’ (London TESS). Parents also spoke about the prejudice their children experienced from other children. As one parent told me, ‘it’s unbelievable, just him [a non-Gypsy pupil] and another little boy, constantly calling the kids “Stinky Gypsy, Pikey; you’re dirty, you stink”.’
On discussing how prejudice is dealt with in school with one of the young people I spoke with, I noted that some people believed it was being positively addressed. This young person told me:

Yeah, see, that isn’t right…because when my dad came in like in the secondary school they tried to like paint a pretty picture saying well they do explain how Travellers carry on and things like that, and I was sat there saying well, no they don’t…I’m just sat there thinking why you filling my dad full of rubbish when I’m there every day taking it.

Perhaps this school is aware of bullying and does try its best to promote positively Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles, but for this girl, ‘in her eyes’, this was not the case. Upon taking up the headship at Green Acre Primary, the head teacher talked to me about the ‘racism amongst the teachers’ and sought quickly to replace these teachers in order to ‘stamp out any racism amongst the staff’. She also talked about how she often challenged the prejudice amongst some of the non-Gypsy parents, who would come in and blame them for ‘all sorts of things’. She told me that she had ‘a reputation within the area of being somebody who’s “Well, don’t tell Ms. X, she won’t take any notice if you criticise the Travellers”, but I think that has been very important’.

It is clear that this particular school where the head teacher challenges such prejudice provides us with an example of how individuals in schools can, via their agency, begin to change the ‘perceived’ socio-spatial configuration and consciousness of such communities within the spaces of school. On discussing
this with a TESS practitioner whom I came into contact with whilst conducting my participant-observations in Green Acre Primary school, she confirmed this as my Field Notes suggest: ‘She tells me that lots of parents want their children to come to this school because it is welcoming – the reception staff are great and treat everyone the same; they are very welcoming and create a good impression’ (Field Notes: Green Acre). This TESS practitioner goes on to note that she:

has been to a lot of schools and she tells me that you do come across a lot of prejudice, which she says is so unprofessional and that there is very few schools where you feel the warmth that this schools puts out as soon as you walk in. Some schools are very cold and the travelling parents feel this and are met with such hostility that there guards are up; it’s the nature of their lives and they are used to this type of reaction. This is why a lot of the traveller mums come in with an attitude; but soon as they feel that warmth they back down and they feel welcomed (Field Notes – Green Acre).

Although the extent to which this ‘welcoming environment’ impacts on challenging the opinions of the wider community is questionable, as well as its influence on schooling at a wider structural level. Indeed, as noted in my Field Notes, this same practitioner tells me ‘that Travellers get such a hard time; especially associated with racism...Some schools she visits she does not meet the head, is asked to sign in and told she can find the Traveller kid in this classroom or that outdoor classroom and is left to wander the school to find the room’ (Field Notes – Green Acre). It’s interesting to note here how this TESS teacher is ‘left to wander’ around a school; this school is clearly not interested in assisting this TESS teacher in supporting the Gypsy/Traveller children in their
school. This perhaps demonstrates the disciplinary nature of power; for example, racism in this school towards Gypsy/Travellers is circulated via the behaviour of the head teacher, which is internalised by this TESS teacher.

This may then be seen as something that is only realised in particular micro settings, where ideas that Gypsy/Traveller children are ‘trouble makers’ (London TESS teacher) and ‘hard to teach’ (teacher) become normalised by social relations and such thinking is ‘legitimated’ by all in many schools. One of the young people I spoke with told me ‘they label you as something, they don’t treat you the same [as others in the school].

Both head teachers from the case-study schools commented on the opinions of other teachers they came into contact with away from their schools, which confirmed that many teachers perceived these children to be difficult to work with. The head teacher from Oak Tree Primary, for example, told me that although there were a couple of supportive heads in the surrounding schools, most other head teachers perceived her as ‘odd to want to work in a school where the majority of children were from the local Gypsy community’. Likewise, the head teacher from Green Acre Primary commented that when she first got the headship at her school, people she spoke with would say, ‘oh my word, do you really want that job? The Traveller children are really badly behaved’. She told me that it ‘wasn’t the Traveller children, it was the whole school but the Traveller children were blamed’.
The broader situation surrounding Oak Tree Primary demonstrates further the fervent animosity these communities are faced with from the wider community, and perhaps how they are ‘legitimately’ spatially marginalised. The head teacher told me that when an influx of Irish Travellers and the withdrawal of non-Traveller children by their parents changed the composition of the school a great deal, this ‘event’ became newsworthy. She went on to say that ‘The local paper had a field day and some nationals e.g. The Mail and The Sun’. She informed me that there was a small group of non-Traveller parents who were particularly vocal and instrumental in pressuring other parents to withdraw their children from the school. Whilst undertaking participant observations in this school it was important for one of the teachers to relay this story again to me over a cup of coffee in the staff room:

X described historically a popular and over-subscribed school. When the Travellers of Irish Heritage arrived they moved onto a nearby unauthorised site, settling their trailers and started to build mobile homes. Their children were admitted to the school. Their arrival prompted some local parents to withdraw children from the school. Eventually the majority of children in the school were Travellers which proved to be very unpopular in the community. X tells me that as is unfortunately common in such situations the school received a bad press; with the local and national papers constantly targeting the Traveller community (Field Notes: Oak Tree Primary).

The following quote from one of the parents I interviewed demonstrates further the deep-rooted perception that some teachers hold about Gypsy/Traveller children as troublemakers:
One little settled boy was being a little monkey on the carpet. You know they sit down on the carpet; and he poked one of the little boys from the village so hard in the back with a pencil he snapped a pencil; but not one of the Gypsy children, just one of the children out the village. And the little boy was crying but the teacher focused on our two kids, on my boy and me nephew.

Such action towards these communities and the perceptions of them result in many schools not wanting to accept them on roll. As a result of the lived experiences of Gypsy/Traveller children in many schools, they become both socio-spatially marginalised from schools and within schools themselves. Some would even protect themselves in schools by denying their identity, as the following quote from one of the parents makes clear:

He was getting so bullied he found it easier to lie...he got to the stage where he was coming home and saying ‘they is calling me Gypsy and I’m not a Gypsy, I’m not’. He just wanted to be left alone, didn’t he, he done it because he just wanted to be left alone. He has never denied his culture but he got to the stage where he was trying anything and he did deny it.

This was also confirmed by one of the London TESS teachers I spoke with, who noted that ‘many Gypsy/Traveller children would deny their identities for fear of bullying and harassment. Some people are therefore very reticent about coming out as Travellers because of the stigma attached to it on a social level’.

I suggest that due to this ‘othering’ and overall lack of recognition and positive acceptance of Gypsy/Traveller culture within schools, many children feel (spatially) marginalised. What I mean by this is that ‘Spaces invoke powerful
feelings, including those associated with belonging’ (Foley & Leverett, 2011:9) and likewise feelings of alienation and a sense of not belonging. If teachers and other educational professionals in schools have internalised a negative attitude towards Gypsy/Traveller culture, such attitudes will shape the ‘lived’ space of the school via social relations and interactions, so Gypsy/Traveller children are not going to feel part of the school environment. Negative beliefs about Gypsy/Traveller children as pupils, and about their culture more generally, mean that these children become ‘othered’ or are kept out of school life altogether. By denying their identity in school, children feel spatially excluded, fail to develop a sense of belonging and may even feel unsafe in the schools that they do attend. A quote from one of the TESS participants makes this point very clear:

One girl who was being bullied as a racist incident in a quite high achieving school, and it was dealt with particularly bad, more so than in a more multicultural school. I think what happened here, was that the girl was from a high profile family living on the licensed site. There was a lot of ‘gypo’ type chat going on and the girl was that scared at one point that she called 999 from the school toilets and said I’m scared of being bullied. That was the absolute lowest ebb. The school didn’t really understand, they were just cross with her for dialling 999 from the school, there wasn’t an issue that she was that desperate to dial 999 and say that she was being bullied. I told the school that this was a cultural issue, but the bloke said that there is no such thing as a traveller culture. I said to him what about if you had a Sikh here with a turban and a bangle, he said that we haven’t got any Sikh’s here so it is not an issue. So that is the school ethos, its quite shocking really.

So it is clear that this girl did not feel safe in the school and you could argue that the school did not acknowledge that this girl was being bullied because she
was white and it was not recognised as racism. The concluding sentence perhaps highlights this lack of cultural understanding, and that the school only relates to cultural inclusion amongst other non-white communities. A further quote from this TESS participant highlights further how children are spatially marginalised from schools themselves due to a lack of cultural understanding:

We had one issue in a school where a girl who was going to take her GCSE exams, was wearing earrings and refused to take them off and the school said that if you don’t take your earrings off then that’s it you can’t do the exam, it’s as simple as that, you are breaking the school rule. Her dad came up to the school and started getting very aggressive and this is how it came out that she was a traveller, they didn’t know before, and then she said ‘well actually I want to wear my earrings because of who I am and what they mean to me’. And as a result of that she didn’t do her exams and I don’t know what has happened to her.

This incident also highlights how some children do not declare their cultural identities whilst in schools and how ‘whiteness’ continues to be a complex issue in relation to Gypsy/Traveller racism, and a lack of knowledge of cultural signifiers. As the above quote suggests, other cultural signifiers may be tolerated when thinking about non-white children – schools may be more likely to adapt to a Sikh rather than a Traveller cultural heritage. The ‘petty’ disciplinary mechanisms in schools in relation to ‘dress code’ here further highlights how such children can become seen as ‘trouble makers’ and spatially marginalised. It does seem strange that this girl was not allowed to take an exam due to wearing earrings to school. I wonder if these earrings symbolised to the school a lack of ‘taste’ and thus ‘respectability’ in line with the work of Skeggs (2004) as noted above in relation to ‘white’ respectability. Perhaps this
particular girl had a ‘reputation’ in the school, and it could be that the earrings were used as an excuse to exclude her from taking the exam as teachers had internalised a belief that she would not do well anyway.

**Final Synthesis**

Gypsy/Traveller culture is based on the idea of ‘movement’ or, more specifically, Nomadism, which affords particular rhythms or normalised behaviour in terms of how people from such communities are spatially organised and located. Irrespective of whether they are settled on a particular site or location, it is this internalisation of Nomadism that constructs the way these people understand and operate within the world they live. For such communities, family commitments, attendance at cultural events and economic movement have become part of their everyday experiences and key to the perpetuation and organisation of their lifeways. These experiences become embedded within their cultural identity and as such are associated with their epistemological appreciation of how they live their lives.

Consequently, when engaging with the institutional spaces of the Sedentarised world, such communities often find a tension with what is expected of them when they engage with such spaces. As a result of their internalisation of a Nomadic mind-set based on the importance of movement, these communities are often ‘othered’ by the Sedentarised majority and perceived as ‘vulnerable’. In thinking about schools, which are often the very first institutional spaces children from these communities encounter, many children find it difficult to adjust to the expectations of school life. Consequently, these children often
experience negative attitudes from other children and even teachers, often due to the complexities around debates of respectable ‘whiteness’ as well as respectable ‘mobility’. Consequently, for many parents it becomes difficult for them to accept the necessity of the school system. Many parents will, as a result, condone the non-attendance of their children at school on the grounds of bullying. But they also fear their children’s cultural identity will be eroded by regular attendance at school. However, some parents from these communities are increasingly happy for their children to attend primary schools in order to learn to read and write as they are aware of the importance of literacy in contemporary society. This is none more so apparent when a school is realistic about accommodating these children and accepting of the cultural dissonance associated with Nomadism and Sedentarism, where children from these communities can begin to do well. They are able to build positive relationships with others in these places and establish a sense of belonging.

However, with pressure on schools to monitor and provide attendance profiles, non-attendance at school is seen as not acceptable. Due to this pressure on schools to maintain high attendance targets, many schools may simply not enrol Gypsy/Traveller children from the outset, particularly post-primary school. As many parents are happy for their children not to attend school or to leave at 11 years old, children who do attend primary school do not often continue their education beyond this. So it’s a vicious circle of prejudices that is often created where parents justify pulling their children out of school, similar to the circulation of disciplinary power within schools that legitimates the
pressure on schools to maintain high attendance and achievement profiles and thus exclude some children.

By examining the educational marginalisation of Gypsy/Traveller children from a spatial perspective, this chapter highlights how these children often find schooling challenging in terms of achieving the best from their educational experience. By drawing on Lefebvre’s spatial trilogy, in particular, it shows how perceived (spatial practice), conceived (representations of space), and lived (representational space) spaces work together to expose the disciplinary power relations implicit in institutional spaces, as well as spaces more widely. Such power relations in schools are manifested in the form of a focus on performativity mechanisms that then organise much of school life which sets up certain ideas about how both teachers and children should behave in school.

In this chapter I have talked about attendance targets, and a focus on outcomes that Gypsy/Traveller children often find challenging to meet due to their particular cultural identity. Moving on from exploring the cultural tensions between these communities and school life, in the next chapter, I examine how such neo-liberal mechanisms further create and embed ‘spatial veils’ that prevent other ways of thinking about and ‘doing’ schooling that could include different rhythms of how children’s time is organised whilst in the school itself.
Chapter Seven

Contesting Cultures II: The Neo-Liberal Impact on Schooling

[N]ational tests and the publication of league tables...provide the system of information and knowledge, which is so important in any market, in allowing consumers to make the ‘best’ choices. But they also orient the provision of education towards certain goals and purposes. (Gewirtz et al., 1995:3)

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Introduction

In deploying my conceptual framework to analyse the practitioners’ narratives, this chapter investigates how the culture of neo-liberal schooling, has shaped, and is shaped by the ‘structures’ and ‘systems’ of an education process that continues to be driven by the ‘global’ market. I demonstrate the relationship between this systemic construction of schooling and the socio-spatial practices and interactions of participants which work together to produce a certain ‘ideal’ type of teacher and learner. With schools now fully subsumed as bureaucratic institutions, time and space is organised therein to impose ‘constraints, prohibitions or obligations’ on teachers and learners that continue to render them as docile bodies (Foucault, 1977:136). This is similar to Lefebvre’s notion
of ‘dressage’ relating to how rhythms ‘train’ individuals to behave in certain ways, as noted in the previous chapter (Lefebvre, 2004).

By building on from the previous chapter, this chapter develops further the idea of school as a socio-spatial place and ‘one of the most significant’ institutional spaces where children and teachers learn how to ‘behave’ in certain ways (Foley & Leverett, 2011:29) in order that schools perform well in league tables. I argue that the construction of identities (and subjectivities) in such places can be analytically understood as a consequence of the spatial dynamic of producing a ‘good’ learner who can pass tests. That is to say that overlapping relationships of the spatial production of schooling (including spatial practices of teaching and learning, representational space in terms of policy discourse and ideology, and finally, spatial representations in terms of the daily experiences of school life); can provide a unique understanding of the education process that focuses on the individual and achievement data. By developing some of the ideas explored in the literature in chapter three, I further examine the socio-spatial culture of schooling and the idea that neo-liberal ideology has reinforced and legitimated the disciplinary nature of schooling to produce a certain way of doing ‘schooling’. Consequently, discourses around structural inequalities have been side-lined. However, I also demonstrate how some schools, via their social relations and daily interactions, are able to produce a more embracing space in order to accommodate Gypsy/Traveller children, based an understanding of their cultural way of life.
Neo-liberal Schooling

When you’re working with the children in their classrooms, you see the world through their eyes and you see how irrelevant everything actually is that you do in a classroom.... It really makes you question what is important. (London TESS teacher)

Neo-liberal ideology over the last thirty years or so has produced a school system based on the performance of teachers and children and a focus on achievement and outcomes in tests. Chapter three makes it clear that current British educational policy and the demands of the schools inspection system based on the delivery of a national curriculum and its associated strategies and testing regimes has (re)conceptualised the purpose of schooling. The ‘representations’ of the school environment have changed to reflect dominant discourses around ‘managerialism, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and performativity’, which have changed the ‘representational space of teachers and children in schools...almost beyond recognition’ (Turner-Bisset, 2007:193). Schools are constrained by a ‘standards’ agenda in which ‘teachers have been increasingly driven, pedagogically, by the political pressure to raise prescribed standards’ (Dadds, 2001). Consequently, many teachers are forced to focus on coverage and outcomes at the expense of real learning where children are engaged in dialogue and enquiry. A quote from one of the TESS teachers provides an example of how the landscape of teaching and learning has changed from their perspective:
School should be about thinking that every child is special, and some children are more special in terms of their support; but there are many young teachers today that are not seeing children in this way and are only interested in levels and results.

So those new to the teaching profession have become embedded within a system where standards and outcomes in tests are paramount to their role as teachers. A particular difficulty expressed by many of the more experienced teachers I spoke with concerned the implementation of the Primary National Strategies for Numeracy (NNS) in 1999 and Literacy (NLS) in 1998 (and the subsequent 2006 (DfES) Strategy) which compelled schools to spend an hour on literacy and an hour on numeracy each morning of each day, following a prescribed format. The introduction of these strategies increased the profile of these subjects and reorganised how teachers taught mathematics and literacy even to this day. Although some of my interviewees suggested that this was not all bad news, especially in terms of the NNS, which encouraged teachers to facilitate more whole-class and group discussions, one of the more experienced teachers was not so supportive of such prescribed strategies and told me:

There was a certain freedom in terms of what you were doing with your teaching time, now it’s all taken up with literacy hour which has become more than an hour because it’s mostly done in the morning and you’ve got more than 2 hours of teaching time in the morning but only literacy and numeracy is done so that’s a whole morning eaten up…it’s more structured. (Teacher)

We can see here how the NNS and NLS have (re)structured how teaching and learning is organised for these subjects in a classroom. With numeracy and
literacy taught in the morning every day, teachers have normalised this structure, taking away the autonomy to do anything else during this time. During my observational work in the schools, it was clear that schools still follow this set format that incorporates whole-class discussions at the start and end of a lesson and group discussions and activities in between. Often following prescribed material, teachers seldom ‘think outside the box’ and reflected on how the children were learning. According to Dadds (2001:45),

> When the teacher has an hour sliced into prescribed bites in this way, a tight syllabus decreed, whole-class and group teaching mandated, and practices such as group reading defined in a uniform way, little room is left to manoeuvre or experiment.

One of the teachers I spoke to argued that reconciling the demands of the National Curriculum and its associated strategies was the most frustrating aspect of their work ‘because it’s just not relevant, it’s very difficult’. Another teacher claimed that even if teachers resist these demands and establish more autonomy and creativity in the classroom, many of them become ‘sucked’ into the pressures of ‘achievement levels’ and ‘targets’ and end up just teaching stuff that gets tested. Therefore, many teachers feel constrained in what they teach and pressurised to focus on content that may come up in tests. They find it increasingly difficult, therefore, to spend enough time motivating and inspiring children or allowing them to work collaboratively in order to consolidate their learning, practise their newly learnt skills or revisit previous learning they may have missed due to absences. As one teacher put it, ‘It’s all about getting
through the yearly plans and making sure all the work is covered for that year and then testing that knowledge.’

These constraints of the curriculum and fixation on government targets have therefore, I argue, influenced spatial practices in schools, particularly around behaviour and grouping children, whereby teachers spend much of their time keeping children quiet and focused on certain bodies of work and tracking their achievements against certain targets. Thus a ‘good’ learner has become seen as somebody that remains on task and achieves well in tests, and a ‘good’ teacher is somebody that can create a quiet classroom. This is something that I internalised in the schools when I carried out my participant observations as noted here in my Field Notes: ‘I am conscious that the other teachers are judging me and whether I can control the children – getting them to walk in quietly and in a line will provide evidence that I can; I think to myself’. This demonstrates to me how the disciplinary power of the school rendered me ‘docile’ which was played out in my behaviour towards the pupils in front of other teachers. As discussed in chapter four, Foucault (1977) talked about power being everywhere and how ways of being in a place act as disciplinary mechanisms to ensure behaviour is made consistent and normalised by the individuals themselves.

In front of other teachers I became focused on control and keeping children quite on the tasks I had set, becoming more interested in the discipline than focusing on the activity or what I wanted children to get out of the activity:
After about half an hour the room is very noisy and children are painting their hands in red and coming up to me saying they are bleeding. I get them to do a variety of things for the display we are putting together. I am feeling out of control. The year one teacher comes in to use the photocopier and I immediately sense her presence and feel I will be judged as to what is going on as the children are starting to ‘mess’ around. I feel I have to gain control and ask the children to sit on a chair, I begin to say thank you to those who are sitting and listening and begin writing names on the board; very quickly they all sit down and begin to listen. I feel pleased in front of this teacher that I am able to do this – as an ex-teacher I am reminded how important it is that I am able to do this and feel pleased that she will report this back to the other staff in the school. I think I have already proved myself as X [deputy head teacher] said to me this morning that I am always welcome to come to the school and do activities with any class – this is a seal of satisfaction.

Such disciplinary mechanisms in schools are embedded in the idea that the good pupil is someone who is quite, which often creates a constraining environment for both teachers and children, which is played out via the body. In the words of Foucault (1997:137):

...the scale of the control...was a question not of treating the body, en masse, ‘wholesale’, as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it ‘retail’, individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gesture, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body.

However, as a researcher in the schools I carried out this study, I was fully aware of this ‘coercion’ to conform to the disciplinary mechanisms of the school, as evidenced in my Field Notes:

It became important to me to keep the children under control in order to show her [Teaching Assistant] I know what I am doing as a teacher, as a
responsible adult with the power to do this. But this is not what I want, I want to allow the children to make some noise and talk; but ultimately to be themselves (Filed Notes).

This is something that I return to later in this section when I discuss ‘A potential for change’.

Disciplinary relations between teachers and children becomes focused on encouraging children to attend school and learn knowledge that will enable them to pass tests and thus be deemed ‘successful’. One of the London TESS teachers I spoke with considered that ‘Most teachers...are constrained by delivering the curriculum... When you are caught up in it teachers become really quite obsessive with figures and get wrapped up in that whole territorial bit and get frantic.’ With this focus on results and outcomes, schools often target resources away from children who really need them to the ‘ideal’ learners in the school who just need a little more focused input in smaller groups to reach the expected requirements of the National Curriculum and its levels. These sessions are known as booster lessons (as discussed in chapter three) and were introduced alongside the national strategies in the late 1990s. This provides us with just one example of how ‘representations of space’ relate to ‘representational space’, moving children out of a classroom to somewhere else in the school in small groups. A quote from the head teacher at Oak Tree Primary and an extract from my Field Notes taken in Green Acre School perhaps highlight further this spatial marginalisation within the lived space of schools in order to target resources to maximise achievement in tests for certain children:
In the past my natural inclination would be to look at the bottom end and think they’re the ones to boost up. But even today I’ve been having a conversation with my Deputy, we’ve got quite a few children who are performing at 4a [expected SATs grade for children aged 11], which I mean is brilliant, but we’re looking how we can boost those into a 5 because we know our target is 40% level 5s and we’re not going to be there unless we target those. So we’ve got a club running after school for that group of children. (Head teacher, Oak Tree Primary)

I have noticed lots of children working in small groups outside their classrooms as I walk round the school and remember the head teacher talking about targeting specific children to ensure they reach expected levels and beyond. (Field Notes, Green Acre School)

Such focus on coverage rather than learning has changed the ‘conceived’ socio-spatial image of the ‘good’ learner, which is associated with increased levels of conformity and compliance; a pupil who will sit quietly and not distract others, attend regularly and do well in tests. The ‘good’ teacher becomes someone who can control behaviour, teach to test and track yearly progress in order to monitor success in tests. Such characteristics then become the mental picture, the ‘new’ reality, or ‘truth’ around teacher and pupil relations in schools, whose job it is to get the optimal number of children into the various performance categories. The following quote from the head teacher at Oak Tree highlights how she conceptualises the role of the teacher in her mind in order to legitimate the practice of teaching to test:

…we’re tracking these children all the time…we look at their results termly, how many points, the data trail is enormous and I’m constantly doing that never being satisfied really; doing a lot more testing I think
than you would probably feel comfortable with...I think that it’s thinking in a different way and it’s not to say we’re leaving others behind, but you’re being very specific about where you’re using your resources, to get these targets...I’m realising that if you don’t give the children opportunities to practice [for tests]...then you’re standing up saying ‘this is what I think, I don’t think children should be prepared for testing’, when you know other schools are doing it and are being seen as being successful.

Where once teachers had a certain amount of autonomy as ‘experts’ in the processes of how children learn and what needed to be taught, this autonomy has been gradually eroded and replaced by greater controls over pedagogy and the curriculum to accommodate this testing culture (Gleeson and Gunter, 2000). The following two quotes perhaps epitomise this lack of autonomy teachers have today and the tensions they face:

I think the pressure teachers are under that you have to teach something in a certain way, never mind where the child is...to get them to achieve a good level at SATs...they [teachers] are just expected to get kids to an expected level and not actually have any say or belief in education. (London TESS teacher)

You know results are so important now and in some ways that goes against some of my core beliefs – this focus on the SATs as the be all and end all. (head teacher – Oak Tree Primary)

As such, teacher autonomy to do something differently, become more creative in how they teach, or to teach with a focus on how children learn has continually been eroded. Gleeson and Gunter discuss the changes to teacher autonomy since the 1960s, suggesting that since 2000, we have been in a period
of ‘productive autonomy’ whereby pedagogy and the curriculum is controlled by the state and ‘children and teachers...[are] controlled by the system of national testing’ (2001:194). Therefore, schooling can often represent authoritarian spaces (as evidenced by my Field Notes above) where children are constantly tested and simply taught to pass tests. And for those working in schools, this is their priority and what schooling has become ‘about’. Thus if you ‘[g]o to any parents’ evening and the discussion revolves around which “level” your child is on and whether they are on track to do well in the SATs and it doesn’t really tell you anything about the child’ (TESS teacher, London). Even if teachers do not agree with this tracking and testing culture, they construct, as Lefebvre puts it, ‘a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs’ (1991:39) to legitimate and justify what schooling has become about.

The following two quotes highlight how this head teacher and teacher have intellectually worked out a dialogue to legitimate representations of schooling and the moral dilemma many teachers often find themselves in:

…you have to keep pulling yourself back thinking, you know, should we be pushing these children, should they be doing more of what they found hard in order for the school to actually deem as being successful; and as a head you’re compromised…but you know that if you don’t get those end results your school is then seen to be failing. (Head teacher, Oak Tree)

I worked with children with moderate learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties and that’s ultimately about doing the very best you can for a child and moving them on as much as you can, but also
looking at the wider aspects of that child’s needs and I think those are very pertinent. You know very important to me as a person and I think the focus on just getting results means that you almost have to compromise some of that sometimes. (Teacher)

All the teachers I spoke with, as well as the TESS workers, echoed such sentiments. When I pressed one of the interviewees to explain what she meant when she suggested that ‘inclusion-friendly approaches’ do not ‘fit with a lot of what is put in place now’, she responded by saying:

…The SATs; the targets; having to deliver certain kinds of things that are perceived to be the most important things by outside agencies. Teaching to different things other than what the priorities are for those particular children and particular communities at that time, and thus making those communities or those individuals feel excluded from what education should be about, so it’s changing the education agenda. (teacher educator)

All of the teachers and other professionals I spoke with were very well aware of the demands of the curriculum, tests and targets, and understood that such materials are major hurdles for many children in schools today, particularly children from Gypsy/Traveller communities, as this trainee teacher told me:

The National Curriculum is irrelevant to these children, including the NLS and NNS. I tried to teach from the documentation, but the children were disinterested. They become restless and in one case a boy threw a chair across the room out of frustration with his work. I found a lot of my time was spent on behaviour management issues. (Trainee Teacher)

This trainee teacher was placed in a school with a large proportion of Gypsy/Travellers in her classroom. The quote highlights the demands placed on
her to cover prescribed material from government initiatives in order to satisfy gaining Qualified Teacher Status. The children did not receive such material very well; as we can see, they became bored. Such sentiments go some way in highlighting the dilemmas or tensions that teachers face when they find themselves in a performative environment that focuses on results and the expectation to deliver a curriculum that focuses on material that is deemed important by other agencies.

**A Potential for Change?**

So how do teachers reconcile the demands of the curriculum and ensure all children remain motivated to learn? The situation for one of the London TESS teachers I spoke with was straightforward: ‘I know it is hard for teachers, [but] I think that when you are on the other side of it you start to realise that there is a little bit more than just delivering the stuff’. This comment suggests that teachers need to become more reflective about what and how they teach so their role becomes more than just an ability to ‘deliver’ lessons in a prescribed format. It is about realising their potential to make changes in the lived spaces of their classrooms in order to support all children. After all, teachers can be ‘in charge’ of pedagogy and thus decide what goes on and what to provide for their learners in their classrooms. For the more experienced teachers, reconciliation was simple, as this one told me, ‘Never taught it [NLS], don’t believe in it, it is impossible to teach, as a lot of the material would be “over their heads” or they simply would not relate to it’.
Comments like these suggest the potential for teachers to provide a more inviting space in their classrooms in terms of the teaching and learning experiences of the children. Perhaps having the experience of teaching before the NNS and NLS initiatives gave some teachers the experience and confidence to do things differently. An example of how such teachers can influence a different way of doing things via the lived space of the school is noted in my Field Notes from Green Acre Primary. The pedagogical practice facilitated in this school was seen to support all children, but Gypsy/Traveller children in particular:

Teachers work very hard to keep things practical and continually focus on basic skills and PSHE [social skills]. Visual learning, drama, PE, creativity figure strongly in this school – teachers work hard to build strong relationships with the children and think about the learning that is taking place through play and talking. Teachers ensure that everything is very visual, talking slowly, facial expressions, modelling expected behaviour, going into role and completing work themselves alongside the children. (Field Notes – Green Acre School)

When I carried out activities with the children in this school, I ensured that I continued in this vein by providing work that was practical, and I was pleased that the children seemed to be very responsive to the work and remained on task. For example, it struck me how they remained at their desks to play a mathematics ‘game’ I had organised:

All children very responsive to starter of finding an addition sum to make target number below 30. A and B struggled beyond 10 – gave lower numbers and LSAs [Learning Support Assistants] worked with
one each. I focused on C and D. Used white boards for recordings – C and D created own number sequences in books by rolling die to create first number – started with 1-6 die and I gave them a 1-6 and a 10,20,30 die. Create 24, 34 etc. – created simple sequences of adding a number each time. C had a go at subtracting a number each time. It has struck me how keen all children were to get on with the activity at their desks and did not move around. I think that this was because it was a game and they were enjoying creating numbers, it was practical, something they could achieve and it made sense to them (Field Notes).

Adopting such a ‘creative’ and ‘practical’ pedagogy was the ethos of the school that was produced by the interactions and relations of all staff including teachers, teaching assistants and auxiliary staff. All staff were very clear, and committed, about inclusive practice. They believed that inclusive practice not only benefited these children but would benefit all children in any mainstream classroom; for example, children with English as a Second Language and those with Special Educational Needs. Teachers at this school were very creative with the National Curriculum, so children were taught on a ‘topic basis’ and all lessons were interconnected and mainly active, as one of the teachers in the school told me when I was talking to her in the staffroom over a coffee:

...this whole idea of juniors has become sorta like new secondary school where you do all this individual subject teaching...it’s all very disparate, doesn’t link up, doesn’t make a great deal of sense to the children...I think topics is a very logical way for children to learn (Field Notes).

The teacher educator I interviewed also exemplified the idea of the importance of topic-based teaching:

What works is a topic-based education where every subject is linked to one topic or theme. This makes more sense to the children as everything
is linked and transitions between subjects are smooth. I think this way of teaching is more beneficial, especially if the topic is something children are already familiar with or know something about – this way children draw on what they already know and use this to expand their learning.

Such sentiments provide a good example of how moving away from subject-based delivery can result in a more sustainable schooling experience for children within the lived spaces of their classrooms. A number of my interviewees talked about the benefits of moving away from single-subject-based lessons and suggested that all children, and particularly Gypsies/Traveller children, benefited from ‘real-life’ topics or projects that involved a more holistic way of learning knowledge and skills. This is perhaps summed up here by one of my interviewees:

...they enjoyed inclusion in real-life projects, which the head was extremely good at organising and things that involved them as part of the community...things like um deciding that we may like to build a little school farm on the plot of land at the back...um...so digging up the foundations for a base for a chicken shed and mixing up the concrete and making the chicken wire – building all the joints to build a wooden frame, yes so those sorts of things – having railway sleepers as raised beds to do vegetable growing, any practical projects like that...um...preparing things for the school fair on the Saturday and going with the head to find all the bits that they needed and cart them out and set everything up and get organised, any real-life projects like that and using real skills that they could make sense of and relate directly to an experience out of school. (teacher educator)

The idea of this type of learning relates to a more progressive pedagogy, as discussed in chapter two, based on ‘how children learn’ and being more involved with what they are learning. Many young children learn through play,
and outside the classroom, by experiencing phenomena on their own terms and relating and interacting with others as they want to (Moyles, 2015). Knowledge is realised and not simply given to children, it is tried and tested and revisited and built on by them. If we think about the learning that is going on in the above quote, we can see that a variety of skills and knowledge are being developed. For example, to name but a few: Design Technology, which includes planning, compiling drawings, cutting and sawing skills; Numeracy, including measurements and simple operations, ratios, proportions and problem solving; Science, involving habitats and living things; Social Skills, including communication and teamwork and understanding the wider environment. Consequently, learning in the types of scenarios outlined in the above quote becomes more meaningful. Such learning is cross-curricular and not subject focused, so is a more creative way of learning that encourages children to make links across their knowledge. It is a more ‘natural’ way to learn.

Participating in real-life projects like these involves children moving around and not being in one place or confined to a classroom. During my study in Green Acre School for example, it was clear that the grounds surrounding the school provided children with opportunities of learning outside the classroom. In particular there was an allotment that I discuss in my Field Notes:

I notice the allotment outside the staffroom window; the runner beans are impressive – Lots of vegetables are growing including carrots, beetroots and potatoes - the onions are really big. Somebody clearly looks after this. Beyond the allotment I can see the school grounds – a big field and trees – what a place to run around in I think. I find out that the allotment has been funded by the PTA and volunteers from the
community came in and helped construct it. It used to be a piece of grass which has been transformed with raised beds and bark paths, the allotment is also fenced off – a local retired gardener comes in each week to look after it. Teachers obviously use this as an excellent creative learning tool for any subject and a great stimulus for all sorts of activities - what a great opportunity for the children to learn outside the classroom I think.

By providing learning outside the actual classroom children can begin to feel more comfortable in the spaces of a school; as they become motivated to learn they become more attached to the school, which then becomes a ‘place’ as opposed to just a space they engage with. Their ‘classroom’ becomes fluid and changeable, moving away from the constrained model that involves learning chunks of prescribed knowledge for a test delivered by the teacher and being confined to a desk in a classroom. This sense of ‘movement’ affords children with the potential to become engaged in their own learning and to discover what interests them and what they are good at. Changing the lived space of schooling in this way provides teachers with a real sense of what children can do and what motivates them. Consequently, it can inform how they can support the full potential of all children.

During my study at Oak Tree School, I was able to observe first-hand how through moving around and using their bodies, children were motivated and engaged with what they were doing. For example, I observed a drama lesson and a PE lesson taken by outside specialists who came in once a week to run the sessions with the children. Each session lasted about 50 minutes and both were very intensive, as I describe in my Field Notes:
A very intensive and creative session, where the children were kept on the go all the time...Lots of drama games involved the children to work on their own, in pairs and as a group...Children were encouraged to draw on own experiences and express these through drama...All children fully engaged for a sustained 40 mins – after which X1 sat down and said that she had enough – usually in class ‘they’ say that she can only focus for up to 10 mins – if she is constantly engaged, and provided with practical activities, but it is usually hard work to keep her focused and sustained other than by 1:1... X2, off task after 45mins and sat down, although I managed to persuade her to carry on by reminding her of reward points/tally....X3 continued until the end of the session, although very giggly at various points. All children were extremely expressive and creative during session. (Field Notes, Oak Tree)

As we can see here, children were kept active, and by engaging in creative and practical sessions, they were able to maintain concentration. These children are used to moving around in and out of their caravans, so sitting still in a classroom is often very hard. Being aware of this and perhaps breaking up the learning into small chunks could support these children. It became apparent that many ‘Gypsy/Traveller children often work better outside the classroom as they spend most of their time outside of their caravans and often feel restricted and oppressed within the confines of the classroom walls’ (head teacher – Green Acre). Consequently, teachers at Green Acre School take every opportunity to work outside the classroom, somewhere children are familiar with. This practice was suggested by other interviewees:

...if it was quite a nice afternoon we’d go outside and do our work sitting on the climbing frame or around there because it was a place
where, particularly Traveller children, they were used to playing on. (teacher educator)

…the Traveller girl in that class was forever coming to me hot and flustered saying can we open the doors and the windows, it’s really hot in class, and they were used to being outside and doing everything outside…so we did a lot of taking our work outside and we just worked outside. (teacher)

While working in the case-study schools I also noticed how many of the Gypsy/Traveller children lacked self-esteem and confidence in their abilities and needed a lot of support with their work, particularly the older children. I found myself having to constantly reassure them that what they were doing was in line with what I expected. I also had to provide lots of space for them to ask questions about the work and use lots of praise and rewards to raise their sense of worth. In both Oak Tree and Green Acre Schools, teachers work hard to establish positive relationships with the parents, who can in turn encourage and support their children with the schooling process. However, these children may be more used to collective ways of working, in the home doing housework and childcare or out doing dealing, trading, construction or seasonal agricultural work. Such work is often very team based and collaborative, compared to working on your own during classroom activities.

In Oak Tree, one of the parent governors is a Gypsy/Traveller, and the school has secured money from the EU Children’s Fund for a full-time Community Liaison Worker, whose role is specifically about establishing positive links between the school and families. In Green Acre, they have a governor in charge
of Gypsy/Traveller achievement, who is responsible for talking to parents and visiting their sites. As a result, both of these schools have gained the trust of the parents, who are happy to send their children to school. Many parents attend lunchtime clubs and school trips, and it is positive for their children to see their parents getting involved. In particular, school trips have not been something that Gypsy/Traveller children have historically attended ‘due to parental fears of health and safety’ (Head teacher – Green Acre). The head teacher at Green Acre told me that ‘the mums, actually the dads more so, are very anxious about how safe their children are’. It is interesting to note here how parents on the move object to other types of moving. This is probably due to a lack of engagement outside the spaces of their communities, and thus a lack of experience of the unknown spaces of the Sedentarised world. However, that said, Green Acre School invites parents to support school trips and come along too. The head teacher went on to tell me:

I sometimes think now the mums are not worried about security and safety like they used to be, but actually they want the experience, they want to go to the theatre themselves. Because obviously, they’ve not often had those experiences themselves, and they get as excited about museum trips as the children, if not more.

By experiencing and engaging in other spaces outside the community space, these parents became more accepting of Sedentarised space, and it therefore became less unfamiliar to them. This is really interesting because these communities are used to moving around, but perhaps only on their terms and within the confines of their own communities. The exposure they experience of other types of moving within Sedentarised spaces, particularly when escorting
their children on school trips, is beneficial in gaining a further insight into the mainstream society. Furthermore, by supervising their children on school trips, other children see Gypsy/Traveller people as human beings with parents rather than as ‘different’. Likewise, it enables parents to have some attachment to or investment in the school.

**Equality of Opportunity as a Tool for the Provision of an Embracing Space**

It is clear that the lived space of both my case-study schools provides evidence of the potential for schools to do things differently. Much in line with Massey’s (2005) work on the potential of the sociality in spaces to change things, space is not simply fixed but fluid. It becomes possible for schools to move away from the priorities of teaching certain bodies of knowledge and teaching to test towards a more progressive understanding of teaching and learning in order to accommodate children from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

It is a commitment to equality of opportunity at the conceived level that seems to act as this vehicle for change that can result in Gypsy/Traveller children being accepted and supported in schools. The following quote from one of the Midlands TESS teachers in response to the question ‘why are some schools good at accommodating Gypsy/Traveller children and some not?’ perhaps sums this up. It is clear that adopting the particular ‘representational space’ of equality in schools, and the subsequent social practices that support it, shapes how the social interactions and attitudes of the people working in schools produce such an environment:
It’s the head; it’s always from the head, the principle, it’s the attitude of the head and the principle to the whole inclusion agenda and how we address the needs of all children within our community…and that comes across, you know from your first meeting how things are going to go. If you’ve got a head whose a bit iffy and ‘well this is going to affect my figures and this is going to do this’, it’s not going to work. Whereas if you’ve got a head…um…I’ve got a head teacher on my steering group, we had a meeting the other night, the secondary head said, ‘they’re lovely, aren’t they?’ he said, ‘but it is hard work’. I said, ‘yes, but you love it, you absolutely love it and you’re determined it works.’ He said, ‘yeah, but it’s hard…’ I said, ‘stop saying it’s hard work.’ But that’s his attitude, you know he’s got a cheery word for everybody, he’s made a point of going out and talking to the parents, because they won’t come in so he goes out to the van and talks to them through the window of the transit, and he’s done that from day one. And he’s made himself accessible to them when they need it. (Midlands TESS teacher)

This TESS teacher was very clear of her role as a ‘cultural mediator’ of school space and how her interactions with others could support schools to accommodate these children, as she went on to say:

If we got the Traveller children in at Key Stage 3, then we’d work with the school to make things happen for them and to make it flexible around the curriculum and bring them out of the areas that they [parents] don’t want them to do like sex education and things and target them into additional literacy, ICT and other things that will benefit them. We’re doing that with one high school and its working incredibly well and they have a lunchtime group for them so they are building up relationships with the staff and it’s building on that that has enabled us to work with the youth group down there. But it’s working because they’re sending the children and that could work elsewhere.
In working with these communities and schools, the TESS role is unique. By interacting with these communities and the schools their children attend, they are aware of both the needs of the communities and how schools operate. Individual teachers are also often more aware of the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller children when they have such children in their classrooms. In getting to know these children they can also act as ‘the cultural mediators of space’, especially when staff are aware that a ‘Traveller’ site is part of their locality, as this interviewee demonstrates:

While we were a very small school I think we were very aware of their needs. Not least because as you went out of the school, very big school grounds, and um the boundary fence there was a sports pitch which was reasonably narrow at that point and at the other end of that sports pitch was the Traveller site. So it was visible, they could see home from the classroom when they were in the juniors, so it felt close. And because all the teachers knew all of the children by name, as 145 was a small school, you could know all the children’s names, and families and cousins and parents. So yes, we were very much aware of the needs of the community. (teacher educator)

It is clear here that being able to see their ‘homeplace’ from the school gave these children the ability to attach themselves more to the school and perhaps even develop a sense of belonging. As Tuan (1977) suggests, an emotional bond to a space is important for individuals when attaching themselves to a place. So perhaps alongside positive teacher interactions, the spatial proximity of their ‘homeplace’ enabled children to form more of a bond with the school. With so many children from the site attending the school and developing a sense of belonging, teachers could form closer bonds with the children and begin to
understand more readily the support that they needed. For these children, the school becomes a place they are familiar with, being so close to their ‘homeplace’, and with the positive relations they are able to establish. The rhythm of attendance becomes a normalised pattern of their day.

However, most Gypsy/Traveller children are not educated in such spatial environments, and therefore many teachers are unaware of their backgrounds or any particular needs they may have. The head teacher of one of the case-study schools commented that all her staff were employed because of their desire to work with children from such communities. However, she observed that within her wider local education authority, few teachers were interested, and ‘most other heads are not aware and not interested’ (head teacher – Green Acre). This lack of interest and awareness of suitable provision for Gypsy/Travellers is reflected throughout the education system as a whole.

Most initial teacher training programmes also exhibit this lack of awareness of the need to address the specific situation of Gypsy/Traveller children on their courses. As a teacher educator on a PGCE programme from Sep 2004 -Oct 2009, I can confirm that despite equality and diversity being a major component of the programme the specific situation of Gypsy/Traveller children would not have been addressed if I were not a member of the staff team. Since leaving the post I know that Gypsy/Traveller education is no longer discussed on the programme. Although the majority of schools consider questions of equal opportunities in relation to social class, gender and ‘race’, they often fail to address issues of racist bullying, and the specific conditions of
underachievement of Gypsy/Traveller children are rarely, if ever, considered (Bhopal, 2004; Derrington & Kendall, 2007; Jordan, 2001, Save the Children 2002). For example, one of the trainee teachers I interviewed, who undertook her teaching practice in a classroom with a high proportion of Gypsy/Traveller children, claimed to have had no ‘formal training about the culture of Gypsy/Traveller children’ either on her teacher training programme or from elsewhere, but received ‘an introductory talk from the head teacher about teaching Gypsy/Traveller children’.

This also seems to be the case more generally, as demonstrated by one teacher I interviewed. He had two Gypsy/Traveller children enrolled in his classroom just before one Christmas and was not informed of their background until some time later. When asked if he was given any advice or support about their needs, he said, ‘No, you know what it’s like, here’s a new kid – sort ‘im out…it was very much like that’. When asked if he had contacted the TESS at any stage, he admitted that he had no knowledge of their existence and suggested that because he had had ‘no real problems’ with these children there would have been no need to contact them anyway. He noted that the children were ‘just like well-behaved little middle-class kids’. He went on to say that the children achieved well, were ‘well behaved’ and the only ‘difficulty’ he mentioned was that their ‘parents never seemed to let them go on a school trip’. What is interesting here is the apparent assumption on the part of teachers that Gypsy/Traveller children are inevitably a problem and therefore when they are not causing a problem or underachieving, they ‘disappear’, as is clearly noted here by the TESS:
...there are probably Travellers out there doing very well, achieving brilliantly and we just don’t know they exist because they don’t come to us... The ‘non-problem’ kids that you are aware of – do the schools know they are Travellers? When we tell them they are surprised. (London TESS teacher)

Despite some teachers and professional agencies being ‘the cultural mediators’ of school space, for the majority of teachers working in mainstream schools, it is clear, as noted above, that the focus on tests and public accountability in the form of league tables has influenced and (re)produced much of what goes on in schools, and thus restricted more creative ways of teaching and learning. As such, the representation of school space (mental/conceived) is dominated by discourses around performativity and accountability. Spatial practice (physical space) and representational space (social/lived) then consist of symbolic structures that attempt to co-produce these representations of space, which in turn produce certain attitudes conducive to the regimes of a performativity-based culture.

Such attitudes constructed around learning in such a culture perhaps limits many teachers abilities and confidence to provide a more creative pedagogy in their classrooms, particularly when teachers are required to provide evidence of learning for both the school and parents. This became apparent to me whilst involved in Green Acre school when I was visited by one of the parents. That day I involved the children in collecting mini-beasts from the school grounds; which they then had to carry out some research about. One child found a snail
and wanted to keep it, which is why I suspect I was visited by the parent, in my Field Notes I record how I suspected that the parent was suspicious about the learning going on:

X comes running up to me with a snail and asked if she can keep it as a class pet. I tell her that this is ok as I have a glass fish tank she can use for its temporary home once we are back in the classroom. I tell her that after break she may like to do some research on snails when we go into the computer room; what they eat, where they like to live and so on. She is very excited at the prospect of being able to keep this snail. At the end of the day her mum appears in the classroom; I say “are you mum?”; she says “yes” and I tell her about Lucy and her excitement about being able to keep the snail – “nobody has let me do that before mum” she says; and proceeds to tell her mum that snails are both male and female; her mum suggests they will speak about this when they get home. I wonder if the mum was checking me out – I wonder if what I am doing is what they consider learning. However, I know the children have learnt a lot about ‘mini-beasts’ today and enjoyed being outside of the classroom in order to do so. (Field Notes)

Applying Lefebvre’s spatial triad here exposes the power relations brought about by the neo-liberal agenda around performativity. So, on the one hand, the ideas, ideologies and practices around the schooling process and the focus on achievements and testing regimes have become normalised, whilst, on the other, the tensions teachers face on the ground delivering the National Curriculum and associated strategies in a creative and autonomous manner become clearer. This dilemma struck me whilst spending time in both Green Acre and Oakfield. It occurred to me ‘that teachers are under a lot of pressure to focus on learning situations and that the fun and exploration element that I have tried to embed during my time here, has perhaps been lost’ (Field Notes).
There is constant pressure on teachers to justify the learning going on in their classrooms. As a ‘visiting teacher’ it was easy for me to legitimate the learning experience I was providing as noted in my Field Notes:

I remember thinking about the learning that is going on here just in case I had to justify it to others; but I do not worry as actually what they are learning about is getting on with each other and co-operating; skills they need to develop as independent learners. They are enjoying themselves outside the classroom and motivated to learn, and this is an important aspect of enjoying school per se.

On reflection, it is fair to say that as I was only ‘visiting’ the school; I was not wrapped up in the pressures of the neo-liberal spatial practices that dominate schooling on a day-to-day basis. As confirmed by my interviewees, the pressures to uphold the requirements of a national curriculum and the testing regimes in place to check yearly achievement did have implications for the schooling of many children from Gypsy/Traveller communities. Therefore those children who are perceived to be ‘behind’, who might benefit from additional focused support are often either excluded from schools or further marginalised within the school itself. That is to say that some children are excluded altogether from these places, or, to use the terminology within spatial theory, spatially excluded, while others are spatially marginalised within the schools themselves (for example, excluded from booster sessions, or sent to a different classroom).
When I asked one of the London TESS teachers if, to their knowledge, they had come across any schools that had refused a school place to a Gypsy/Traveller child, this was their response:

Yes, mainly secondary schools but there was one case in a primary school that was in special measures, that accepted a Year 6 boy who was on the edge of exclusion... On the very day that I took the mum in for a meeting, they had changed their minds and said actually they have a problem and they wouldn’t take him...it wasn’t good and if you had been an articulate middle-class parent that happened to have a kid that had behaviour issues for whatever reason, you would have been absolutely ballistic in the way that he was treated. But that school never even contacted the parent once, they let me do all the go-between stuff.

It is interesting to note that by referring to middle-class parents this TESS teacher has internalised the view that working-class parents are less articulate and less likely to challenge the decisions of a school. As noted in chapter three, socio-economic status plays a major role in structural inequalities, where teachers often will have different expectations from children depending on their social location. The fact that the parent was happy for the TESS to liaise with the school perhaps demonstrates the trust this parent had for the TESS. I was told that this particular school was due to put on SATs tests in two months’ time and that the results of these tests were going to decide whether the school came out of special measures or not. Two weeks after the SATs were over, the school enrolled the child. Excluding this child prior to the SATs week then acted as a disciplinary spatial practice. This type of spatial practice to exclude children from these communities was also confirmed by the support worker I spoke with who talked about a parent who was told by a school that her 11-year-old
child could leave the school after Easter, ‘a week before SATs and they were
given forms to sign to say that they could home educate their kid’ (London
TESS teacher). I was also told by one of the Midlands TESS teachers that on
liaising with a deputy head at a secondary school to place a teenage child, she
was asked ‘well, why do they want to go to school anyway, they will soon
leave’. The support worker told me ‘he was just incredibly awkward, I was
quite shocked with his attitude’.

So, this general perception of low attainment as well as fluctuating attendance
patterns results in many teachers and schools often finding it extremely
challenging to spatially include children from Gypsy/Traveller communities in
order to provide these children with a consistent learning experience. However,
for both the case-study schools, despite some frustrations over attendance, I
found an overwhelming respect for the liberal tradition of assimilation into the
mainstream model in line with a respect for issues around the ‘Every Child
Matters’ (DfES, 2003a) agenda. Gypsy/Traveller children were generally seen as
‘just kids like any others who deserve particular support in achieving their
equality of opportunity’ (head teacher – Green Acre). I found that
Gypsy/Traveller children at both the case-study schools were spatially included
and assimilated well within the school structure, being supported to achieve
alongside their peers. By being spatially included in schools and supported in
this way would enable these children to develop positive relations on a day-to-
day basis with others in the school. In so doing, such children could become
attached so that the school space becomes a place where they feel comfortable.
However, as we have seen, not all schools are willing to spatially include children from these communities. Part of the problem for many schools, as noted in chapters two and six, is that children from Gypsy/Traveller communities, including those that have settled, possess uniquely different ‘spatial orientations’ towards schooling and education, which is often at odds with the schooling process. That is to say, those who experience a more Sedentarised way of life and way of thinking develop a different sense and spatial meaning of the school landscape in which school becomes a normalised space.

**Final Synopsis**

The school environment is a socially produced space. Everything that goes on in a school is produced by a variety of interconnected processes, including government policy, discourse and ideology, as well as through the agency of everyone who engages with and is connected to the life of the school. Due to a focus on performativity, attendance, targets, test results, and league tables, many schools may simply be organised around the teaching and learning and testing of particular bodies of knowledge. The result is the need for children to regularly attend a school, and for their progress to be constantly tracked each year to ensure they remain on target to achieve well in tests.

Educational practice in many schools is increasingly organised around achieving good test results and the measuring and tracking of children’s performance in certain subjects (English and Mathematics in particular). This
raises social-justice issues concerning the conception and delivery of education, since the way many schools are organised to facilitate good test results could disadvantage certain children, especially if they struggle to adapt to a school environment and fail to reach expected yearly targets. For children from Gypsy/Traveller communities, the schooling process marginalises them. With their lived experiences being structurally different from the settled majority, and with less priority placed on schooling by their communities, the schooling process does not sit comfortably with the reality of their everyday existence or belief systems. Thus, the cultural and political aims of schooling perpetuate a certain hegemonic discourse, in line with a particular mind-set that is often exclusionary in nature for some children.

With schooling being mainly focused around test results, the representation of school space sets up a particular ideological understanding that emphasises particular spatial practices which facilitate the tracking and measurement of children against certain criteria in order that they remain ‘on track’ to achieve well in tests. Drawing on these ideas, we can see how social institutions, such as schools, embody and perpetuate a certain belief system, or ‘hegemonic discourse’ that is literally imprinted in the environment via the structures of educational policy and ideology as well as through individual agency. What goes on in schools is created at the political, economic and ideological level, and played out at the local level by individual schools and their staff. Educational practice is thus socio-spatially produced and normalised. Such discourses (re)produce and (re)enforce certain types of activities, attitudes and behaviours, which ultimately excludes other ways of thinking about or doing things in
school pedagogically. These include what types of knowledge are important and therefore what should be taught in schools; the way that teaching is organised, as well as the construction of certain ‘pupil’ and ‘teacher’ identities consilient with achieving well in tests. Those who do not ‘fit’ this identity may be marginalised and thus spatially excluded. Equally, by acknowledging a lifestyle that prevents children from attending school on a regular basis, one that focuses more attention on family and cultural events as well the importance of community responsibilities, it becomes clearer how children from Gypsy/Traveller communities often find it difficult to engage appropriately with the schooling process. They face pressure on the one hand from schools to attend regularly and do well in tests, and on the other, from members of their community, who often fear the assimilation of their children within school.

It is clear when teaching and learning is more practical and creative, and when Gypsy/Traveller children are accepted and accommodated at the micro level of a school they do become part of the ideological make-up or geographical consciousness of all who occupy and relate in the life of that school (representational space). This facilitates the development of positive relationships between schools and these communities and ultimately of practices that seek to sustain their inclusion. However, although individuals in schools may be in a position to improve the schooling situation for many Gypsy/Traveller children, there is a still a long way to go before these communities are accepted by the wider spaces of society as a whole, and thus afforded equality more generally.
Chapter Eight

Contesting Cultures III: Schooling and the Gender Norms of Gypsy/Traveller Culture

This girl said to me one time, ‘what is the point of me going to school, I’m going to get married and have children and tidy the trailer all day.’ It is very patriarchal, girls get married very young. (TESS London)

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Introduction

Contemporary Gypsy/Traveller culture remains traditionally patriarchal ‘with men primarily responsible for supporting their family financially and practically…and women taking overall responsibility for the home and children’ (Cemlyn et al, 2009:226). Young people learn through community participation and socialization whereby family-based learning becomes paramount for the preservation and continuation of their cultural identities (Powell, 2010). With such a strong family and group orientation marked by such strict gender relations, ‘institutional’ schooling is not often seen as a priority. What makes this situation interesting for these communities is that both boys and girls from these communities adopt their gender roles at a young age (Powell, 2010). Thus, the majority of boys will be expected to leave school at 11 to join their older brothers, fathers and grandfathers in employment (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003; Powell, 2010). Girls leave to join their mothers in
looking after younger siblings and the ‘homeplace’ on a full time basis until they get married and move out to look after their own home and children (Kendall, 1997).

The importance of this gender dynamic when considering these children’s schooling experiences became increasingly significant to my work and this thesis. It became particularly pertinent to me after carrying out the semi-structured interview at the alternative education centre and the focus-group discussion with the four English Gypsy Romany teenage women who attended this centre. Although their stories confirmed an overall lack of schooling and lack of educational achievement in line with arguments discussed in the previous chapters in relation to ethnicity, they also provided an insight into their experiences in relation to them as young women. According to Casey (2014:808) there is ‘little empirical work [that] has been carried out that integrates the doing of gender with the study of race’. Consequently, work that focuses on the impact of gender equality in relation to the experiences of Gypsy/Traveller children is limited, although, there are some notable exceptions (Casey, 2014; Cemlyn et al. 2009; Powell, 2010), and my work, particularly this chapter, contributes to this developing field. With other work that suggests a change in parental attitudes towards ‘institutionalised’ schooling, particularly for their daughters (Bhopal, 2004; Bedmar & Leon, 2012; Kendall, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2010; Powell, 2010; Smith, 1997), this chapter is particularly concerned with the potential impact of education on the gender relations of Gypsy/Traveller communities.
As noted above, the work of Skeggs (1997, 2004) provides a further important reference point here, particularly in relation to her distinction between use-value and exchange-value. It was clear from the parents I spoke with and young women that by attending school they were ‘generating a sense of self-worth (a use-value)’ whereby their qualifications would lead to employment (exchange-value) (Skeggs, 2004:2).

Bhopal (2004) suggests that the increasingly positive change in attitudes towards girls’ schooling has come about out of the growing need for girls to learn to read and write in order to deal with the institutional spaces of contemporary mainstream society. Women play a central role in dealing with such institutional spaces outside the community (Casey, 2014; Cemlyn et al., 2009), where literacy is ‘viewed as a way of accessing resources without having to rely on members of the sedentary society to complete e.g. benefit forms, tax or insurance documents etc.’ (Kendall, 1997:87). Smith (1997:244) concurs and suggests that

most Romani people recognize that mainstream education is the only possible route to literacy for their children. Literacy is imagined to be vital in today’s society where even the most basic needs such as obtaining a drivers’ license, filling in a social security form, or requesting a residence permit require literacy.

Although this may be accepted by the community, I argue in this chapter that, ironically, the increased need for the schooling of girls may also be providing them with a potential space in which to question their allotted gender role as wife, mother and carer, as they begin to recognise their self-worth and potential
for employment (Skeggs, 2004). Engaging longer in the education system and mixing with non-Gypsy/Traveller children in schools could provide these girls with a ‘transformative’ place in which to ‘distance themselves from daily entanglements, and think about themselves and the world around them in a different way’ (Tamboukou, 2003:54). For these girls, then, exposure to school becomes the ‘public sphere’ in which they are able to explore ideas that are counter to the ‘private sphere’ of their communities. Although, as noted above in chapter six, parental concerns around assimilation and the failure of schools to recognise cultural traditions and values is often still an obstacle for engagement in education for all children, particularly secondary schooling (O’Hanlon, 2010).

This chapter illustrates how parents, particularly fathers, are keen to develop and maintain the masculine and feminine identities of their children at a young age in line with the values and expectations of their communities. The chapter also explores how schools, and education more widely, can perhaps offer Gypsy/Traveller children, but particularly girls, a different spatial environment in which to begin to challenge and contest these patriarchal expectations of the ‘homeplace’. Thus applying a feminist spatial lens provides further insight into how, by adopting a spatial analytic, we can expose the (gender) power relations implicit within cultural space for both boys and girls. In this case, patriarchy is exposed, and as Tamboukou notes: ‘Space is…especially vital when structuring gender relations’ (2003:35).
Patriarchy and Gender Identities

For Feminists, the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures, which limit and confine women. The limits on women’s everyday activities are structured by what society expects women to be and therefore to do. The everyday is the arena through which patriarchy is (re)created – and contested. (Rose, 1993:17)

The establishment and development of patriarchal expectations and thus gender identity is particularly acute for older Gypsy/Traveller children, where ‘boys acquire more rights and fewer obligations than girls’ (Smith, 1997:246). Gender roles for both girls and boys are clearly recognised, defined and constituted within the everyday ‘home’ spaces of their communities and way of life (Casey, 2014; Cemlyn et al. 2009). As Okely (1983:113) reminds us:

The ‘homeplace’ is the principal area of socialization for men and women. It is here they learn their respective gender roles within the community. It is the spatial environment where women are socialized for domesticity and where, from childhood, girls learn to equate their femaleness with domesticity.

Patriarchy ‘refers to the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women as a group and so assumed to have authority over them’ (McDowell, 1999:16). Much has been written about how patriarchy (or a particular gender regime – see Walby, 1990, 1997, 2011) acts to construct and maintain gendered identities in order to establish particular power relations based on sexual difference within the places we occupy. According to Massey, for example (2004:186):
space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them...are gendered through and through. Moreover they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live.

Consequently, such thinking and gender-appropriate expectations are firmly embedded in the structures (regimes) and practices of everyday life and experiences, whereby everyone’s lives are regulated ‘according to assigned masculine and feminine gender identities’ (Jaggar, 2014:6). These ideas often perpetuate a belief that ‘women are inferior to men, and the attributes of femininity as less highly valued than those of masculinity’ (McDowell, 1999:10). As McDowell argues:

women and their associated characteristics of femininity are defined as irrational, emotional, dependent and private, closer to nature than to culture, in comparison with men and masculine attributes that are portrayed as rational, scientific, independent, public and cultured. (1999:11)

Since the 1960s, much has been written, particularly in the UK, Europe, Australia and the USA, to challenge these ideas. As a result, the condition of many women’s lives in these countries has improved. Emancipation from the (private) domestic sphere has played a significant role in these improvements. As noted by Rose (2000:90), ‘For many women...the home is a site of hard work and perhaps physical and sexual abuse; for some, only by leaving such homes can they find a place in which to belong’.
By entering the public sphere some women have thus been able to ‘gain better access to education, employment and political representation’ (Walby, 2011:4). Furthermore, Walby notes that more and more ‘women of working age derive a significant part of their livelihood from waged labour’ (2011:5). However, within Gypsy/Traveller communities such a transformation from the domestic sphere to the public sphere has not been so readily forthcoming for many women, particularly married women (Powell, 2010). The domestic sphere continues to operate as a gender regime where both boys and girls are required to conform to a certain gender identity. Traditional roles where boys go out to work and girls look after the home are clearly reconstituted within the community spaces and lives of these children (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, Powell, 2010). What makes this situation unique is that not only are both boys and girls spatially segregated via the gender expectations of the community, but they are also spatially segregated culturally, in that they are often pulled out of school between 11 and 14 (DfE, 2006c). With community pressure to adopt strict gender roles at such a young age, boys and girls are even frequently withdrawn from primary schooling by their fathers, who see any attendance at school as a threat to the adoption of traditional gender identities and Gypsy/Traveller lifeways. This lack of engagement in education beyond primary schooling thus arguably prevents these children and young people from encountering opportunities to relate or think differently about their roles and identities outside their communities.
However, with evidence that suggests a shifting landscape of parental attitudes towards the value of schooling for their children, but particularly their daughters, girls from these communities may be beginning to think differently about their identities and as such delay the gender expectations of their communities.

**Place, Space and Gender**

Places are made through power relations, which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience. (McDowell, 1999:10)

Turning attention to some of the empirical data shows how young teenage women and boys from Gypsy/Traveller communities experience spaces and places differently from the Sedentarised mainstream. In doing so I highlight how the power relations set up by the social construction of gender within these young people’s everyday lives attempts to reaffirm specific gender roles. The following quotes from the teenage women in the focus group highlight a domestic gender regime that spatially segregates girls and boys at a young age into their allotted gender roles (particularly boys):

Girl 1: I was just forever doing the same thing every day, getting up and cleaning and cooking. Getting my dad’s stuff ready and getting all my brothers’ stuff ready.

Girl 2: If they [boys] do go to school in primary they leave, don’t they, because they are expected to go off and work.
Girl 3: And they [boys] don’t have to go to school because they learn how to work and that.

However, girls are increasingly encouraged to stay on longer in school in order to read and write, as highlighted by the following quote from one of the teenage women I interviewed: ‘My dad can’t read and write at all, but me and my sister write everything for my dad. Boys finish education at 11 and work, girls tend to stay on and expected to learn to read and write.’ Another girl I interviewed told me that her mum told her that she was going to school because ‘you do need to learn to read and write, she just wanted me to read and write’.

This shift in thinking is supported by some of these girls’ mothers, as highlighted here by one of the parents I spoke with who was talking about her 7-year-old daughter. She told me ‘Times is changing so I would like her to, if she is still doing as good at school as what she is, if she wants to, I would let her go on [at school], I definitely would’. Another mother I spoke with told me that her own mother had been keen for her to stay on at school and to learn to read and write in order to deal with issues outside the non-Traveller community (as discussed in chapter six).

Having the backing and encouragement of their mothers to get the best out of school is perhaps resulting in girls doing better in schools. Indeed, the role of mothers in the education and upward mobility of their children in general and daughters in particular has been a constant theme in the literature of class
mobility in education (Reay, 1998; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Sabates et al., 2011; Vincent, 2010). For the Gypsy/Traveller teenage women I spoke with, it was as if they had permission from their mothers to get attached to the school space so that it became a comfortable and legitimate cultural place for them. This perhaps further highlights how, when an individual feels attached to a space, it becomes a place; a place where they feel comfortable and thrive, as we have seen in the previous two chapters.

The TESS teachers also confirmed that they found more and more mothers were keen for their daughters to stay on longer in school. They reported that girls were enjoying school, doing well and wanted to learn, which was echoed by mothers I spoke with:

My youngest one, XXXXX...she is very bright and she needs learning, she thrives on it...

...even as an 8-year-old she’s gonna sail through it, she’s gonna do secondary...

On speaking to one of the teenage women interviewed similar sentiments were expressed, as this girl told me ‘I’m really interested in learning and I like learning...I am willing to learn’.

It is in the schooling of boys where there has not been an equivalent shift in thinking (DfE, 2010), and patriarchal pressure from the community for boys to work is perhaps too strong to provide wider opportunities. Hartley (1974:7), writing in the 1970s, suggested that ‘demands that boys conform to social notions of what is manly come much earlier and are enforced with much more
vigour than similar attitudes with respect to girls’, and this still has great relevance for Gypsy/Traveller communities. One of the head teachers I spoke with told me that a parent with two daughters and a son told her how it was becoming acceptable for girls to stay on in school but this was still not the case for boys. This parent went on to tell her that ‘the trouble is for some children their education stops here, Mrs XXXX [head teacher]. XXXX [child’s name] now, he’s only twelve, he’s not in school, he’s not moving on with his education at all whereas my two girls are continuing’.

The following excerpt from a conversation I had with one of the parents who spoke about her son highlights further this expectation for boys to leave school early and work after primary education:

Parent: …he’ll still leave at 11. Well, he’s 11 now but he leaves at the end of this year, yes.

Me: And what will he do?

Parent: Go to work with his uncles cos I’m a single parent, he’s got no dad so… They normally come out of school go to work with their dads so he’ll either work with his granddad or go with his uncles.

Pressure from fathers and other men, including uncles and grandfathers, who require their sons to go to work with them seems to be paramount. As noted here by Blaney (2005:110): ‘It can be difficult for boys in particular to be still at school at fifteen or sixteen as their fathers may feel they should be out earning a living’. However, what may also be at play here, other than pressure to work, is a desire from the boys themselves to leave school and join the other men in
work in order to prove their masculinity ‘that in (some ways) effectively constitutes apprenticeship to older male relatives’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003:590). As Levinson and Sparkes (2003:599) found in their research:

Males of all ages spoke with pride of going out to learn trades and skills with older males….Young men spoke of a sense of liberation when going out to work with fathers, uncles and old brothers, where ‘we get treated as equals’.

One of the mothers in my sample told me that her 11-year-old son ‘can’t wait to get to work, he’s nagging now’. For this parent, it was clear that, for her son, schooling beyond primary level was something that the community did not value. She went on to tell me that ‘it’s pointless in our culture because nobody ever breaks out of the thing. They all learn the same job, you know, all the Travellers…they all do the same kind of work, they’ve got no need to go outside that’. Notice the reference to going ‘outside that’; the expectation is clear that boys in these communities will go to work with the older men and learn on the job. They do not need secondary education, which could potentially provide them with an alternative. This expectation is internalised by these boys via their social relations of the lived spaces of their communities.

Qualities such as ‘business skills, physical strength, loyalty, sexual prowess and potency’ are very much valued by Gypsy/Traveller men (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003:588), and school is often perceived by fathers as ‘inculcating boys with an altogether less masculine identity’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003:599). There is a ‘suspicion not only of the skills gained through exposure to the education
system, but of values and attitudes that threatened traditional, masculine identities’ (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003:601). Such sentiments relate to earlier debates around the relationships between education, labour and masculinities (Willis, 1977 is the classic text here), whereby boys often failed to apply themselves at school, as this would have invoked a challenge to their masculinity. Nayak (2003:152) notes that ‘it made little sense to apply oneself academically when reputations could be more quickly established within the accepted registers of working-class masculinity which valued strength, loyalty, humour and physical stature’.

As a result, boys from these communities want to learn a trade as early as possible so that they can work alongside and socialise with other Gypsy/Traveller men, where ‘occupation serves as a mutual identification pattern’ for these boys (Beck, 1998:140). During the focus group with parents and staff from the home education programme, it was clear that work was viewed as more important than school, and this is perhaps how the community justifies the removal of young boys from school in order to uphold masculine identities, as this one parent noted:

XXXXX and XXXXX [sons’ names] going to work with XXXX [father’s name] is not valued by the education system as education, whereas I think it is education and it’s contributing to society. That’s how my grandparents worked, they got to 14 if they were strong enough or able enough they went and learned a trade with their fathers or their uncles or their grandfathers, and that is disrespected today, in fact so much that it’s almost illegal, you’re not really allowed to do it. And I think that’s crazy.
Opening spaces of possibilities

It was quite interesting talking to another parent about the situation of girls and schooling. Her daughter, aged 7, was doing well at school and really enjoyed it. She was keen for her daughter to stay on at school. So despite an expectation that girls will become housewives and look after the male workers in the household, for this parent it is clear that although her son will adopt his gender role as the worker and breadwinner, she does not necessarily expect her daughter to follow the traditional gender role as housekeeper at the equivalent age of her brother. On further discussion with this parent, she told me that she was a single parent and that she made all the decisions about what her children would do. That said, it was clear that she was aware that she was perhaps challenging the expectations of her community, as highlighted here when I asked her why she felt it was unusual even for girls to remain in schooling:

Parent: Cos it’s frowned upon in our culture but they don’t like it.

Me: So do you have to fight other relatives to keep your daughter in school?

Parent: No cos they’re my kids, it’s my decision… but they’d all have their say, I think, they’d all have their little say…but they are my kids and I’m very stubborn.

Such sentiments were confirmed by one of the head teachers I spoke with, who told me that one mother ‘got a lot of stick from the community who thought she was doing the wrong thing; she didn’t want other people to know she was sending the girls to secondary school, but she’d made that break’.
Despite the pressures of the communities, such quotes provide us with examples of how some mothers are keen to ‘make that break’ from the patriarchal controls of their communities and take the ‘risk’ of giving their daughters the opportunity of staying on longer at school. This shift in thinking towards the schooling of girls is also something that even some fathers are coming round to, as the head teacher at Green Acre told me:

Last year we had a child whose mum... she’s got two girls both of which have been to us, and came out with level 5s [above-average SATs results], and through that child being in school and her sister, Mum and Dad made the decision for them to go on to high school.

On entering a site to interview one of the parents, it became clear to me how young women and mothers were provided with the opportunity to begin to challenge the situation of the younger girls in their communities. There were no men around, just other mothers and young women, which is typical of Gypsy/Traveller sites during the day. The absence of men from the ‘homeplace’ during the day not only provides a space where young girls (and boys) learn their expected roles but also a space away from men where mothers and young women can talk about and discuss the cultural situation of their children, but particularly their daughters. As Kendall (1997:83) notes:

Women control the inside of the trailer, especially when the men are away during the day, then it becomes primarily ‘their’ space. They have opportunities to have other women round and meet with family and friends, in ‘their’ trailers, on ‘their’ plots. ‘Homeplace’ provides the spatial environment where women can have control and instil in their families the concept of a ‘Traveller Identity’.
While Kendall sees ‘homeplace’ as reproducing cultural norms, I suggest that ‘homeplace,’ at times, can also become a site of resistance away from patriarchal control, although perhaps only during the day when the men are not around. Through the daily interactions within this place, women and mothers are provided with opportunities to maybe challenge patriarchal relations for their daughters at the lived dimension of this space. Such challenges could then potentially provide girls with a different perspective on their allotted gender role, particularly those that stay on in school or return to education later (as was the case with the teenage women in the focus group). So, for some girls, having aspirations to do things differently may initially come from the desires of their mothers for change, as evidenced here from one of the teenage women I interviewed, whose mum wanted her to stay on longer in school:

My Mam encourages me to do that [stay on at school]...and says that you have enough time to settle down and get married when you are actually old enough. At the end of the day, I’m only 16, I’ve got my full life ahead of me. Like there’s hundreds and hundreds of things that I want to do and obviously you can’t go through this world without qualifications and you’re not going to get anywhere without getting a job.

Another girl from the focus group told me about her mother’s life and the desire her mother had for her to do something different. She said her mother had told her that ‘As soon as she was like courting my dad she dropped it, left it, [school] and became a housewife basically. “I never did anything with my life” she said, “I just got married and I’m a housewife...I want you to be something”’.
This desire for daughters to break away from the domestic gender regime of the community is, I suggest, internalised by these teenage women and provides them with the opportunity to reconfigure their own gender identity. No longer do they want to ‘end up’ like their mothers, marrying young, cooking and cleaning all day, but they aspire to something different. Two teenage women from the focus group I spoke with told me:

Girl 2: I wanted to go to college and go and do something, and be something in life. Rather than stay at home, clean up, cook, wash dishes, watch kids and then it’s like you get to 17 and it’s like, get married.

Girl 4: I don’t want to get married, I want to live my life, I want to go on holiday and I want to get a job, I want to fend for myself…I want to go and enjoy my life before I just like leave home and become a mam.

At the heart of this desire to delay the adoption of their domestic gender role, it was very clear that schooling would provide them with a space in which to think differently and offer them the ability to do things outside the expectations of the community and away from patriarchal authority. I am reminded here of the work of Tamboukou (1999, 2003) and her studies around women’s autobiographical writings, which provide evidence of how some women resist ‘the space restrictions imposed upon their lives, claiming space of their own, sometimes creating new space boundaries for themselves but also imagining different spaces beyond masculinist geographical closures’ (2003:16). For the teenage women I spoke with, it was clear that the education centre had become their own space. They were very aware that extending their education would give them the independence that they so desired away from the spatial
boundaries of their ‘masculinist’ communities, as noted here by both of the teenage women I interviewed:

I want my own independence; you know what I mean. This is why I come here trying to get qualifications.

I wanted my own independence basically...I’m doing something with my life. I’m not just stuck cleaning and cooking all day.

The impetus for change was fuelled by the desire to gain qualifications that would enable them to become economically independent, as noted here by one of the teenage women I interviewed and the other from the focus group:

I used to hate going to my dad and asking for money when I was going out. I thought, no, I want my own bit of money.

Girl 3: Like, most Traveller people, all we do is rely on our husbands...I want to be independent because you have to sit at home and wait for him to give you money. I want to have my own job and my own independence and that. Get my own life sort of thing; that’s the key. That’s why I’m here.

Once these young women engaged with education, the social space of that environment afforded them with the ability to think differently about the gender relations and expectations of their community. Another one of the teenagers from the focus-group discussion told me why attending the educational centre was important to her:

Girl 2: And then it’s like wake up in the morning and I’m going to do that again and again and again [cooking and cleaning]...I’m so bored
Another girl from this focus group told me that when her father stopped her going to the education centre for a while, she ‘did start to miss it because it’s a bit of freedom away from home and cleaning all the time’.

For these teenage women, then, going to this education centre has become a place of freedom away from the constraints of the lived spaces of their ‘homeplace’. The idea of freedom relates to the flexible nature of spaces and how the social relations with others establish spaces as comfortable places in which to feel valued and have your opinions respected. That is to say, once in the education centre and away from the confines of their domestic sphere, through their interactions and relations with others, these teenage women have an opportunity to challenge their identities as Gypsy/Traveller women. They feel free in this place, and able to express themselves. So it is interesting to note here how the ‘homeplace’ for these teenage women is a constraining space and the education centre has become an inviting space that they enjoy attending.

Writing about her own school experience, hooks (1994:3) makes this point so eloquently:

Attending school then was sheer joy. I loved being a student. I loved learning. School was the place of ecstasy – pleasure and danger. To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to
someone else’s image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself.

‘The danger zone’, as hooks puts it, for Gypsy/Traveller girls is to aspire to something other than getting married, cooking, cleaning and looking after children. They want to construct their own lives, get a job and become independent and thus step out of their allotted gender role. However, this is ‘dangerous’ as it is a challenge to the expectations of their communities. It is therefore no surprise that it is the girls’ fathers who are reluctant for their daughters to ‘reinvent’ themselves, as noted here by one of the teenage women I interviewed, who told me ‘My dad didn’t want me to work…he totally hates girls working because he prefers me to be at home like cleaning and cooking but I thought “no way, I want to do something else”.

The Constraining Gendered Space

It was clear from the mothers and the teenage women I spoke to that many young girls from these communities wanted to do something differently with their lives other than simply take up their allocated gender role. They were keen to delay marriage and ‘have a life’ first, a sentiment that was positively encouraged by their mothers. Attending school (or another educational setting) afforded them with the opportunity and the space to relate differently as well as providing them with the material resources to aspire to do something differently. However, this is not the case for all girls. Pressure from these communities to leave school is still acute and perhaps highlights how patriarchy is internalised and its associated gender roles perpetuated at the cultural level of these communities, but particularly by fathers. So, for some
girls who may wish to carry on their education after primary school, there is still this expectation to get married, which is often internalised and accepted unquestioningly by many girls. This is despite the knowledge that once they are married, their husbands will have power over them, as noted here by the teenage woman in the focus group who wanted to get married young: ‘you have got authority over them when you’re courting them [boys]…But when you’re married they take over the father role basically and you come under their authority. But that’s better than anything really’.

The following extract from the focus-group interview on the one hand demonstrates the internalisation of the idea that it is good for the community for teenage women to get married at a young age, but on the other hand, it shows how some challenge this destiny, and perhaps with their mothers’ encouragement, are determined to do something different with their lives and break away from such embedded values:

Girl 1: I’d like to be married now.

Girl 2: What for?

Girl 3: Because you’re a fool.

Girl 2: Yeah…your life you’d just throw it away to be married.

Girl 4: You’re going to be in the trailer probably, 18 year old cooking and cleaning.

Girl 1: Yeah, I know but I don’t go anywhere as it is, I might as well be married the way I am now. Because all I’m doing is cleaning and staying at home, what’s the difference?
Girl 3: Well, so are we.

Girl 4: Yeah, so are we. We don’t really go anywhere but we don’t want to be married.

Girl 1: You don’t want to be married?

Girl 2: No, I want to live my life.

As the discussion went on, it was clear that the three girls who resisted marriage were going against what is expected, and that peer pressure from other girls in these communities to get married may be part of the general patriarchal pressure to yet married young, internalised by Girl 1 in the group. The two teenage women I interviewed and one of the teenage women from the focus group noted the following:

For everybody soon as they hit 16 ‘I want a boyfriend, I want to get married’.

Every Traveller’s like ‘oh my god, you’re 22 and you’re not even married.’

Girl 4: I said you all think it’s like, oh if I get married, I’ll have more of a life blah, blah, blah, that’s all they fill you with.

Fathers would exert more overt pressure to ensure that their daughters were on track to marry and stay at home to help look after children, cook and clean. During the interview with one of the young teenage women, she told me:
I always had a choice whether I wanted to go to school. But then as I got older, my dad didn’t want me in school anymore...So he pulled me out of school and he said, ‘That’s your final year now’...because he prefers me to be at home cleaning and cooking.

She went on to tell me how her mother was keen for her to carry on at school but, again, her father was not:

When I said I wanted to be a nurse, she [her mum] was like, well, she wanted me to stay in school. Go all the way through. Go through college and everything. She wanted me to do what I wanted to do. But then, my dad didn’t want me to, because my dad wanted me to come out of school and help out.

According to one of the TESS teachers in the Midlands, although they had noticed a shift in thinking towards girls’ attendance at school, they often encountered resistance from fathers for their daughters to remain in school:

It’s quite fascinating, I think, to see how things are changing and it’s bit by bit by bit really and it’s how much of that sort of male dominance really that will be chipped away because even though the young women will say ‘oh, we’re gonna do this’, when push comes to shove, if he’s says ‘right we’re off’, they would go.

It is interesting to draw on the work of Helleiner (2003:169) here, who found that once girls were married, they quickly adopted their gender-specific role as housewife. In her ethnographic work with Irish Travellers she finds that:

while some women reported having worked in casual jobs in laundries, supermarkets, and hotels this was usually before marriage...the overall
involvement of married women in income-generating activities appeared to be minimal.

Helleiner goes on to note:

Most married women that I lived among spent much of the day working within their respective trailers and mobiles. Women were ultimately responsible (with assistance of older children and especially girls), for daily tasks such as cleaning the trailer, washing dishes and clothes, food preparation, and cleaning, dressing, feeding and supervising children. (2003:171)

On speaking with the head teacher at Oak Tree Primary, it was further highlighted how patriarchy plays a key role in ensuring girls are ‘on track’ to marry and adopt their traditional gender roles within the community:

Not all mums want their girls to carry on. Our big thing at the moment is that we’ve got a bright girl in year 3, but her attendance is diabolical. Mum is adamant that she will not go further than the end of Key Stage 2 [end of primary school at age 11], ‘she’s going to be a mummy and this is all we want for her’, she says, and I’ve sort of said to her, ‘but you know I’ve read in the Traveller Times about girls going to university, having a career’; ‘No, those are the people who get pregnant before they’re 16, those are the people who get divorced, we’re not having that’.

The final part of this quote exposes the fear that some parents have about allowing their children to attend school and perhaps highlights the ‘danger zone’ hooks points to. It is clear to this parent that the spaces of school expose children to other ways of thinking and her fear is that such environments are
places that could lead to the construction of alternative identities. As Massey (1994:181–2) suggests:

The fact of escape from the spatial confines of the home is in itself a threat...in two ways: that it might subvert the willingness of women to perform their domestic roles and that it gave them entry into another, public, world – ‘a life not defined by family and husband’.

The following quote from one of the teenage women interviewed highlights how mixing with non-Gypsy/Travellers exposes the difference between the communities and potentially gives children and young people a desire to behave differently:

I’ve had responsibility from a young age and, all Traveller girls do, though, and Traveller boys, like they have a responsibility for going out to work with their dads, they have responsibility of taking the dogs for a walk, the responsibility of the horses...Travellers have got more responsibility than Gorgios [non-Gypsies]...what I don’t understand is like when I come back from college I’ve got to go home and clean up and then put the food on, pick the kids up from school time, wash the dishes and it’s bed time...where Gorgios kids like Gorgios girls and boys they come back from school and they can just go and get a wash, put their other clothes on and go out with friends. I can’t do that.

Parental fear of their children mixing with others from non-Traveller communities, particularly from fathers, was also noted during the interview with the head teacher from Oak Tree Primary:

I had a visitor the other day through the Traveller Education Service...and he’s involved with the National Strategy for Traveller children... he said well, what you have to understand is they won’t say this to you, but they’re fearful that their children, if they spread their
wings, will meet non-Traveller boys and marry out of the culture, and he said that’s a real fear and it’s about keeping hold of the girls so that they don’t move away. And it was really interesting for him to say that, so I’ve sort of got that in my mind now, and you can understand it, can’t you, just as the Muslim parents are fearful of their girls.

This quotes highlights how fathers are reluctant for their daughters to get attached to others outside the community for fear they will marry a non-Gypsy man and leave the community. Consequently ‘Traveller women are subject to strict moral codes regarding their sexuality’ (Kendall, 1997:80), and as a result, fathers often police the whereabouts of their daughters, forbidding them to go anywhere on their own, particularly the older teenage girls. Some fathers may even decide to move on to somewhere else, pulling the girls out of school. One of the teenage women I interviewed who attended the alternative educational centre told me that ‘I think my dad thought I was getting too comfortable again, so he pulled me out’. All the other teenage women in the focus group I spoke with at the centre expressed similar sentiments; they told me:

Girl 2: We can’t go anywhere on our own.

Girl 3: He [father] only let me come here to chaperone my sister, he didn’t want me to come here [the education centre].

Girl 1: The first time I came here [the education centre] XXXX [older sister] had to come with me because I’m not allowed to come on my own.
Part of policing the boundaries of girls in these communities is embedded within the domestic gender regime, which dictates different rules for girls and boys. McDowell (1999:219) notes how:

One of the ways in which women are controlled is through the erection of a set of beliefs and fears about ritual and pollution, in which certain parts of the body, the washing of clothes and of utensils and the preparation of food are the subject of strict regulation. Gypsy men are seen as innately pure, whereas women are a source of pollution and can only aspire to purity through careful attention to their behaviour, and particularly their sexuality.

Girls are thus spatially restricted as to where they can go and whom they can see; they have to be chaperoned when outside the boundaries of their communities. As Tamboukou (2003:21) notes: ‘Women’s sense of alienation from the everyday spaces of their lives is related to a fear, that they are always watched and evaluated’. These teenage women from the focus group went on to tell me about the process of being observed:

Girl 1: At night-time I’ve got a cousin of mine she comes with us everywhere...you’ve always got to have somebody with you to vouch for you.

Girl 2: When you’re courting a boy you’ve got to have someone there...You’re chaperoned.

Girl 4: You can’t drive anywhere, you still have to have a chaperone.
Boys from the community do not face such restrictions and are free to go where they want to and with whom they please, as noted here in another extract from the teenage women in the focus group:

Me: So are boys different, can they do what they like?

Girl 1: Yeah, basically.

Girl 2: Yeah.

Girl 3: We keep ourselves decent until we are married, but boys can do what they want. They do what they like. They come and go all night and they are allowed with Gorgios [non-Gypsies].

Girl 1: They’re allowed just to go off and go out with their girlfriends or whatever.

Girl 4: Yeah. They don’t get talked about. They don’t get scandalised.

Girl 1: A girl’s got to live up to her name – how she dresses, how she acts, who she goes about with, what she does. What boys she with.

Girl 2: Yeah everything. A girl has to live up to her reputation.

Girl 3: Even the fact that, say, someone was asking me out and say it was only a week, or two week, or three week, and someone knew I could be scandalised.

Notice the use of the word ‘scandalised’ in the above quotes. It is interesting how they use this word as if they’re the object rather than the subject of peer judgement. These sentiments clearly highlight the gender divisions of girls and boys in these communities and expose the power relations relating to the re-
grouping of hegemonic masculinities and patriarchal femininity. According to Crickley:

when an ethnic group is under attack from external dominant groups, their oppressive control of female sexuality may be seen as a way of maintaining group boundaries as well as providing males in the group, already oppressed elsewhere, with ways of exercising some domination. (1992:106)

Consequently, men seemingly control women’s space – the ‘natural’ sphere of Gypsy/Traveller girls is within the domestic space of the home where it is easy to police their behaviour in line with domestic expectations (Casey, 2014). When stepping outside the community space, the policing of their behaviour is achieved by not allowing them to be on their own, or by an internalised fear of being ‘scandalised’. Consequently, girls are restricted outside the private spatial environment of the Gypsy/Traveller community. Fathers and other males will police the movement of girls in their communities, ensuring that their whereabouts and company are known (Casey, 2014). Much has been written about the public/private divide (Rubin, 1975; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995), with ‘each assumed to be the “natural” sphere of one or the other sex’ (McDowell, 1999:31). Women have traditionally been associated with private space and men with public space, ‘that between the public and the private, between inside and outside – plays a central role in the social construction of gender divisions’ (McDowell, 1999:12).

For many white feminists, this division between private space and public space in Western society is ‘one of the most oppressive aspects of everyday spaces’
(Rose, 1993:17) which has long been associated with patriarchal power (Millet, 1977; Oakley, 1975; Walby, 1990, 1997). Such divisions are still very much a significant part of the understanding of Gypsy/Traveller communities, which in turn naturalises the division that the ‘homeplace’ is the women’s sphere and outside of that is the men’s sphere and their responsibility, yet only in relation to their economic activity. It is very interesting, as noted earlier, that Gypsy/Traveller women have become increasingly involved in dealing with the demands of mainstream institutions, which takes them out of the ‘private’ community space into the ‘public’ spaces of the mainstream. Consequently, it has become even more important in terms of reproducing patriarchal relations for men to assert their dominance over their daughters to ensure that they get married within the community and remain in the ‘homeplace’ (Casey, 2014).

During the focus group with the teenage women, it was clear that they respected the word of their fathers and it was important for them to make their fathers happy. They also told me that their reputation amongst others in the community was important to how they were perceived by others and their parents:

Girl 1: If you’re not clean you get talked about…but as long as our home’s clean that’s the main thing.

Girl 2: When you go off with a boy by yourself, that boy can easily go back and say blah de blah. There’s no witnesses that he didn’t do anything with you while you’re just together because there’s nobody else there. So there’s nobody to vouch your saying ‘that never happened’.

Girl 3: As you get older you can’t stay away from your place because of your reputation.
Girl 4: As long as I stick with me own group of people or go out with my sister, they’re alright [parents].

So despite these girls’ attitudes towards marriage and their desire to do well at the education centre in order to claim their own independence, they were acutely aware of the deep-rooted community rules surrounding women and girls in public spaces, and the importance placed on their reputation within the community. These were rules that they also used to judge themselves and others, arguably colluding with the community ‘regimes’, and evidence of the naturalising of patriarchy.

However, despite this, it was also clear that they were determined to get the most from education in order to protect their own independence, which has become extremely important to them:

Girl 2: …if you did get married, happy to get married next year – I’m not planning on it, by the way – I’d still want that job, and I’m still going to work with children. Then I can get things for my own self, knowing that I got there and I’ve done it myself. So if we did have a divorce, he can’t turn around and say, ‘Well, give me such and such back.’ Do you know what I mean, like throw things back in my face, I don’t want that.

Girl 4: Well, I’d still like my own car because if you get married they won’t take the car off of you. And you know you could just to get up and go if anything bad happened. And they can’t say, ‘Well you can’t get in that car.’ So it’s nice to have your own car so you can get up and go if you need to.
So it is clear that although they are expected to marry and adopt a domestic role within their communities, as well as be careful of who they mix with, engaging in education was equally important to these teenage women in order to retain their independence and future aspirations. It is perhaps this determination to do well and get the required resources to find work that is potentially ‘chipping away’ at the very nature of these communities’ domestic gender regimes.

**Final Synthesis**

Gypsy/Traveller communities, then, are patriarchal in nature. Boys and girls are expected to leave school between the ages of 11 and 14 and to adopt specific gender roles that see girls involved in domestic responsibilities while boys go out to work with their fathers and the other men in the community. Such thinking is firmly embedded within the lifeways of the Gypsy/Travellers. They observe the spatial organisation of their communities, which involves women staying on the site while men leave it to go to work. They observe traditional gender roles wherein mothers, aunties, grandmothers and sisters carry out domestic chores and provide dinner for fathers, uncles, grandfathers and brothers on their return from work. Gypsy/Travellers associate the ‘homeplace’, or private sphere, with mothers and reproductive labour and the outside, or public sphere, with fathers and work undertaken for financial reward.

However, with more and more children and young people engaging in school, these children are seeing a different world, the world of the Sedentarised mainstream. They are mixing with non-Gypsy others and relating with them
throughout the course of the day. With women expected to become involved in the dealings of mainstream institutions there is an interesting tension here. The communities want girls to be able to interact with the literate world of institutions and professionals. However, they do not want them spending too much time in a school or college once they reach adolescence in case they meet a boy, drift away and get other ideas about how to live their lives. I have argued that by engaging within the school they are being socialised to think differently about their lifestyle and what they want out of life. For some, then, schooling is providing young girls with a space to explore opportunities outside the gender regimes of their communities. They are beginning to realise that they need education to get qualifications, to get a good job and become independent. The school then becomes a space away from the confines of their communities that affords them with a specific gender identity.

As such, ‘staying on’ at school is seen as a threat to these community norms and values associated with the expected identities of women and men. It appears that fathers and other men do not want their daughters to get too attached to the mainstream world of the school; they want them to remain within the community looking after the ‘homeplace’. However, due to men not being around all day on the sites, the ‘homeplace’ is occupied solely by women (and young boys and girls); thus, by day, the site becomes the domain of women – a place in which potentially to question their roles. No longer do these women want their daughters to follow in their footsteps; they want them to do something else with their lives not simply ‘end up like them’ cooking and
cleaning all day. However, their sons are different, and will on the whole work with their fathers and will leave school at age 11 to do so.

It seems that masculine identities are really important to these boys and the other men. School is therefore seen as a place that may be acceptable for girls, for a while, in order to learn to read and write, while boys must leave as soon as possible to learn a trade in order to one day support their own families. It is therefore very difficult for young boys to break away from their masculine responsibilities. Yet the irony is that their sisters are increasingly engaging longer in schools and preparing themselves for work in order for them to be economically independent, which could result in a challenge to the domestic gender regimes of their communities.

So with the expectation for girls to be able to read and write in order to deal with mainstream society, they are staying longer in the schooling process. Whilst immersing themselves within the spaces of school they are relating with others outside their communities. With such immersion in this different space away from the confines of their communities, these girls are free to express themselves differently and perhaps develop an alternative identity in order to improve their life. However, there is no such space for their brothers to explore a different identity, as they will often leave school at 11 and work, remaining with other Gypsy/Traveller men, which thus retains the patriarchal nature of their masculine identity.
So by adopting a feminist lens, this chapter provides a distinctive insight into the extent to which the schooling and education of Gypsy/Traveller girls can potentially provide them with a place in which to challenge the gender regimes of their communities in order to eventually open up other possibilities.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

Introduction

The educational ‘underachievement’ of many Gypsy/Traveller children is a phenomenon that has been identified for over forty years. Part of the problem relates to the shared value of Nomadism that combines how these groups are socially organised and a school system based on Sedentarism, that is, the need for regular attendance at one school. The primary aim of this thesis was to consider this phenomenon by examining this distinctive relationship between Gypsy/Traveller communities and the English educational structure of schooling using the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’. Using spatial theory has allowed me to examine the power relations embedded in both the school place and the ‘homeplace’ in order to illustrate how such places organise and produce specific social relations. These ‘socio-spatial’ relations exemplify particular expectations, behaviours and identities, which encapsulate certain belief systems, or ‘hegemonic discourses’ external to these ‘places’ – which is ‘space’. To that end, I have argued that the socio-spatial structures and cultural expectations of schooling often conflict with the spatial experiences and lifeways of children from Gypsy/Traveller communities. Such dissonance often results in limited access to schooling for these children.
On thinking about why this situation continues today, I have shown that alongside this cultural dissonance, a further factor relates to the values associated with neo-liberal education policy architecture. Despite the ideas of ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES, 2003a) around the respect for diversity in schools, as well as ideas about social equality through schooling, the neo-liberal schooling environment has become increasingly unable to secure adequate educational equality for these children. As such, the social-justice/equality of opportunity agenda lacks any real substance, as ideas about inclusivity and respect for diversity have become mere rhetoric as the market increasingly produces a schooling landscape that benefits children from particular social locations. I have shown how once we start thinking about the spatial fabrics which govern the delivery and experience of education, it becomes possible to get to grips with a greater variety of aspects of what excludes some people or includes others. It is challenging to imagine how schooling can be deployed as a tool for equality and social justice for Gypsy/Traveller children when the historical formation of an education system has also been about the perpetuation of progress, modernity and the establishment of a Sedentarised nation state and associated social arrangements.

I have brought together in this thesis that which is otherwise missing from the literature. This is a viable understanding of this phenomenon from three perspectives: from practitioners inside schools, from practitioners outside schools and from Gypsy/Traveller parents and young people themselves. By involving individuals from these communities, this thesis provides their voice, which is often limited in other research. Furthermore, at the same time, while
educational enquiry has begun to embrace analytics of space and place, this has
not been applied consistently or when considering the experiences of
Gypsy/Traveller children in schools. Drawing on Foucault’s (1980) influential
critique of truth phenomena, I illustrate in my work how Sedentarism ‘spatially’
organises the school environment in a certain way that embeds particular
‘truths’ of what schooling is about. These truths are played out at the micro
level of the school via social relations, which in turn legitimates and normalises
particular forms of agency. In other words, Sedentarism produces certain
spatial conditions that support and embed the organisation of particular ways
of ‘doing’ schooling that may not sit comfortably with Gypsy/Traveller
communities. I have shown that with a growing focus on performativity
(Jeffreys, 2002; Wrigley, 2003; Apple, 2005a, 2005b; Ball, 2008, 2013), this
phenomenon has been exacerbated as ideas of creative teaching and a topic-led
curriculum have often become eroded by a test-based system.

That said, my findings do indicate that some real improvements have been
made in terms of the participation and success of Gypsy/Traveller children
within particular mainstream schools. Such schools are able to adapt the
cultural practices of normative schooling to support the inclusion of
Gypsy/Traveller children. This is something I explore later in this conclusion, in
my policy recommendations.

Alongside cultural dissonance and a lack of equal opportunities, a further
finding of my work highlights how community encouragement to adopt strict
gender roles at a young age is also another key factor. Some Gypsy/Traveller
parents restrict access to schooling beyond primary education as a result of this early adoption of clear feminine and masculine identities. This is particularly acute for boys, who are expected to leave school at the end of their primary schooling at the age of 11 in order to go out to work with their fathers, brothers and uncles. Even if boys have no problems in attending school, pressure to adopt their masculine identity as a ‘breadwinner’ at this age can be very powerful (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003). On the other hand, it was found that some girls were doing well at school and staying on longer and also attending other educational settings in order to gain employment. This was initially due to the need to learn to read and write, as it is the women in these communities that play a central role in dealing with the institutional spaces of contemporary mainstream society. As a result, though, I illustrate how schools can actually provide girls with an aspirational place in which to challenge their expected gender role of looking after the ‘homeplace’ and becoming a mother. Therefore, with limited literature relating to the relationship between gender and Gypsy/Traveller schooling, my work opens up new paths of further enquiry.

In this concluding chapter I now return to the main aims of this project in order to provide an examination and discussion of the intentions of the thesis. After this, I consider the implications of my work for policy and go on to suggest future research in relation to the schooling of Gypsy/Traveller children. After this, I provide my concluding thoughts.
Aims of the Thesis

Research Aim 1: Conflict of Cultures

This project set out to evaluate the extent to which a mismatch and conflict between the culture of school and the culture of Gypsy/Travellers’ everyday lives has contributed to their underachievement and lack of involvement in schooling. In order to understand the development of this cultural dissonance, chapter two provides an historical overview of the transformation of schooling since the introduction of free mass schooling at the beginning of the twentieth century through to the inclusive aims of the social democratic settlement during and after the Second World War. Schooling initially became established as a mechanism to ensure a degree of political, social and economic stability and then additionally as a tool through which the liberal democratic state might pursue the goal of a fairer society based on equality. The realisation of these goals was synonymous with modernity and the development of the nation state, where alongside the prosperity of the country, a respect for individual rights and freedoms eventually became important issues.

These attempts to ‘improve’ society and the citizen and secure social equality have also presumed a settled population, or Sedentarism. This development of Sedentarism as the ‘ideal’ social arrangement has often resulted in the marginalisation of those communities that follow a Nomadic tradition. The literature review in the chapters on educational policy indicates that Sedentarism is the norm and has become totally entrenched in social
institutions and practices. As such, Sedentarism is a ‘process’ which shapes the way much of life is organised, including the schooling expectations of our children. All children in England are expected to pass a number of tests at certain stages of their primary and secondary schooling in order to remain ‘on track’ to achieve a particular educational trajectory that will ultimately prepare them for access to university, i.e. five or more A–C grades at GCSE and three or more good ‘A’ level grades. Targets in place for schools have become focused around these outcomes and synonymous with the ‘quality’ of a school. Consequently, due to their disrupted schooling pattern, current educational policy continues to marginalise and exclude Nomadic children, both implicitly and explicitly.

Irrespective of being settled on a particular site or location, it is the internalisation of Nomadism that constructs the way these people understand and operate within the world they live in. For such communities, family commitments, attendance at cultural events and economic movement has become part of their everyday experiences and key to the perpetuation and organisation of their lifeways. These experiences become embedded within their cultural identity and as such are associated with their epistemological appreciation of how they live their lives.

The issues that many children from these communities face relate to the cultural dissonance whereby the ‘settled’ community perceives Gypsy/Traveller communities as a problem because of their Nomadic mind-set. This ‘problematic’ view of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles is evidenced by the raft of
government legislation during the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly in terms of town and country planning, the modernisation of the road transport system in the 1970s and the subsequent loss of ‘stopping places’, and the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The collective effect of government policy in various areas has been pressure towards assimilation, achieved through increased forms of surveillance of many Gypsy/Traveller communities, including through educational initiatives. Recent legislation has done little to contest the continued marginalisation of Nomadic groups or challenge much of the negative perceptions they continue to experience.

When engaging with the institutional spaces of the Sedentarised world, such communities experience this tension with what is expected of them when they engage with such spaces. By their internalisation of a ‘Nomadic’ mind-set based on the importance of movement, these communities are often further ‘othered’ by the Sedentarised majority and perceived as ‘vulnerable’. There is a certain contestation between social acceptance of certain kinds of movement, and lifestyles based on continuous mobile engagement with the world. Whereas movement from the sedentarised community is voluntary and seen as acceptable, the mobility of the Gypsy/Traveller is viewed as unacceptable. This is based on sedentarist ideas of economic movement in which to engage with the global market whilst still fixed to a particular place. As a result nomadic movement is seen as a threat to ‘respectable mobility’ and the need to be governable. Therefore, nomadism as a cultural practice becomes associated with not belonging and conflating ‘placelessness’ with deviant behaviour.
Schools are often the very first institutional spaces children from these communities encounter, and many find it difficult to adjust to the expectations of school life. Consequently, these children often experience negative attitudes from other children and even teachers. Many Gypsy/Traveller parents will, as a result, condone the non-attendance of their children on the grounds of bullying (DfES, 2003c), but they also fear their children’s cultural identity will be eroded by regular attendance at school (Cemlyn et al. 2009). School then becomes seen in terms of an ‘alien’ spatial order.

However, some parents from these communities are increasingly happy for their children to attend primary schools in order to learn to read and write, as they are aware of the importance of literacy in contemporary society. When schools are realistic about accommodating these children and accepting of the cultural dissonance associated with Nomadism and Sedentarism, children from these communities can begin to do well. They are able to build positive relationships with others in these places and establish a sense of belonging, which is important if children are to develop positive experiences.

If Nomadism was structurally accepted, children could move freely from school to school without any problems, and classrooms would be based on the child’s/student’s development and not necessarily on age. Furthermore, education would not be just about schooling but would encompass a wider learning environment based on the idea that learning can take place more readily outside schools. I discuss these ideas further below when referring to possible recommendations for policy.
However, the tensions between a Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle and mind-set and mainstream schooling are clearly evident, and continue to marginalise children in many schools. So a presumption of Sedentarism inevitably discriminates against Nomadic communities, despite the rhetoric of inclusion, human rights, and the promotion and respect of diversity within schools. These tensions are exacerbated by educational policies that focus on standards and performativity, and schooling based on a trajectory that favours children who adopt a settled code of existence. Therefore, Nomadic forms of existence are not reflected in social policy initiatives or the National Curriculum, which continues to undermine educational equality for these children.

Research Aim 2: Performativity and Policy

A second intent of my work was to understand how neo-liberal educational policy and practice has become reproduced by the mechanisms of the market, and particularly around a neo-liberal focus on what Ball (1990, 2007, 2008, 2013) has theorised as performativity in tests at the expense of educational equality. This trend towards performativity has reorganised schools as places that prioritise self-interest and personal motives above anything else schooling should offer, including equal educational opportunities and social justice. Schooling is about individuals investing in themselves by obtaining education, qualifications and skills so as to enhance their employability. In a market where parents and children are the consumers, many schools have become more interested in their ‘image’ as they become increasingly accountable for the quality of the ‘product’ they provide and more responsive to (some) parents’ interests in delivering good test results.
Consequently, with school budgets being determined by the number of students on roll, schools have had to rethink their ‘image’ in the marketplace in order to attract engaged parents and more-able children in order to ensure a position at the top of the league tables and therefore the market. This focus on the marketability of schools has led not only to a plethora of information about the efficiency of schools but also to a focus on the performance profiles of schools, which many Sedentarised parents see as an extremely important tool when considering which school to send their children to. Part of the mechanisms in place for highlighting performance data has been the publication of ‘league tables’ which show children’s performance in the government SATs and GCSE exams, which many parents, institutions and the government have embraced wholeheartedly as the benchmarks of educational quality, and thus as the purpose of schooling and educational ‘achievement’.

Therefore, despite the moves towards inclusive education particularly during the Third Way years of the New Labour Government (1997–2010), policy decisions have become more in tune with and shaped by a performativity culture, with league tables published as a mechanism for accountability. Consequently, since the implementation of the 1988 ERA in particular, the current education system has continued to be organised away from the idea of education as a social good and public right. Consumerism has favoured the rights and interests of some consumers at the expense of others, with many more other agencies and actors getting involved in schooling and determining their own admissions criteria. This has become even more evident with the further development of academy and free schools under the Coalition
Government as well as the current Conservative Government. Certain children are thus spatially marginalised as they are either not enrolled in the first place in these schools or later excluded for ‘inappropriate’ behaviour. I have argued, therefore, that it is likely that the increasing focus on performativity within the schooling process has become a further major contributory factor in the exclusion of Gypsy/Traveller children. They become increasingly perceived as poor attenders, low achievers and thus a threat to the league-table position of a given school.

This thesis then argues that beyond a focus on test results and league tables, very little thought is given to the purpose of education and schooling as a process that could provide all children with equal opportunities. With schooling now driven by outcomes of test results, market competition, individualism and parental choice, education has become simply a ‘product’ like anything else in contemporary capitalist society. The problem with this is the neo-liberal myth that democracy will naturally follow as market forces, choice and meritocracy will ensure systems are fair and equal for every single individual, irrespective of their social location. However, as noted in a number of sociological works, a child’s social and cultural location remains a complex factor in school performance, particularly in relation to their socio-economic status, gender and ‘race’.

I contended that ideas of intersectionality have become an increasingly dominant model in considering how differences associated with socio-economic status, gender and ‘race’ interrelate to affect the positioning of individuals in
modern society. I argued that such positioning is fluid and related to reciprocal associated power relations that control the spatial organisation of schools and social relations. However, while underachievement is dependent on a complex mix of social and cultural locations based on difference, which are often fluid and multi-layered, it operates alongside existing structural explanations to marginalise children on the basis of their ‘race’, social class and/or gender. Such an understanding of underachievement, I have suggested, allows for a more nuanced understanding of the differences in group attainment based on the power of social relations. Thus, the importance of actors comes into play as they produce and (re)construct what goes on in the institutions they operate and relate to.

I questioned that market-driven education policies have completely sealed the fate of every single school and affected the identities of every single teacher and every single learner. Rather, it is teachers on the ‘ground’, implementing and interpreting policies around teaching and learning, that possess the potential to do things differently, in line with the traditions of critical education. I believe that social relations in schools are key for this potential, as individuals possess the agency to respond differently and create a different socio-spatial culture. Although I respect that doing things differently is not easy within the current performativity culture that teachers and pupils find themselves enmeshed in, it is not impossible for every school. For example, in chapter seven I have shown how teachers can challenge the interpretation of certain policies in order that their school becomes a place of belonging for all children; a place where they are spatially included and feel they can achieve and do well.
A third area of inquiry was to examine how successful neo-liberal policy and practice has been in accommodating and including Gypsy/Traveller children in schools and thus contributing to a positive schooling experience for these children. Due to a focus on performativity, attendance, targets and test results, many schools are simply organised around the teaching and learning of particular bodies of knowledge and the testing of that knowledge. The result is the need for children to attend a school regularly and for their progress to be constantly tracked to ensure they remain on target to achieve well in tests. Educational practice in many schools is increasingly organised around achieving good test results and the measuring and tracking of children’s performance in certain subjects (English and Mathematics in particular). Parents who can support the learning experience via books, computers, private tuition and so on often enhance their children’s performance. This raises social-justice issues concerning the conception and delivery of education, since the way many schools are organised to facilitate good test results could disadvantage certain children, especially if they struggle to adapt to a school environment and fail to reach expected yearly targets.

Hence, the schooling process may be understood as marginalising children from Gypsy/Traveller communities. With their lived experiences being structurally different from the settled majority, with less priority placed on schooling by their communities, the schooling process does not sit comfortably with the reality of their everyday existence or belief systems. Thus, the cultural
and political aims of schooling perpetuate a certain hegemonic discourse, in line with a particular mind-set that is often exclusionary in nature.

However, I have shown that when schools adopt a more flexible and creative approach to delivering the National Curriculum and associated programmes of study, children become more engaged and motivated to learn. This might include, for example, a return to ‘theme’-based teaching where everything is taught around a given topic and the curriculum is delivered via real-life situations and projects that connect and make sense to the lives of all children. It is also clear that when Gypsy/Traveller children are accepted and accommodated at the micro level of a school, they do become part of the ideological make-up or geographical consciousness of all who occupy and relate in the life of that school (representational space). This facilitates the development of positive relationships between schools and these communities, and ultimately of practices that seek to sustain their accommodation in the schooling system.

By using a spatial lens to understand what is going on here, I have shown how individuals can go some way in adapting their behaviour in schools to create this more conducive environment for children and young people. As Lefebvre suggests, space is not fixed, and it is via the lived space that individuals can change the ways things are done. Soja (1996) also sees spaces as fluid and suggests that individuals operating in these places and spaces have the potential to unravel the spatial veils and transform themselves and the spaces they operate in.
In line with this thinking, the lived space of schools provides individuals, including teachers, staff and learners, with the potential to operate differently. Although often very challenging, by creating their own unique educational ethos, the suggestion is that schools may be able to establish the socio-spatial conditions necessary to enable Gypsy/Traveller children to develop a sense of belonging to the schools that they attend, making them somewhere they feel included and safe.

So thinking about the schooling process in spatial terms, a key aim discussed below, provides us with an additional analytical tool with which to consider people’s schooling experiences, starting from the premise that the issues that many children face in the schooling system relate to the ‘spatial’ organisation of the school environment. However, I do recognise that while individuals in schools may be in a position to improve the schooling situation of many Gypsy/Traveller children, there is a still a long way to go before every single school feels empowered to achieve this. These communities are still very much ‘othered’ by much of wider society, and thus it will take a long time before they are afforded structural equality more widely beyond the school gates.

*Research Aim 4: Socio-spatial Structures of Schooling*

Theoretically, then, the key intention of the thesis was to explore how the socio-spatial structures, practices and organisation of the wider education process operate in producing and maintaining educational (in)equalities for children from Gypsy/Traveller communities. Based particularly on the work of Lefebvre
(1991) and Soja (1989, 1996), I argue that, like any social space, the school environment is a socially produced space. I have illustrated how a conceptual tool, the spatial lens, is important in illuminating how spatial relationships are realised and how they come together through relations of power to make place and identities. That is to say, the school possesses its own unique signs, symbols and images, or ‘spatial codes’. These spatial codes influence and (re)produce particular behaviours and power relations often unique to the schooling environment yet representative of wider socio-spatial ideologies.

By examining the educational marginalisation of Gypsy/Traveller children from a spatial perspective, I have highlighted how these children often find schooling challenging in terms of achieving the best from their schooling experience. By drawing on Lefebvre’s spatial trilogy, in particular, I demonstrate how perceived (spatial practice), conceived (representations of space), and lived (representational space) spaces work together to expose the power relations implicit in institutional spaces, as well as spaces more widely. Such power relations in schools are manifested in the form of a focus on performativity mechanisms that then organises much of school life in terms of producing certain behaviours and identities that facilitate certain activities.

Everything that goes on in a school, then, is produced by a variety of interconnected processes, including government policy, discourse and ideology, as well as through the agency of everyone who engages in and is connected with the life of the school. With schooling being mainly focused on test results, the representation of school space sets up a particular ideological
understanding. This emphasises particular spatial practices which facilitate the tracking and measurement of children against certain criteria in order that they remain on ‘track’ to achieve well in tests. Drawing on these ideas, we can see how social institutions, such as schools, embody and perpetuate a certain belief system, or ‘hegemonic discourse’ that is literally imprinted in the environment via the structures of educational policy and ideology as well as through individual agency. What goes on in schools is created at the political, economic and ideological level and then played out at the local level by individual schools and their staff. Such discourses (re)produce and (re)enforce certain types of activities, attitudes and behaviours, which ultimately exclude other ways of thinking about or doing things in school. Educational practice is thus socio-spatially produced and normalised. These practices include what types of knowledge are important and therefore what should be taught in schools, as well as the construction of certain ‘pupil’ and ‘teacher’ identities. Those who do not ‘fit’ this identity may be marginalised and thus spatially excluded.

Everyone involved in the teaching, learning and management of schools – including parents, governors, teachers, the local education authorities, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), central government and private providers – plays their part in developing and constructing these expected socio-spatial behaviours, values and norms of school life. Through their daily interactions and relations with other children and staff, teachers are instrumental in forging and reinforcing these norms, values and attitudes about how children should behave and how they should conduct themselves inside the school ‘place’. Via their interactions with other children, teachers and other adults, all children and
young people learn how to operate, act and interrelate appropriately within the lived spaces of school. Ultimately, their interactions provide them with meanings, which set up a normalised moral framework of beliefs and practices, which are then constituted and maintained by everyone associated with the schooling system. Consequently, the role of the ‘good’ teacher has become about tracking children’s yearly progress in tests, and the role of the ‘good’ learner is to stay on track and pass numerous tests. Schools have thus become ‘places’ where children are regularly tested, held accountable and often disadvantaged by a narrow standardised education.

Children who appear different from the ‘norm’, who do not conform or critically engage or who rebel and fail to achieve expected grades will not fit in and are thus less likely to develop a sense of attachment or belonging to the school. The school for these children will simply remain a space they engage with but not a place they experience positively or feel a sense of connection to. By understanding the school as a transformative place, and not one fixed on the truths established by a culture of performativity, I argued that people within schools can reconstitute the space of school to create a different set of truths that accept different identities in order to produce a place where all children and adults feel connected. This is a place that seeks to motivate and develop children through their particular strengths and does not simply judge them on their performance and achievement in tests.

In this way, the lived space of schools gives all individuals the opportunity to operate differently. By creating their own unique socio-spatial ethos, schools
may be able to establish the socio-spatial conditions necessary to enable Gypsy/Traveller children to develop a sense of belonging to the schools that they attend; to make them places where they feel included and safe. So, starting from the premise that the issues that many children face in the schooling system relate to the ‘spatial’ organisation of the school environment, I have used a spatial lens as an additional analytical tool with which to consider people’s schooling experiences.

*Additional Aim: Space, Place and Gender*

While carrying out this project, and in particular while conducting the empirical research, it became clear that the experiences of children from these communities were affected not only by their cultural identity but also by their gender identity. This gender dynamic came to light quite early during the data-collection stage of my work. While peaking to one of the Traveller Education Support Teachers (TESS) I was told that these communities were traditionally patriarchal in nature. On visiting a site to speak to one of the parents and in the subsequent discussion with young people from the community, it was confirmed that gender too was having an impact on the lack of schooling experienced by children from these communities. As this soon became a further factor that affected school attendance, I have discussed the effect of gender in a separate chapter (chapter eight). As such, my thesis also provides a distinctive insight into the extent to which the schooling and education of Gypsy/Traveller girls can potentially provide them with a place in which to challenge the gender
regimes of their communities in order to eventually improve the condition of their lives.

Boys and girls from these communities are expected to leave school between the ages of 11 and 14 and adopt specific gender roles that see girls involved in domestic responsibilities whilst boys go out to work with the fathers and the other men in the community. Such thinking is firmly embedded within the lifeways of the Gypsy/Traveller environment, where young boys and girls are socialised into their roles from a young age. They observe the spatial organisation of their communities in which women stay on the site whilst men leave it to go to work. They observe their mothers, aunties, grandmothers and sisters carrying out domestic chores and providing the meals for their fathers, uncles, grandfathers and brothers on their return from work. They associate the ‘homeplace’, or private sphere, with their mothers, and the outside, or public sphere, with their fathers.

However, with more and more children and young people engaging in school, these children are seeing a different world, the world of the mainstream. They are mixing with non-Gypsy others and relating with them throughout the course of the day. With women expected to get more and more involved in the dealings of mainstream institutions, it has become even more important for girls to be able to read and write, in order that they can engage with all the information required when living in a modern society. Consequently, girls are staying on longer in schools, and the more they engage with others in schools, the more they are questioning what they need to become independent. So by
engaging within the school they are being socialised to think differently about their lifestyle and what they want out of life. For some young girls, schooling is providing a space to explore opportunities outside the gender regimes of their communities. They are beginning to realise that they need education to get qualifications, to get a good job and become independent. The school then becomes a space away from the confines of their communities that affords them the possibility of a different gender identity.

Unsurprisingly, staying on at school is seen as a threat to these community norms and values associated with the expected identities of women and men. Fathers and other men do not want their daughters to get too attached to the mainstream world of the school; they want them to remain within their communities, looking after them and the ‘homeplace’. However, because men are not around on the site all day, the ‘homeplace’ is occupied solely by women (and young boys and girls); thus, by day, the site becomes the domain of women – a place in which possibly to question their roles. No longer do these women want their daughters to follow in their footsteps; they want them to do something else with their lives, not simply cooking and cleaning. However, their sons are still expected to get to work with their fathers and, even if they attend school in the first place, they will leave at age 11 to do so. Therefore school is seen as a place that may be acceptable for girls, while boys must leave as soon as possible to learn a trade in order to one day support their own families. It is therefore very difficult for young boys to break away from their masculine responsibilities. Yet the irony is that their sisters are increasingly engaging longer in schools and preparing themselves for work in order to be
economically independent, which could result in a challenge to the domestic gender regimes of their communities.

So with the expectation for girls to be able to read and write in order to deal with mainstream society, they are staying longer in the schooling process. Whilst immersing themselves within the spaces of school they are relating with others outside their communities and exposed to different kinds of identity narratives around women with jobs and cars. Such immersion in this different space away from the confines of their communities means that these girls are free to express themselves differently and perhaps develop an alternative identity in order to change their lives in line with these ‘new’ narratives. However, there is no such space for their brothers to explore a different identity, as they will often leave school at 11 and work, thus remaining with other Gypsy/Traveller men, which thus retains the patriarchal nature of their masculine identity.

**Implications of the Research: Recommendations**

a. One of the main findings in relation to educational good practice, as demonstrated in the case-study schools, relates to the potential for schools to do things differently. There is potential for schools to move away from the priorities of teaching certain bodies of knowledge and teaching to test, to a more progressive understanding of teaching and learning in order to accommodate children from Gypsy/Traveller communities. At the moment, the emphasis on SATs, teaching to test and a focus on summative assessments puts
pressures on teachers to focus solely on the curriculum and the scores in tests as the most important aspects of schooling.

The focus for the case-study schools was the adoption of creative learning styles as key to their practice. These schools used the National Curriculum but adopted a topic-based approach that encompassed a range of subjects, topics, knowledge and skills based on the interests of the children. Such provision allowed children to practise and build on their knowledge in engaging and motivating ways. Consequently, very much in line with the Cambridge Primary Review (2010), my first recommendation would be a commitment to creativity and topic-based learning.

b. Schools should be encouraged to focus more on ‘how children learn’ and be supported to become more involved with what children are learning from one day to the next. A focus on formative assessment in this way can focus teachers’ attention onto how they can support learning and understanding on an individual basis. This may require further resources in the form of other practitioners supporting teachers in classrooms. However, it may simply be a matter of professional development in terms of classroom organisation, the organisation of learning time, and the support to spend time on formative assessment. My second recommendation, therefore, is to support a commitment to Assessment for Learning, as discussed in chapter three, with every teacher trained to use this tool effectively.
c. I have discussed how it is a commitment to equality of opportunity at the conceived level that seems to act as the vehicle for change that can result in Gypsy/Traveller children being accepted and supported in schools. It is clear that adopting the particular ‘representational space’ of equality in schools and the subsequent social practices to support this relates to how the social interactions and attitudes of the people working in schools produce such an environment. I found that Gypsy/Traveller children at both the case-study schools were spatially included and assimilated well within the school structure and were supported to learn effectively alongside their peers. Being spatially included in schools and supported in this way would enable these children to develop positive relations on a day-to-day basis with others in the school. Thereby, such children could become attached – the school space becomes a place for them where they feel comfortable. My third recommendation would be to support all staff in a school, from teachers, teaching assistants to auxiliary staff, to be very clear, and committed, about the inclusive practices they adopt. This would ensure that inclusive practice was not simply discussed rhetorically in the staff room but actually put into action.

d. In working with these communities and schools, the TESS role is also unique in being the ‘cultural mediator’ of space. By interacting with these communities and the schools their children attend, they are aware of both the needs of the communities and how schools operate. Individual teachers are also often more aware of the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller children when they have such children in their classrooms. In getting to know these children they can support them, especially when staff are aware that a ‘Traveller’ site is part of their
locality. For example, in chapter seven I demonstrated that being able to see their ‘homeplace’ from the school allowed these children to attach themselves more to the school and perhaps even develop a sense of belonging.

So perhaps alongside positive teacher interactions, the spatial proximity of their ‘homeplace’ enabled children to form more of a bond with the school. With so many children from the site attending the school and developing a sense of belonging, teachers could form closer bonds and begin to understand more readily the support these children needed. For these children, then, the school becomes a place they are familiar with. My fourth recommendation would thus be that schools with known Gypsy/Traveller sites in their locale could establish a stronger link with the TESS and these ‘local’ communities. A named person in the school could act as the link person and even visit Gypsy/Traveller sites, building relationships with parents. This was found in one of my case-study schools where that person was also a governor of the school.

e. Ultimately, the findings of this thesis hint towards a more far-reaching re-casting of the provision of schooling and the broader educational environment. If we begin thinking about schools as spaces of inclusion where the emphasis is on child-centred learning and a focus on how children learn, children may become more engaged in their own learning and discover what they are good at and what interests them. Classroom learning would become more ‘fluid’ and flexible, moving away from simply learning prescribed knowledge and teaching to test. A final recommendation, then, would be to cease administration of the SATs and the publication of league tables. I consider that
such tests have no educational value and even reduce and restrict other learning opportunities.

**Future Work**

I have already been able to disseminate some the ideas developed within this thesis via journal publications (Cudworth, 2008, 2009, 2015; Cudworth & Cudworth, 2010) and would be keen to continue to do so. For example, a further article that I would want to develop shortly after submission of this thesis would be based on chapter eight, looking at the gender dynamic of Gypsy/Traveller schooling. I am also keen to publish a book of this work that would provide insight into how a spatial analytic could be used to provide a further lens for educational enquiry in relation to the teaching of ‘outsiders’.

I would also like to re-engage with the rich narrative data I collected as part of this research, without the time constraints of needing to complete and submit this thesis. Future work could also involve the collection of further data from a wider range of interviewees from Gypsy/Traveller communities. This would add further validity to future publications. Furthermore, I did not involve individuals from the fairground or bargee communities in this particular project, and this would provide more representation from communities that move around and how they deal with the schooling of their children. Interviewing Gypsy/Traveller individuals that have made schooling a ‘success’ would also provide further knowledge of how their experiences enabled them to achieve this.
Although I have been able to triangulate my data and was fortunate to be able to talk to a father as part of one of the focus groups, I do feel that the involvement of fathers and boys, in particular, would add more to the validity of this work. It is well known that it is more difficult to talk to such men about their own experiences than it is to talk with women. Spending a sustained period of time over several months with the TESS who have access to sites would probably enable me to establish the trust of these men, who I could then go on to interview.

Furthermore, a more sustained participant observation in schools, over a term or even a year, would be a further opportunity to immerse myself more fully in these schools. In a schooling landscape that has changed significantly over the past five years or so, I would be keen to make comparisons of different schools. For example, with free schools and academies becoming more and more widespread, it would be interesting to see in what ways such settings are different from and similar to mainstream settings in terms of accommodating a range of children from differing backgrounds. With free schools in particular setting their own curriculum and ethos, are they able to do better than the mainstream in terms of equality of opportunity, or are they tied to the pressures of SATs results and league tables in the same way?

Finally, I would also be interested to revisit the case-study schools and some of the interviewees to do a follow-up study in order to find out if anything has changed for these schools and the individuals associated with them. It would be
interesting to see whether the same staff have remained in these schools, and if not, whether the dynamics of the ‘place’ have altered as a result of the social relations of new staff. Whilst doing this research I did have an opportunity to revisit one of the parents I interviewed and I found that she had now removed her son from school due to bullying. When first interviewed, she reported her son was doing well and enjoying school, and she was happy for him to continue to attend. So by revisiting more of the interviewees, it would be interesting to find out if and how things have changed for them, and this in turn would demonstrate the fluid and fragile nature of the situation as well as people’s realities of this phenomenon.

I would be particularly keen to revisit the four young women I spoke with as a focus group in the alternative education centre in order to find out if they had achieved their ambitions. As discussed in chapter eight, they were interested in gaining some qualifications in order to secure employment. They had returned to ‘school’ in order to realise this opportunity, stating that they ‘did not want to end up like their mothers’ staying in the caravan all day. When I interviewed these individuals, the alternative educational setting provided a different ‘place’ for them away from their ‘homeplace’. Having restricted access to other places outside their communities was commonplace and was something that constrained them. As such, being allowed to engage with this institutional setting allowed them to realise their ambitions of having their own money whilst immersed with others, including non-Gypsy/Travellers in this setting. I would be interested to find out if these four young people had realised their ambitions and how this was working out for them.
Concluding Thoughts

Since starting this project in 2009, we have witnessed two changes of government, from a New Labour Government to a Coalition Government (Conservative and Liberal Democrat) in 2010, and a Conservative Government in 2015. Educational policy has remained intricately related to the endeavours of the neo-liberal project with the ideals of consumerism, individualism, and performance becoming even more firmly entrenched within current educational policy. According to McGimpsey (2016:1), other key values, namely ‘austerity, social investment and localism’, have now become the key drivers of this policy architecture. As a result, schools have diversified with new actors and agencies involved in education via the introduction of city academies and specialist schools (under New Labour); the expansion of academies, the launch of Free Schools and the scrapping of education quangos (under the Coalition); and the continuation of Academies and more Free Schools (under the current Conservative Government). All of which has continued to fervently undermine much of the discourse associated with schooling and structural inequalities (Chitty, 2014) and placed underachievement firmly within the ‘hands’ of the school and the individual student.

It is important to note that my work relates mainly to the policy architecture of New Labour, whose mantra on coming to office was ‘Education, education, education’. This was an interesting time for schooling as New Labour attempted to reclaim education as the vehicle for social justice and equal opportunity. However, as discussed in chapter three, the success of this project
is questionable, as New Labour continued to pursue neo-liberal market-driven ideology as a framework for policy development in the public services and indeed began the diversification of schooling that has subsequently been continued and development by the Coalition and Conservative Governments. This has led to the continued erosion of equal educational opportunities for all children. Indeed, the standards agenda is now little modified by any moves towards, or even rhetoric around, a social-justice agenda.

Although some real improvements have been made in terms of the participation and successes of Gypsy/Traveller children within particular mainstream classrooms (see Cudworth, 2015), it is hard to think that these improvements will continue. This despite evidence of increased school attendance coupled with some schools and individual teachers becoming aware of some of the issues facing these communities and adopting a more flexible and creative approach to delivering the National Curriculum as a result. It is clear that low attendance, the ‘othering’ of their culture and lack of recognition in the National Curriculum, ‘white’ racism and the pressures of performance data placed on schools are all issues that continue to contribute to the overall educational underachievement of Gypsy/Traveller children.

I acknowledge that this thesis cannot be presented as a representative picture of all Gypsy/Traveller communities, but I consider it is illustrative of some of the challenges these communities face. In working in case-study sites where both English Roma and Irish Traveller children are taught, and by engaging with individuals from English Roma communities, and those who worked with Irish
Travellers and Roma children in schools, I do provide some representation across these groups. The ideals of Nomadism as a concept embodied by all these communities are used to represent the communities collectively. My work highlights the interplay of Nomadism and policy and practice of schooling by considering the significance of social relations within the institutional ‘space’ of schools. Unravelling what is going on at the micro level of the classroom emphasises how schools and classroom environments represent a complex and multi-layered world of contested and negotiated forms of structural power relations.

My work has demonstrated how schools spatially embody hierarchical power relations that perpetuate systemic ways of thinking and doing. The result of this is the establishment of a paradoxical situation where, on the one hand, schools are operating within the context of a social-justice agenda, but on the other, the demands placed upon them by a ‘performance’-driven system means that many find it increasingly difficult to deliver on this. I argue that if we can understand what is going on in the neo-liberal classroom then we can perhaps begin to unravel how particular identities and social relations interrelate to sustain structural inequalities. As such, this research can begin to raise awareness about the lifeways of Nomadic communities and how their needs can be meet within the schooling process. These findings can be studied alongside previous research in this area in order to advise on appropriate accommodation of children in schools. This research is particularly useful for primary-aged children, this being the main focus of this thesis.
So, on a final note, I suggest that in order to improve provision for all children in the current English ‘multicultural’ educational system, a way forward would entail the removal of much of the emphasis on performance data, but particularly the current league tables and testing regimes. This would ensure a less rigid curriculum and planning regime and a more realistic and flexible attendance policy, and would enable schools to be consistent in the delivery of policies that respect an equality agenda where ‘Every Child does Matter’. By analysing the situation using a spatial analytic, my work can stimulate further ideas around regulation, equity, power and space in order to achieve these aims, or at least to provide a platform on which to debate such ideas.


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### Semi-Structured Interviews

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<tr>
<th>Professional: Outreach Support Worker – Leicestershire – Sep 2012</th>
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<td>Parent 2 – South of England – Nov 2010</td>
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<td>Young women from community – 17 years old:</td>
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### Focus Groups

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<td>Teachers – July 2012</td>
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<td>Teenage women – June 2013</td>
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<td>Parents and staff – Home Education Programme – South of England – Nov 2010</td>
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### Participant Observations

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<tr>
<td>Case-study school Oak Tree – South England – June 2010 (2 x days)</td>
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<td>Case-study school Green Acre – Leicestershire – June 2013 (5 x days)</td>
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Please note: specific details are not given in order to protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
Appendix 2

**Theming and Coding the Data**

**Initial Themes**

- Its all about levels and targets and getting results
- Ofsted
- Pressures on Schools with GTs on Role
- Need to be in school – Times are a Changing
- Parents – A Sea-Change - engaging in the spaces of school
- Good Practice / Creating Inclusive Spaces (mentally) / Feeling included
- Not wanted in schools
- Stereotypes / Racism / Bullying in Schools
- Primary ok Secondary not – Primary schools more child friendly spaces
- Preconceptions / Space
- Schools / Teachers not engaging with Gypsy Space
- TESS as a barrier
- Cultural Clash between school and home
- Anti- traveller culture lessons
- Parents experiences of school
- Definition of success
- What they want from EDUC
- Cultural - Flak from community if carry on school
- A safe Space
- Negotiating the spaces of school
- Tracking Children – paranoia around safeguarding
- Gender
- Building Trust

**Broad Themes**

- Prejudice towards the community
- Pressure on schools to achieve government targets
- Implementation of education policy
- Cultural norms of school versus community and inclusion