For "getting it": An ethnographic study of Co-operative schools

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Abstract

The marketisation of the educational sector continues to shape educational provision, policy and practice on a worldwide scale (Apple, 2001; Ball, 2008; Giroux, 2004), ostensibly providing 'freedom' through the conflation of consumer 'choice' and 'equality of opportunity' via the *invisible hand* of the market. The assumption that competitive markets will produce better schools and outcomes for their students veils the extent to which a large proportion of the world's population are positioned as marginal actors, unable to 'compete' or 'choose' as equals, as they engage on a significantly uneven playing field (Mills & McGregor, 2014; Reay, 2012). Historical and global (*cf.* Fielding & Moss, 2011; Neill, 1990; Wrigley et al., 2012) examples of democratic alternatives to the traditional institution of 'the school' have provided rich evidence of the radical possibilities for social change in the form of case studies and academic critique. However, the absence of a cohesive platform which allows a multiplicity of voices and diverse contexts to collaborate together and develop a more effective voice, risks positioning these more radical models at the fringe of educational reform. This represents a significant challenge for extending democracy within educational contexts. The co-operative movement represents a possible solution to this, especially in terms of developing its capacity to create a powerful alliance of partners which can reorient the means and ends of public education towards social justice. Indeed, in just six years co-operative schools have come to represent the third largest grouping within the English public education system (Munn, 2013) and in January 2014, there were just over 700 schools in the UK which have committed to adopting co-operative values (self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, openness and honesty, social responsibility and caring for others) within the very heart of their school's ethos (Shaw, forthcoming, 2015).

Although the first English co-operative trust school opened in 2008, sustained analysis of this model has not been undertaken to date. Therefore, this research project attempts to offer the beginnings of a critical conversation that considers the possibilities and challenges that such a model of schooling might have to offer by undertaking a systematic examination of the recent emergence of a 'co-operative' model of public schooling from within the socio-historical context of decades of neo-liberal educational 'reforms'. This piece of research maps out how this model is

variously conceived as a more ethical brand by some, and as a radical project which creates the necessary conditions for democracy and social justice to flourish by others. This research therefore, seeks to understand how tropes of "getting it" both constitute and confuse readings of freedom and equality in education as nascent understandings of co-operative school membership become slippery subjects of co-operative school discourse. By undertaking a critical discursive analysis of claims that co-operative school governance structures allow everyone to 'have a say', this thesis develops a theoretical engagement and provocation of 'voice' in education as it becomes increasingly troubled with and by attempts to answer the question, 'what *is* a co-operative school?' and 'what can it *do*?' In order to answer these questions, data drawn from critical ethnographic fieldwork undertaken at three co-operative trust and academy schools during 2012-13 was considered alongside discourse analysis of an emerging body of 'texts' that sought to inform and promote 'co-operation' in school.

As a result of exploring the accounts of Others who offered a range of narratives that reflect the 'making up' (Hacking, 1990) of the co-operative subject, these *different* versions of events brought into view both the challenges and the possibilities that 'co-operative' schools and their members face; as the values and principles of co-operation are also shaped (but not necessarily determined) by claims made for equality which reflect the messiness of everyday school life. Furthermore, this piece of research highlighted the extent to which students' experiences of "getting it" (co-operative schooling) troubled corresponding rights to be included in decision-making processes as the conditions of co-operative school membership are intersected by multiple axes of difference and inequality, both within educational discourse and in wider society.

This research suggests that despite the promising emergence of a model of schooling that places a collective approach to civil society at its core, historical asymmetries of power and entrenched marketisation of educational provision and practice tended to prevail. This severely limited the extent to which schools were able to create the conditions of possibility for everyone to "get it" and 'have a say'. I thus argue that, in order for co-operative schools to resist the neo-liberal appropriation of freedom

through the lens of the 'rational' individual consumer of education, significant restructuring of governance arrangements is required alongside considerable advocacy work that addresses students' rights to be included and protected as full members of the school community. This thesis closes with a number of observations and recommendations that contribute to reinvigorating the debate about what co-operative schooling can *do*, in addition to highlighting how this research project offers further insight about the conceptual and methodological dilemmas that work to shape the construction of children's agency and subjectivities as students are variously positioned as heterogeneous subjects of co-operative education and educational research.

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Acknowledgements

As I reach the end of an extraordinary journey and reflect back upon the last three years, I am more aware than ever of the insufficiencies of language for articulating the extent of my gratitude to others who have supported me along the way. However, whilst acknowledging the hopelessness of capturing my appreciation in a paragraph or two, I attempt to pursue this impossible task nonetheless.

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helping me access the 'voice/s' that often go unheard and unacknowledged against the acoustics of neoliberal pedagogic spaces and hope that these stories offer a small step towards recognizing the challenges that educational professionals and students continue to face. I hope you think that this thesis offers a fair reflection of some of the obstacles that you and your colleagues continue to negotiate.

Most of all, my family and friends deserve a huge thank you for offering a wealth of support and assistance which has enabled me to hide away for days and weeks and sometimes months on end whilst I locked myself away, trying to make 'sense' of an academic discourse which became a little less alien to me as the years went by. To my parents, Carol and Alan, thank you for your words of encouragement and for bringing me up to believe that anything is possible and to never give up whatever challenges life throws in our midst. I will remain eternally grateful for all of the sacrifices you have made throughout my childhood. To my sisters, Jennie and Rosie, thank you for reminding me not to take life too seriously and for always being there, whatever the emergency. To my partner and soulmate Nick, I can never thank you enough for your continual support and patience and for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. I could not have done this without your support. And to my daughters Sophie and Millie thank you for understanding when Mum couldn't always be there, I am extremely proud of you both and hope that that the sacrifices we have all made will be rewarded one day and that now we can look forward to easier times ahead for the whole family.

A prelude to the 'co-operative' school: navigating social (in)justice in education

Stephen Ball (2012, p. 27) argues that: '[e]ducation policy, education reform are no longer simply a battleground of ideas, they are a financial sector, increasingly infused by and driven by the logic of profit.' Despite this, opportunities for collective resistance to increasing levels of social and economic inequality have appeared to gain momentum on an international level over the past few years. Protests such as 'The Occupy Movement' emphasise the extent to which the '99%' have attempted to reconstruct public space to voice collective dissent against the richest 1% and 'reclaim democracy from capitalism and corporate power' (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). However, the extent to which these protests offer a significant form of countervailing economic-political power to resist the current state of affairs is increasingly placed under question (see for example, Quiggin, 2010; Wolin, 2010). Hopes that the recent global financial crises would weaken the stranglehold of 'the corporation' have slowly vanished, leaving us to question how else one might resist the effects of 'The Strange Non Death of Neo-Liberalism' (Crouch, 2011) in our homes, and in our schools.

As early as 1795, early pioneers of the co-operative movement developed a pragmatic approach to corporate greed by setting up their own 'anti-mill' flour mill in Hull in response to the extortionate prices charged by commercial millers (Bibby, 2014). This co-operative mill operated for over a century. The co-operative movement has expanded considerably since that time, with its collective values and social ideals bringing together over a billion members the world over. This begs the question therefore, could a co-operative response to the marketisation of education offer such a form of countervailing power? With just over 700 co-operative schools positioned within the English public education sector currently taking up this challenge, perhaps there is the possibility to find out.

The central aim of the 'co-operative' model of schooling is premised upon creating the conditions for a more socially just society, which are reflected in the Co-operative Movement's values and principles and multi-stakeholder governance structures. At present, 'co-operative' schools are mandated to operate in an environment that straddles the aims and objectives of decades of neo-liberal public policy 'reform' on the one hand, *and* on the other seeks to develop the conditions and resources that inspire collective well-being. This situates the 'co-operative' school and its members within a number of contradictory discursive frameworks which thus generate a multitude of possible fields of action for interpreting co-operative values and principles within the present educational milieu. Therefore, undertaking an in depth investigation of the recent emergence of a 'co-operative' model of 'schooling', offers the opportunity to examine the 'co-operative' school as a key site within which some of these political struggles are played out. Given the nascent nature of this particular model of public schooling and the consequent dearth of critical research in this area, I argue that it is vital that we begin to document and interrogate, 'what happens?' when these schools are positioned *between* the space of 'socially just' aspirations and 'socially divisive' conditions of interpretation, in order that we might begin to understand what 'co-operative' schooling might mean for transforming the relationship between education and a more socially just society. This research project attempts to map out such a space.

Throughout this piece of research I engage with key debates that query the central purpose of education in society, especially in terms of developing an understanding of how 'co-operative' schools might negotiate a position for themselves within the public sector and create the necessary conditions for democracy and social justice to flourish through pre-figurative practice and democratic governance. I go on to consider how public education might be reimagined as a collaborative exercise which disturbs the material-discursive spaces of the conventional 'school', inspired by the 'rational' individual of modernity and the 'freedom' of the neo-liberal market. As a consequence of this, the thesis develops its structure by means of developing a theoretical engagement and provocation of 'voice' in education as it becomes increasingly troubled with and by attempts to answer the question, 'what *is* a co-operative school?' and 'what can it *do*?' Drawing upon a post structural imagination,

this thesis begins to critically consider what it might mean to (re)view education as a collective practice of freedom within local communities as I place the precarious *presence* of 'co-operative' schools under the spotlight of a deconstructive ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 78). Therefore, I endeavour to adopt a methodological focus which seeks to expose the limits of 'truths' and 'facts' that I might find in the conventions of ethnography and the ruins of qualitative inquiry (MacLure, 2010) as I attempt to ask:

> *What is a co-operative school?*

- How are the ethics, politics and practices of 'co-operative' and 'traditional' state schooling variously defined?

- What is at stake for co-operative school members, communities and wider society when education is organised on the premise of co-operation and mutuality?

> *What does co-operative schooling do?*

- What can co-operative member's stories tell us about their experiences of 'co-operative' schooling?

- How is co-operation 'worked-out' at the site of the school?

In the course of trying to answer these questions, this thesis became entangled with a number of conceptual, ethical and political dilemmas which placed the emancipatory aims of this research project and emerging narratives about the 'co-operative' school in constructive tension throughout, thus creating a dialogic space in which to explore the 'co-operative' school as a possible site of counter discourse to the 'business as usual' of contemporary schooling. These quandaries ultimately produced a catalogue of troubling conclusions which coalesced around Michel Foucault's little question 'what happens?' as I attempt a critical investigation into the thematics of power that circulate, coexist and sometimes collide when a 'co-operative' model of schooling is articulated within the dominant discursive framework.

This thesis begins with a journey that explores the complexities of sustaining an ethical and political engagement with a new and emerging sector of public education

that has developed within a discursive terrain that intersects the present educational policy landscape and the historical and social ambitions of the co-operative movement. In order to gain a sense of the complex socio-political relations between education and social justice, part one examines the social construction of education and its relation to collective well-being and 'schooling', especially in terms of mapping how educational institutions have gradually evolved from sites of religious instruction to spaces of social regulation. Following this short genealogy of the 'co-operative' school, I go on to consider the theoretical and methodological dilemmas which shape the ethical and political trajectory of this qualitative research project as I deliberate the consequences of collecting 'data', analysing 'texts', representing 'voices' and developing a collection of narratives that can offer a critical contribution to 'knowledge' about the 'co-operative school'.

Part two begins with a consideration of the limits of 'voice' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009) and the failures of ethnography (Viswesweran, 1994) as I get caught up in the dilemmas of (re)presenting the 'real'. Here I begin to lay the groundwork for understanding how the 'co-operative' school model emerged from idea to action, as a result of changes to education policy and in conversation with educators who aspired to offer a *different* agenda for education and social transformation via a 'co-operative' approach to school governance and pedagogy. These chapters explore how a number of 'co-operative' legal frameworks of school governance evolved in response to being positioned as one of many other 'providers' within the current educational 'market'. Alongside this, I develop a discourse analytic approach to understanding co-operative school membership as this section considers how various articulations of 'co-operative schooling' mobilise the trope of 'voice' as a signifier of democratic subjectivity. This section goes on to deliberate 'what can be said about the co-operative school by whom, where, and when?' before moving towards developing a deeper understanding of the tensions that surround one school's transformation to 'co-operative' trust. Here, one member of staff charged with the task of making 'co-operation' more visible shares her experiences of developing a 'membership benefits package' as I begin to deliberate whether the co-operative model may just offer a more 'ethical' brand. This section concludes by sketching out the conditions of possibility for 'everyone having a say' as I critically examine the how co-operative

school navigates equality and difference through co-operative governance structures and separate categories of membership.

Part three draws together a series of (dis)located stories and (dis)located 'voices' which come together and fall apart as I explore the notion of 'student voice' in the co-operative school; that is in terms of examining the discursive construction of childhood/s in wider society and wondering what this might mean for educational projects that aspire to engender equality. I go on to consider how my initial attempts to 'capture' student voice and understand its 'place' in the 'co-operative' school led me down a number of blind alleys and cul-de-sacs until finally, I encountered the failure of 'student voice' on the side-lines of a basketball game. Stories about my encounters with students and their 'voice/s' offer an awkward reading of traditional adult-child relations as I become entangled in a number of ethical 'fixes' that test my desire to 'do no harm'. In foregrounding moments where both 'student voice' and 'co-operative' governance frameworks fail to live up to expectations of equality, I begin to notice 'transgressive jolts' (MacLure, 2010) that push the familiar ontological status of 'students' and their 'voice/s' to the limit. Here, I consider how children and young people occupy a variety of (il)legitimate spaces to 'speak' as fundamental questions of equality are raised. Later, my engagements with 'student voice' continue to cause 'trouble' as I seek out the 'truth' in an awkward exchange with a head teacher who exposes how the diametrically opposing demands of competition and co-operation are played out against a range of asymmetrical power relations and regulatory practices. This section closes with a reflection upon various struggles for recognition as I (re)consider how the illusion of harmony crumbled and faltered in the wake of a 'failed' proposal for school reform which placed the equitable basis of 'co-operative' governance structures in abeyance.

Part four brings this ethnographic encounter with the 'co-operative' school to a close with a series of conceptual, methodological and practice based reflections that set out how this piece of research has contributed to the beginnings of a critical conversation about the 'value' of co-operative schooling and the provocative nature of 'voice'. In addition to deliberating the merits of adopting a critically informed ethnographic approach to generating 'data' about the 'co-operative' school, I go on to offer a number of observations and foreground the ethical dilemmas that emerged as a result

of understanding my situatedness as a researcher who was interrelated with Others throughout my sustained immersion within these contexts of education and educational research. Following these considerations, I sketch out what this research project and emerging narratives can tell us about the promise and perils of 'co-operative' schooling and identify some of the challenges that lie ahead if this model of schooling is to offer a significant form of resistance to the domination of neo-liberal articulations of freedom as individual 'choice'. I conclude with several recommendations that could enable co-operative school policy, practice and pedagogy to move towards developing the site of the 'co-operative' school as a radical democratic project rather than offering a more ethical *brand*. Finally, I also highlight the pressing need for further research that builds upon the critical conversations that I have attempted to begin.

Part 1.

Methodological minefields, metaphors and movements

With the intention of developing a more critical understanding of the complex relations between education and social justice, here I explore some of the key debates and tensions that have cultivated the educational landscape which presents itself as the context for this research. In order to become better acquainted with these debates, I have engaged with a wide range of literature that spans across and in-between the traditional disciplinary borders of social policy and practice, education, political theory, history, geography, anthropology, cultural studies, and gender studies. I begin by considering the construction of education as a vehicle for 'development' in a variety of guises (as forms of human, social, political and economic advancement) and pay particular attention to moments where ideas about 'the individual', 'development' and 'education' both come together and fall apart to shape knowledge and 'truths' about educational means and ends. In order to gain a sense of the debates and dynamic power relations which are created when the identity work of co-operation and effects of neo-liberal pedagogy compete, coexist and collide, this research project begins by (re)viewing the historical contingencies and cultural assumptions that have cultivated the current educational landscape that presents itself as the socio-political context of my enquiry. With a keen eye towards a Foucauldian reading of power-knowledge, I aim to wander amidst and beyond the linear trajectory of development suggested by pseudo-Darwinian accounts, and instead seek out the tensions and contradictions that complicate and challenge dominant assumptions about the value of education and its relation to 'the good life'. This direction is pursued in order to reimagine how a 'co-operative' model of education might offer the possibilities for thinking about 'development' otherwise. That is, as a collective, relational and interdependent project that moves towards envisioning a more 'just' society for all.

1.a Co-operative Education Re-born: A journey from 'the good life' to the 'good' school and back again…

I am comforted and inspired by the words of Nikolas Rose as I begin this research encounter with the 'co-operative' school. I join with him in a desire to provoke dissensus and skepticism as an integral constituent of critical thinking in order that one can:

> …stand against the maxims of one's time, against the spirit of one's age, against the current of received wisdom. It is a matter of introducing a kind of awkwardness into the fabric of one's experience, of interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode experience and making them stutter. (Rose, 1999, p. 20)[1]

My position here, as a researcher exploring the potential of a seemingly positive direction for public education in the form of 'co-operative schools', reflects this 'awkwardness' that Rose refers to above, both materially and textually. For here, and throughout, I continually stutter and struggle to navigate and interrupt the discursive terrain of traditional research praxis in order that I may resist the compulsion to produce a 'legitimate' account that: '…resist[s] the forces seeking to reduce us to mere purveyors of information and expertise…[and accept the] responsibility to resist closure and hold open the question of meaning', (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 32) as a fundamental aim that is inscribed between the layers of 'texts' that tangle with this research design. At this juncture, situated within this 'no man's land' that cannot belong to any particular 'field', I am reminded of the countless conversations that I have pursued with friends, family, colleagues and strangers about the purpose of my research over the last few years. I remain haunted by my inability to provide a succinct response. Ordinarily, when asked 'what is your PhD about?' I pause and explain that I am exploring the emergence of co-operative schools in England. And more often than not, I am greeted with puzzled looks and more questions such as, 'what is a co-op school?' and 'is it anything to do with the co-operative supermarket?' or words to that effect. At this point, I often I attempt to explain how this model of schooling is based upon the values and principles of the co-operative movement and

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[1] Here Nikolas Rose draws upon Deleuze's ideas about the power of language to 'destroy the coherence of the self'.

briefly sketch out how a co-operative governance structure might work within the context of the state educational sector. For the sake of brevity, I have simplified and shortened the discussions that typically ensue but nonetheless it is important to reflect here upon how these types of conversations usually progressed in order to convey the 'typical' response to the subjects and object of my research - a sort of litmus test if you like. In any event, the next question that is typically asked goes along the lines of, 'well, does it work?' or 'are they any good?' and it is precisely at this point that I have continued to struggle to give a simple, coherent answer. For, on almost every occasion I am asked, there appears to be an unspoken assumption that I 'should' be able to provide an answer, that is, as a so called 'expert' in the field! The regularity with which this assumption is made has caused me to question more deeply, 'what *is* going on here?' and 'how can I *claim* to have the capacity to *know* or assert whether any school is *good* or *works*? As I interrogate these assumptions further, following Foucault (1989a) I am led to question *how* such statements about what constitutes a *good school* have been constructed and 'what rules come into play?' when questions of this genre are asked.

A Universal Right to What?

From the beginnings of Socratic dialogue, debates regarding the relationship between 'knowledge' and the development of 'reason' have mediated the cultural and ethical status of education and its construction as a principal public institution in society since antiquity. Throughout history, countless scholars have endeavoured to explain how education impacts upon the way people think, live, work and experience their position as individuals and collective members of society. Questions of rights to, and the role of, education as fundamental structure of society continue to be asked with 'education' being cited as advancing varying degrees of individual and collective 'growth'. Contemporary ideas about education remain subject to a plethora of interests, ideals and claims that seek to explain the 'value' of education for individuals and wider society in terms of personal, social, economic and (inter)national 'development'. And so, the meaning of 'education' continues to occupy an important, yet equivocal position in debates that struggle to agree upon and define its central function. The debate goes on…

On the global stage in 1948, the right to a free education: 'directed to *the full development* of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' was enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Emphasis added, United Nations, 2000). And whilst this declaration aspires to present 'education' as a universal entitlement, it remains a 'right' that is observed asymmetrically (if at all) across axes of gender, race, class culture, dis/ability, and heteronormativity. The inclusion of 'education' in the Universal declaration of Human Rights constructs its essence as an undeniable common 'good' to which every person has a right to experience. That is to say, the unquestioned acceptance of 'education' as a human right (thereby invoking neutrality alongside universality) carries with it the danger that we might fail to recognise its complex relation to social (in)justice or neglect to critically interrogate its multiplicity of forms in the rush to provide universal access to *something*, almost impossible to define and impossible to imagine a 'good' life without. Pritchett (2013) encapsulates this dilemma in his critique of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000) where he argues that: '[i]n the push for schooling, education got pushed aside.' (p.47) Following Foucault (1989a), if we suspend the assumption that education is *always* conceived of as a universal 'good' and consider how knowledge about education has been (and is) produced, then it becomes possible to reconsider the wide-ranging effects and contested claims made of education as a set of provisional, heterogeneous discourses that can also exclude and cause injurious effects as they shape-shift over time and across continents (see Francis & Mills, 2012). From John Dewey's argument that education is a 'necessity of life' (1937, p. 5) to beliefs that education merely offers the state a mechanism of social control and moral order, through to readings of education directed by economic achievement and productivity that persist amid contemporary educational policy imperatives, it becomes clear that not only have Dewey's earlier educational aspirations gone awry, but that 'education' has a habit of re-inventing itself. And it is towards this possibility of re-imagining what is meant by education, in terms of mapping the conditions of possibility for co-operation and social justice, that I now wish to turn.

W*hat is it* that education can provide? If every person on this planet has a right to

access 'education', *what is it* that one will experience, be able to do, or think about as a result? Are all forms of 'education' the same? Do they necessarily offer the means to 'progress' (spiritually, economically, socially, intellectually)? And perhaps more importantly, *who* wields the power to shape *how* education is conceptualised and made available? Herein lie some of the enduring conundrums of educational philosophy that continue to inform and shape the contemporary political and ethical orientation of education, not to mention the epistemological bearings of this research project[2].

Prefiguring 'the good life'?

For many, education offers the opportunity to pre-figure a utopian society modelled on varying forms of human flourishing and peaceful existence. The constitution of 'the 'good life' or a 'civil society' remains a highly contested subject that has occupied the minds of Buddhists, Confucianists, Ancient Greek philosophers, contemporary theologians and scholars who all identify a wide range of essential ingredients for pursuing what some might term 'human growth' and a more 'civil' society. Different ideas about morality, justice, freedom and democracy intersect with both individual and social educational aims and ideals; all of which are mobilised as motifs of human and social 'progression' in a variety of educational forms and practices. Throughout the last century, education has been conceived simultaneously as a necessary good or evil, attracting both optimism and bitter criticism of its capacity to evoke individual and social change and control. Moreover, in the 1960's and 70's education was variously defined by some as possessing the radical potential to empower students by gaining access to knowledge as a form of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and as a vehicle of oppression sustaining the interests of élites in maintaining the status-quo (Harber, 2004; Illich, 1971). A decade later, the subjects and objects of education came under further critical scrutiny following the publication of what became a foundational critique of traditional psychology. *Changing the subject* (Henriques et al., 1984) offered a critical reading of power and subjectivity and the projects of traditional psychology which generated critical questions about the effects of

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[2] Space precludes the inclusion of a more comprehensive history of educational philosophy here. However, examining relations of power that circulate amongst a range of educational endeavours remains central to the overall aims of this thesis.

'schooling' and educational/developmental psychology. Thus, groundbreaking work began to emerge which examined power as a productive force and turned attention towards discourses and practices which shaped educational subjectivities. A turn towards a post structural reading of the school identified it as a socio-historical site for identifying 'norms' and 'deficiencies' which enabled 'experts' and the state to intervene and supplement the moral, psychological and intellectual 'development' of pupils, both in the past and looking towards provision for future generations (Billington, 2000; Burman, 2008a; Rose, 1989). More recently in addition to this, education has been considered in terms of providing the means to transform the economic prospects of nation-states through socially divisive forms of neo-liberal pedagogy (Ball, 2012a; Giroux, 2008; Mc Cafferty, 2010). The extent to which education should support or problematize the status quo, distinguishes the crucial point at which educational ethics and politics collide. And it is here, at this collision point that there remains most contention about the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead for re-imagining education for 'the common good' (Fielding & Moss, 2011) and for meeting the social, economic, environmental and technical challenges that lie ahead for communities of the 21st Century (Facer, 2011).

Education and the status quo

John Dewey recognised that traditional models of state education served the interests of a ruling élite, its goal 'to adjust individuals… *to fit into* the present social arrangements and conditions' (in Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 61, my emphasis). Dewey's influential text *Democracy and Education* offered an alternative which reoriented the purpose of education towards the 'common good', rather than the reproduction of the existing social order. The key, according to Dewey, was democracy. For Dewey, democracy did not simply offer a form of government, it offered '…a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience' (1916, p.87) as he argued that it was the relation between education and democracy that offered the greatest potential to develop: 'faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgement and action if the proper conditions are furnished.' (Dewey, 1937, p. 2) Indeed, his philosophies inspired a long history of educational reformers

such as, Paulo Freire, Loris Malaguzzi, and AS Neill who shared Dewey's vision of placing democracy at the heart of educational activity. For Dewey collective approaches to education offered an environment whereby co-construction not reproduction prevailed, and offered a space where individuals could:

> ...learn to understand themselves as democratic individuals by becoming members of a democratic community in which the problems of communal life are resolved through collective deliberation and a shared concern for the common good'. (In Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 63)

Rather than place democracy at the centre of educational practices, Rancière's (1991) understandings of democracy and education place relations of equality at the core, building upon the premise that all human beings are equally intelligent, and that education and the production of knowledge takes place in relationship with others. Rancière demonstrates this via the unorthodox educational practices of Joseph Jacotot in his account of The Ignorant Schoolmaster [*Le Maître ignorant*]. Moreover, as Dahlberg and Moss (2005) explain, for Rancière education based on the transfer of objective knowledge divides the world into two: 'the knowing and the ignorant, the mature and unformed, the capable and the incapable' (p.102). As they point out, this leads to an understanding of 'development' which plots progress as a journey from 'dependency to emancipation'; or as Rancière would have it, this creates the 'miscount' of some members of society as 'immature' and therefore unequal. Therefore, in order to consider 'co-operative' education as vehicle for bringing about greater social justice and equality one needs to be able to clarify the purpose of education (maintenance or resistance of status quo) and articulate how equitable educational 'access' and 'outcomes' for all might be prefigured through educational policy and practice. This constitutes a deeply complex and difficult problem which has occupied the thoughts, dilemmas and activities of numerous educational activists and critical theorists the world over. One person who grappled with this dilemma and became renowned for his contribution to a body of critical theory and work, which converges under the umbrella of 'critical pedagogy', was the eminent Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (1921-1997).

Despite historical and contextual variances, Freire's ideas and teachings have resonated profoundly amongst a variety of scholars from a variety of disciplines (Giroux, 2004; hooks, 2011; Martín-Baró, 1994; Shor, 2001;). And, although Paulo Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (one of the foundational texts for critical pedagogy) in Latin America more than forty years ago, his legacy of generating liberation through praxis: 'the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1970, p. 64) continues to influence and stimulate educational debate throughout the world today. For Paulo Freire, the primary task of education was to question dominant knowledge or 'truths' that support inequality and to realign education towards the practice of freedom by supporting students to become subjects of their own education. Indeed he devoted much of his life's work to enabling individuals to: 'win back the right to *say his or her own word, to name the world*' (Shaull, in Freire, 1970, p.15, my emphasis) facilitated through a process of 'conscientização'. The meaning of the Portuguese term 'conscientização' has been characterized in many different ways and constructs the very foundation of Freire's philosophy. Ana Maria Freire describes it as a:

> Methodology for a critical understanding of the world, for a *reading of the world* that would allow an understanding of the presence of human beings in the world as subjects of history, not as objects of it and of the oppressors. Also, for Paulo, 'conscientization implies an intentional action for change, that is, for transformation. (Cited in Vittoria, 2007, p. 105)

According to Freire, critical pedagogy offers hope for transforming oppressive structures, which subjugate through limiting and shaping knowledge of perceived 'reality' through the lens of the most powerful. Freire articulates a sensitive appreciation of the diverse ways in which knowledge of one's self and capacity to resist asymmetrical power relations are deeply embedded within psychological and social knowledge that becomes internalised as 'truth' and 'reality'. Freire draws attention to the subtle instruments of control that oppress men (and women) at the very core of their consciousness:

But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or "sub oppressors." The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they are shaped. Their ideal is to be men (sic); but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of "adhesion" to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot "consider" him sufficiently clearly to objectivise him – to discover him "outside" themselves ...their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. (Freire, 1970, p. 27)

Freire reasons that it is only when the oppressed are able to recognize that true liberation requires unveiling and disentangling oppression internalized from within that authentic transformation or 'conscientização' can occur. However, rather than supporting vertical teacher-student relationships that imply deference and prize the knowledge of an educated élite, Freire maintains that it is the experience and knowledge of the world of the oppressed that should form the basis of pedagogy. For Freire, power, politics and education were inseparable and formed a complex relationship deeply embedded within one's understandings of the 'word' and 'world'. He argued that a recognition of this relationship in turn facilitated the promotion of 'learning' and 'doing' democracy *through* education and underlines how: 'education and democracy need each other, in an open and permanent dialectical process' (Vittoria, 2007, p. 97).

The ideas and experiments of progressive philosophers continue to influence contemporary educational scholars and activists alike who endeavour to underline the profoundly ethical as well as political nature of education, for Henry Giroux (2008, para.4):

Ethically, education stresses the importance of understanding what actually happens in classrooms and other educational settings by raising questions regarding what knowledge is of most worth, in what direction should one desire and what does it mean to know something. Most importantly, education should take seriously what it means to understand the relationship between how we learn and how we act as individual and social agents; that is, it should be concerned with teaching students not only how to think, but how to come to grips with a sense of their own individual and social responsibility and to be responsible for their actions as part of a broader attempt to be engaged citizens, who can participate in democratic public life.

However, there are many individuals and diverse groups which claim to 'take education seriously' and it is often taken for granted that only a fully 'developed' and therefore educated person can make a *reason*able claim for democratic participation. Yet one person's 'education' could be another person's indoctrination, likewise democratic freedom for one might mean oppression to an Other, indeed it seems that defining 'education', 'development' or 'freedom' of any kind (human, social, political and economic) seems to generate more questions than answers regardless of discipline or desire. In order to interrogate these ambiguities and tensions more deeply, it is necessary to unpack a variety of educational, political and social ideologies, aims and interests and consider their effects in terms of who stands to benefit or lose when education and democracy become ever more slippery, that is, as subjects of universal 'development'.

Slippery subjects: Education and 'the school'.

In much educational discourse, education equates to 'schooling'. Slippage between 'education' and 'schooling' occurs so frequently that one rarely questions the normative assumption that one necessarily equates to the other[3]. Indeed, even a perfunctory reading of a range of contemporary educational texts and journal articles reveal numerous instances whereby 'education' and 'schooling' are often framed synonymously. In the global North at least, it appears that memories of compulsory state schooling appear to be etched so deeply into the public consciousness, that an age of education free from state intervention represents another world altogether, despite the fact that compulsory schooling has been a relatively recent phenomena in the long history of 'education'. This slippage between 'education' and compulsory 'schooling' becomes ever more pertinent if one considers more recent global interventions that aim to eradicate global poverty through the medium of education but measure the achievement of such educational goals through quantitative targets

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[3] One example of an exception to this can be found in The Citizen School Project, which sought to implement and recreate critical education in Porto Alegre, Brazil (See Gandin, 2009).

which record the number of students enrolled at 'school'. Lant Pritchett questions 'whether reaching the goal of schooling keeps faith with the goal of education?' when he states:

> There is a big problem with using schooling as the vehicle for achieving educational goals. That problem is hidden in plain sight, right in the Millennium Development Goal, like the original 1948 goal, is "universal primary *education*", but the achievement of this goal is defined as universal completion of primary *school*… focusing solely on measures of schooling assumes that achieving schooling meets the goal of education'. (2013, p.18, original emphasis)

Dahlberg & Moss (2005,p.24) also reiterate this point in relation to early years education. Their exploration of *Ethics and Politics in Early childhood Education* highlight a raft of policy mandates that seek to align the language and practice of early years education with 'school readiness' across a multitude of international platforms, which they argue: '…implies that pre-schools should shape children to fit the demands of compulsory school without questioning those demands and that institution. This slipperiness and ensuing ambiguity is of central importance here; it complicates and confuses ideas about the central purpose and practices of education and prompts the question: 'what are the discursive resources that entangle (mis)interpret knowledge at the intersections of 'education' and 'the school'?

In order to begin to explore this messy terrain and gain further insight into the rules for organizing and producing different forms of knowledge, 'truths' or statements about 'the school' (what Foucault, might describe as 'genealogy') we need to pose the question, how is it that we came to think of education as *something* that *happens* within 'the school'? And if one considers 'schooling' as a set of discursive practices that make it almost impossible to conceive of education without, who are those positioned *outside* of the discursive frame of education i.e those unable or unwilling to access 'school', are they re/positioned as abject subjects of society; beyond comprehension, beyond reason, beyond control?

Seeds of 'schooling'

Henri Marrou (1956, p. xiv) encapsulates the evolution of ancient education as the 'progression from a "noble warrior" culture to a "scribe" culture'. In a *History of Education in Antiquity* (1956) he goes on to explain how the formation of 'the scribe' enabled the Christian faith to grasp a fundamental influence upon the construction of culture and education through 'the Book of Books' (the Bible), thus constituting religious instruction as the means and ends of education for centuries. Subsequently, in *Centuries of Childhood* (1962, p.135) Philippe Ariés traces: 'the original cell of our scholastic system in the West' back to the cathedral school of the Carolingian period. Drawing upon a wealth of historical data, Ariés notes that cultural understandings of the purpose of education transformed at this point in order to: 'satisfy the requirements of ecclesiastical recruiting' (p.134). Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that whilst the separation of students according to age and subject appears a 'common sense' notion within contemporary educational institutions, during the Middle Ages the relationship between age and level of study was considered insignificant and rarely commented upon in historical data. Ariés reasons that this indifference was due to the fact that: '[a]s soon as he started going to school, the child immediately entered the world of adults' (p.150). After the Middle Ages, the religious curriculum expanded to include Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics) and Quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music), although the raison d'être of school life continued to serve the interests of the church. Notwithstanding this, by the late 14th century, the Christian ascendancy in education began to falter. A variety of independent schools (note independence from the church, rather than the state as inferred by contemporary meaning) such as Chantry schools were funded by wealthy benefactors and later developed into public schools, such as Winchester and Eton, still in existence in the UK today (Gillard, 2011).

'Schooling' Society: education, the state and social control

By the start of the 18th Century, education in the UK comprised a: 'haphazard system of parish and private adventure schools' (Williams, 1961, p. 134) and

therefore, access to formal 'schooling' could be said to have been deeply undemocratic and largely dependent upon public benefactors or familial economic and cultural resources (*cf.* Ariés, 1962; Crawford, 1991; Cunningham, 1991; 2006). Rising urbanisation created some recompense for this, as the need for universal access to education escalated in response to penal and social reforms that aimed to contain the economic and social upheaval brought about by the industrial revolution.

> The reconstruction of the 'factory child' through the prism of dependency and ignorance, was a necessary precursor to mass education in that it helped prepare public opinion for shifts in the child's identity: from wage-earner to school-pupil; for a reduction in income of working-class families, as a result of loss of children's earnings; and for the introduction of the state into the parent-child relationship. (Hendrick, 1997, p. 45-46)

At this juncture, a closer inspection of the construction of childhood/s and the political investment of the state in the form of compulsory mass public education, marks out the history of education as a history of social control in addition to underlining the cultural and temporal reconstruction of childhood dependency and development (Cunningham, 2006; James et al., 1998). Thus, as matters of childhood agency and independence were drawn away from the traditional private sphere of the family, children began to occupy a separate spatial entity in the form of the state controlled educational institution. Moreover, this spatial and temporal 'separation' of children from factories and their families has also provided limitless opportunities for scientific research and a captive audience within which to 'normalise' understandings of moral, social and psychological development aided by Francis Galton's (1883) distribution curve and the establishment of psychology as a bone fide science (*cf.* Burman, 2008a; Rose, 1989). Notwithstanding the problems that these 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1989) have caused for conceptualizing heterogeneous childhood/s (*cf.* Burman, 2008a; Hacking, 1990; Hultqvist & Dahlberg, 2001; Rose, 1989) the evolution of state education reconstituted the 'natural' school child as a subject of 'expert' scientific knowledge, educational practice and political intervention (Hultqvist & Dahlberg, 2001). What is more, young people became increasingly engaged: 'in a consciously designed pursuit of the national interest' (Hendrick, 1997, p.49), as children embodied a new social and political identity which situated them as carriers of social anxiety and as bearers of the nation's future economic success.

Over a century later, educational policy has continued to shape and monitor children's development in line with the national interest as a means to retain a

competitive advantage over other nations. The State's capacity to position young people as crucial (future) contributors to the nation's prosperity remains a priority for the new coalition government, forming the key educational concern in the opening statement of *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper:*

> So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, *but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors.* That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. (Emphasis added, Department for Education, 2010, p.3)

Education: in whose interests?

This very brief genealogy of 'the school' suggests that educational institutions have gradually evolved from sites of religious instruction to spaces of social regulation, characterised by complex relations of economic, political and cultural power. The questions of whose interests are served and of which types of knowledge are valued within contemporary society have created multifarious tensions replayed within: 'an epidemic of educational reform' (Levin, cited in Ball, 2003, p215). Stephen Ball (2008, p.57) argues that political interest in the provision of education has progressed from the 'interventionalist state' of the modern era, concerned with the regulation of the urban working class to a 'competition state' at the start of the 21st century. The inequitable effects of neo-liberal educational policies produced within the context of a 'managerial state' are mapped out by critics (see Apple, 2001 and Power & Franji, 2010, for example) who assert that the rise of privatisation, marketisation, performativity and 'enterprising individual' discourses have served to radically alter the educational landscape and exacerbate social inequality. The displacement of political anxieties that surround the dynamics of participating in an increasingly globalised 'knowledge economy' (Apple, 2001) are epitomised by a reconceptualisation of children in the public sphere as: 'human capital and therefore as a means of controlling the future' (Prout, 2000, p.304).

Despite freedom and equality being considered worthy of attention as the right of a young person's global citizenship[4], affording a degree of independence from the state (see Nick Lee, 2001), neoliberal ideology continues to veil the regulation of children's bodies and minds in its implicit positioning of childhood as a paradoxical time of 'freedom' *and* 'protection'. Indeed, Nikolas Rose argues that:

> Childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence. In different ways, at different times, and by many different routes varying from one section of society to another, the health, welfare, and rearing of children has been linked in thought and in practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the State. The modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual and moral danger, to ensure its normal development, to actively promote certain capacities of attributes such as intelligence, educability and emotional stability. (Rose, 1989, p. 121)

Navigating social justice in education

Moreover, a number of critics such as Clive Harber (2004) and Ivan Illich (1971) have vigorously questioned the utility of 'schooling' as a site which has the capacity to enable equitable human growth. They argue that obligatory schooling constitutes a form of social and psychological violence in terms of reproducing ingrained social inequality and psychological injury. What's more, the extent to which the social institution of education has the power to redress and ameliorate the effects of endemic global inequality continues to be a highly contested subject (Perry & Francis, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Recent initiatives undertaken by the previous Labour government such as Widening Participation in Higher Education, Excellence in Cities Programme and Sure Start in the Early Years which aimed to enhance the educational outcomes of economically and socially disadvantaged students have reported limited success (Kerr & West, 2010). Furthermore, despite decades of government intervention and academic research, the extent to which schools can overcome social disadvantage through the medium of public state education remains uncertain (Kerr & West, 2010; Perry & Francis, 2010). The current coalition

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[4] For a full explanation of the international statement of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children see: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly of the UN 1989).

government's concerns reiterate the urgency to redress disparities. However as the following extract illustrates, 'urgency' is borne out of losing our 'competitive edge', rather than out of social and moral obligation. According to the former Education Secretary, Michael Gove:

> We are falling behind … other countries are moving faster ahead" ... "Rich, thick kids do better than poor, clever children before they go to school. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of our society, the situation is getting worse. (Cited in The Guardian, 20th July 2010)

Further, it appears that in spite of differences in how educational aspirations are defined *for* children in the apparent interests of personal, psychological or social 'development', it remains clear that a large proportion of the world's children have become subjects of an increasingly 'marketised' educational sector. This continues to shape educational provision, practice and outcome on a worldwide scale (*cf.*Apple, 2001; Ball, 2008; Fielding & Moss, 2011; Giroux, 2004; Reid, 2002). The extent to which this is also internalised by children and replayed as a form of 'neo-liberal pedagogy' (McCafferty, 2010) underscores the need to explore alternative educational models that offer hope for disrupting the dominant framework which appears to have abandoned the notion of education as a common good (Reid, 2002). For decades, it has been convincingly argued that state education has served the purposes of political economy rather than democracy (Apple, 2001; Ball, 2008; Giroux, 2004). In an era that has become increasingly disenchanted with capitalist forms of organisation and production, I now cast my attention towards the possibility of transforming this state of affairs.

(Re) considering the status of democracy in education...

Anne Phillips (1991, p.1) reminds us that: '[t]he ancient Greeks could conceive of democracy without any qualms about excluding both women and slaves' and makes the point that the relationship between equality and democracy cannot always be taken for granted. (Re)negotiating the meaning of democracy (as an aspect of human and social 'development') within education, presents a similar dilemma for young people who have traditionally been asymmetrically positioned in relation to the

'adult'. At present, children and young people are excluded from the formal decision making processes of a 'representative democracy' by prevailing discourses that attribute civic competence and the right to vote in accordance with reaching the age of 18. However, if we understand democracy as a fundamental value central to: 'human flourishing and the conditions under which it can best be fostered' (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p.42) then we can begin to gain a sense of how democratic education could be encountered as an experience of 'learning to live' with others within school communities.

Fielding and Moss (2011) draw attention to Macmurray's philosophy of community and highlight the importance of the presence of freedom *and* equality as a prerequisite for democratic school communities to flourish:

> Equality and freedom, as constitutive principles of fellowship, condition one another reciprocally. Equality is a condition of freedom in human relations. For if we do not treat each other as equals, we exclude freedom from the relationship. Freedom too, conditions equality. For if there is constraint between us there is fear; and to counter the fear we must seek control over its object, and attempt to subordinate the other person to our own power. Any attempt to achieve freedom without equality, or to achieve equality without freedom, must therefore be self defeating. (Macmurray, in Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 50)

Alternative educational pioneers have experimented with redefining the means and ends of education with varying degrees of success. One educational institution that has managed to sustain a radical alternative for over ninety years is the infamous Summerhill School, founded in 1921 by AS Neill. The school is an independent school with charitable status situated in Suffolk, run by a self governing democratic community of students aged between five and eighteen, live-in house parents and teaching staff. The philosophy of the school is grounded upon Neill's original premise (and only rule that cannot be changed) that: 'no child should be compelled to attend any lesson that they do not choose freely by themselves' (Summerhill school, 2010b). From the outset, Neill challenged the historical adult-child relations which continue to shape the thorny dilemma of determining the age at which a child is considered a 'competent' decision maker. Neill reconceptualised children's autonomy by

developing a model of school governance that upheld equal status for all members of the school, regardless of age:

...all the inhabitants are considered equal members of the community. All are equally entitled to citizenship of the school - teachers, big kids, and little kids alike - and this is reflected in their interactions with each other. There is an ease of manner between equals that cannot exist in a hierarchy, however friendly and informal. (www.summerhillschool.co.uk)

In opposition to the dominant framework, Neill considered children to be both able and responsible enough to participate fully in the democratic life of the school (Darling, 1992). This fundamental belief continues to be embedded within the very fabric of school life at Summerhill today.

> Summerhill is a school of intelligent choice, where students must decide each day how they will use their time…they can play, they can involve themselves in a variety of constructive social situations, they can be by themselves to read or daydream, they can engage in self directed group projects and activities, and they can choose to attend formal lessons… each day the children define themselves by choice and action…this is a profound experience that leads to a strong sense of personal agency and self knowledge. (www.summerhillschool.co.uk)

Outside the walls of Summerhill, a child's 'sense of personal agency' has been tempered by normative assessments of aptitude and maturity shaped by a long history of developmental scientific 'expertise' (Burman, 2008a; Rose, 1998). Indeed huge disparities of childhood autonomy are contested and affirmed by bodies of academic research and discursive practises that influence young people's ability to navigate and understand their tenuous position as 'not yet adult', influenced by the ideological dilemmas of contemporary childhood discourse (Billig et al., 1988). For example, juridical practices unremittingly question the credibility and moral agency of young witnesses (Motzkau, 2005), whereas in contrast, children's: 'increasingly extensive participation in commercial life as consumers and beyond' (Zelizer, in Cook, 2004, p.151) positions the child as a credible consumer and decision maker. In light of these ambiguities, Summerhill's revolutionary approach to allowing pupils: 'more freedom and power than they could possibly handle' (Darling, 1992, p.46) has proved extremely controversial and more recently, has even jeopardised the continued survival of the school (Stronach, 2002a).

Alongside unprecedented individual personal freedoms, school members collectively discuss and debate issues that arise as an integral aspect of living together as a democratic community. 'Self governance' of the school is organised and enacted through participation in the tri-weekly school meeting which allows every member of the school community, regardless of age, to raise any matters of concern. However, on occasions the popularity of particular school members calls into question how the best interests of the collective group are served on a 'one person one vote' basis. The following extract by Neill demonstrates an inversion of traditional adult-child relationship, rarely experienced outside the world of Summerhill:

> Once, I spoke strongly about breaking the bedtime rules, with the consequent noise and the sleepy heads that lumbered around the next morning. I proposed that culprits should be fined all their pocket money for each offence. A boy of fourteen proposed that there should be a penny reward per hour for everyone staying up after his or her bedtime. I got a few votes, but he got a big majority. (Neill, in Sharf, 1977, p.91)

Neill maintained: 'that being given the right to participate in community government is for the pupil both an educationally profitable experience and an important display of adult trust and confidence' (Darling, 1992, p. 46). The dual benefits of this are evident as one ex- pupil recalls how the General Meeting created a bridge between personal and collective decision-making:

> The General Meeting is the crucial thing in all this. I describe it as being the public element of self. There's a private element of self, part of which chooses whether to go to lessons or not, and you understand and suffer the consequences of your decisions on a personal level. The meeting is the public self where you understand the implications of any decision you make on a public level. If I voted for us all to stay up late, and that's what happened, maybe people would be overtired, or maybe it would be great fun because it's the end of term, or whatever – but you actually do get the chance to see what you do and how it affects other people. (Danë Goodsman in Lucas, 2011, p. 151)

In addition, others underscore the experiential effects of democratic participation within the community of Summerhill as an affirmation of respect for others:

> At Summerhill the fundamental thing to me was that you could understand someone else's point of view and respect it and still fundamentally disagree with

it. You respected differences. That's the key to the whole thing. (Former pupil, Lucien Crofts in Lucas, 2011, p. 166)

However, along with other pupils who have recounted difficulties in adjusting to a different version of democracy from the one they had become accustomed to *inside* the relative safety of Summerhill (See, Lucas, 2011), one former pupil points to the tensions he experienced in establishing equitable relationships with others *outside* of the school community:

> Learning to relate to people without that Summerhill understanding and the meeting to support you was a shock; and I didn't cope very well to start with...The world is a very different place outside Summerhill. Summerhill prepares you well in certain things, but it actually de-prepares you for a lot of it. You don't have that amount of caring attitude out here. You don't have a high speed, real type democracy. It's all too big. And it's not full of Summerhillians anyway. (Lucas, 2011, pp. 161-162)

Debates that question the efficacy of 'schooling' as preparation for negotiating the challenges of (adult) 'life' are well rehearsed in political policy discussion and tend to situate the meaning of success along a trajectory of academic and vocational value. In contrast, the oral histories presented in *After Summerhill: what happened to the pupils of Britain's most radical school?* Reflect a microcosm of Summerhill's democratic approach and its effect upon the identities of children and young people who have had the opportunity to navigate their own processes of 'development'. A significant number of these accounts convey how pupils are able to articulate a meaningful sense of equality and personal independence as a result of participating in democratic community life. A number of pupils do not necessarily view this as an entirely positive development. Some pupils express frustration at not having achieved any formal qualifications and report feelings of naïveté as a result of living and learning within an 'insular' environment and speak of difficulties that impeded their 'integration into society' or 'playing the game' in the world of work[5]. In spite of this, Lucas (2011, p.12) also draws attention to the significant absence of fear as a more positive outcome and essential element of human flourishing that is interwoven amongst the majority of Summerhillian stories: '...fear of failure; fear of authority; fear of social ostracism; fear of life and the consequent failure to engage with it with a feeling of optimism and a positive outlook.'

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[5] For example, see the accounts of Claire Harvie, Lucien Crofts and Abigail Taylor in Lucas (2011).

However, whilst Lucas (2011) surmises that such an absence of fear is indicative of the 'unpressurised childhood' offered within the context of Summerhill, one must also consider how this is constructed. In spite of its continued success and popularity, the community of Summerhill reflects a tiny fraction of society. Whilst Summerhill continues to attract a diverse global population of students, (less than half of its students are from the UK)[6] one must not overlook the fact that its pupils are drawn from a minority who have the financial resources to access independent education and 'choose' this more radical option in preference to universal state education. Moreover, this could also be argued as sustaining a highly contextualised, if not insular, account of democratic education. Despite this, the fact that Summerhill appears to have succeeded where many other radical models have failed is testament to the sustainability of Neill's philosophy of children being accorded the right to participate in collective decision-making processes and his commitment to ensuring that regular, tri-weekly debates between all members of the school community occurred, albeit that this school operates on a relatively small scale compared to the majority of other more traditional models of 'schooling' in the UK. The scale and size of Summerhill remains both a strength (in terms of managing collective decision-making processes) and perhaps also a source of weakness in terms of extending the model for the public sector which traditionally organises 'schooling' on a much larger (more financially efficient?) scale. Despite the fact that Summerhill has managed to sustain Neill's vision of education for over ninety years, this approach has thus far remained on the fringes of the contemporary educational landscape. At this point I feel drawn to ask if the co-operative model of 'schooling' could adopt Neill's philosophy of education and thus extend a democratic approach to community schools on a much wider scale?

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[6] Summerhill is an international community. Many nations are represented including France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Switzerland, US, Korea and Taiwan; the UK accounts less than half of the pupils. See, http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/pages/index_continued.html

For schools wishing to challenge the domination of private sector interests in school governance, the co operative movement presents itself as a potential partner which pledges to offer:

> A strong ethical stance; willingness and an ability to share our expertise, the opportunity to engage with a business; a unique way of engaging pupils, parents and local communities. (The Co operative College, 2012a)

Facer et al., (2012) point to the dual attraction of the co operative model which enables schools to take advantage of the proposed 'freedoms' of academy status whilst at the same time preserving a commitment to social justice and democratic values. Furthermore, capitalising upon co-operative approaches to education that attract cross-party support via reforms that *claim* to offer various interpretations of 'freedom and autonomy,' enhances the scope of political support for this educational model. At present, the co-operative model occupies the unlikely position of appealing to both radical democratic educators and conservative politicians, which carries the risk of being susceptible to neo-liberal appropriation (Facer et al., 2012). Given the ubiquitous nature of neo-liberal policy reforms that position students and families as active consumers of education, interpreting counter discourses of 'choice, freedom and autonomy' within co operatively governed schools represents a demanding task, made even more difficult by the marketised context within which schools are compelled to operate. However, establishing a co operative model of school governance (democratically accountable schools owned and run by their local community via a multi-stakeholder forum) offers a unique opportunity to put John Dewey's (1937) philosophy of democratic education to the test for he argued that: '[a]ll those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them' (in Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 3).

In the first decade of the 21st century there was an apparent resurgence of co-operative values and principles stimulated by initiatives such as the Young Co-operatives project in 2002 and in 2003 as the Co-operative Group became key partners of Specialist Business & Enterprise Colleges. Interest in co-operative schools

gathered much greater momentum after 2008 when co-operation became the driving force behind a radical move to change the governance structure of what was to become the first mainstream co-operative trust school in Reddish Vale, Stockport (Arnold, 2013). Moving into the second decade of this Century, the number and variety of legal models for co-operative schools has continued to expand and develop in response to both policy reform and increasing demand from schools wishing to challenge the domination of private sector interests in school governance. What is more, co-operative schools constituted the fastest and largest growth area within the co-operative and mutual sector in 2013 (The Co-operative College, 2013c) and at the time of writing there are over 250,000 students attending co-operative schools (Shaw, forthcoming, 2015). This exponential growth has required a considerable commitment on behalf of The Co-operative College who have steered the organizational structure of this rapidly growing sector of schools since inception.

If the growth of co-operative schooling continues to follow the precedent of numbers doubling year upon year, at the time of writing there is a distinct possibility that around 1000 co-operatively led schools may be open at the time of the British general election in 2015. It would seem therefore that the legal instruments, the will and the resources are available to provide a real alternative to state, private and corporate sponsorship of competition as the only approach to the organisation of the mainstream school system. However, this is still not enough to generate the conditions of a new logic of everyday politics that could result in a new paradigm of societal organisation. This depends on whether there is an alternative vision of society that these new co-operative schools are able to articulate and practice convincingly and proliferate successfully throughout the communities they serve through the practices and projects of young people who graduate from those schools.

The genealogical journey thus far has explored the socio-historical construction of 'education', 'the school' and 'the student' in order to develop a deeper understanding of the discursive terrain that intersects the current English educational policy landscape and the historical and social ambitions of the co-operative movement. An examination of key debates that have shaped the cultural and political status of education in society reveal how complex relations of power circulate and shape both

the purpose and practice of public education and its relation to collective well-being and 'schooling'. This literature review has highlighted how educational institutions have gradually evolved from sites of religious instruction to spaces of social regulation, thus orienting a reading of public education that situates 'progress' along a linear trajectory that moves toward 'developing' the rational individual of modernity. I now go on to consider the theoretical and methodological dilemmas which shape the ethical and political trajectory of this qualitative research project. In the following chapter, I deliberate the consequences of collecting 'data', analysing 'texts', representing 'voices' and developing a collection of narratives which might offer a critical contribution to 'knowledge' about the prospects and possibilities that 'co-operative' schools might have to offer towards engendering a more radical educational project.

1.b
Coming and going and "getting it", (re)examining the ground

'…go there where you cannot go, to the impossible, it is indeed the only way of coming or going'

(Derrida, 1995, p. 75)

This section outlines my experiences of undertaking discourse-oriented research that seeks to offer a 'provocation' of 'voice' within a new and emerging sector of state education in the UK. Here, I consider the merits of exploring the development of a 'co-operative' model of public education through the lens of critical ethnography. Within this chapter I draw attention to the complexities of sustaining an ethical, political engagement throughout this research process, especially when collecting and interpreting 'empirical materials' and (de)constructing stories of co-operation as an ethnographer and other. In addition, I also consider the capacity of this methodology to serve as a key resource for informing the theoretical underpinnings, ethics and actions of my work around social justice and 'voice' in educational research, and in the 'co-operative' school. It is at this nexus between critical thought and action that I go on to consider and reflect how multiple narratives of 'co-operation' and 'schooling' may be deconstructed in order to question what it might mean to be positioned and to 'speak' as a subject of co-operative education within this nascent terrain.

Having spent the last few years coming and going and exploring various accounts of co-operative schooling within 'the field', I now find myself preparing to embark upon a different journey, one that moves beyond 'how to get it', to include 'what to do with it' (Fabian, 1991). Suspicious of 'data' and all that this term might imply, I remain ever-mindful that: '[d]ata themselves are not necessarily sensitive or particularly harmful, but the possibilities of harm accrue from the uses to which data are put' (de Laine, 2000, p. 14). I then go on to occupy myself with the dilemmas of attending to the political and ethical implications of 'doing' critical ethnography as I examine the

consequences of putting something, otherwise known as 'data', 'to work' within this thesis and other publications.

This journey is punctuated by a number of detours that occur throughout this thesis as I occasionally pause for a while and reflect upon how the conditions of my precarious *presence* in this 'field' (the 'co-operative' school) shapes, and is shaped, by my subjectivities as a situated and relational Other. Moreover, this series of interruptions serve a number of theoretical, methodological and analytic functions as I strive to contest the 'fictive geography' (Britzman, 2000, p. 28) upon which both my 'voice' and the 'validity' of this ethnographic account rests. These interpretive disturbances attempt to provoke more questions than answers as I engage with the (im)possibility of offering unmediated access to the 'reality' of the co-operative school as I attempt to write and reflect **under erasure** (Burman & MacLure, 2011). Following Derrida, although I acknowledge that I cannot do without recourse to the language and theories of 'method' or 'data', this methodology emerges as a result of my struggles to challenge the inadequate, but sometimes necessary, conventions and language of 'research' that simultaneously shape and contort my attempts to 'get to know' the 'co-operative' school. Therefore, these hesitations, doubts and detours are offered in the hope of introducing a deconstructive counterpoint that confounds the possibilities of contributing to (authentic?) knowledge about the 'co-operative' school *in my own voice*.

Some thoughts from 'the field'...
1. First encounters with co-operation in education

Weeks before I knew that I had been successful in my application to undertake a PhD studentship project entitled 'Re-thinking Schools for the 21st Century', I had been busy preparing for my interview trying to ascertain exactly what a co-operative school might be and familiarising myself with the subjects of key educational policy debate. I recall that this was far from easy as there appeared to be scant knowledge of this new and emerging idea for schools operating within the state sector and I berated myself for only being able to find one journal article on the subject (entering co-operative schools into the Google search engine now [15-08-2014], offers 113,000,000 results!). With barely any existing research to draw upon, I busied myself with thinking about how a difference in

governance structures might engender a radical shift in the construction of childhood identities and extend opportunities for participation in a more socially just society. I hoped that this would be enough to get me through the interview. Armed with a keen commitment to finding out more about co-operative schools, a lifelong dedication to supporting social justice in education and a deep mistrust of the neoliberal 'Big Society' agenda, but little else, I put forward my ideas for exploring the possibilities of co-operative schools. At that stage, I knew very little about the co-operative model of education but my passion for critical research and limited experience of ethnography opened up the opportunity to find out more and to put some substance behind the guess work and quick thinking required to get me through the interview. Later that afternoon, I was delighted to receive the call that offered me a life changing opportunity to find out more about these elusive co-operative schools. Three years later, battered and bruised from endless hours spent reading, writing and researching the question I had not been able to answer in the initial interview, I cannot claim to have become an expert, neither can I give an unequivocal answer when asked; 'what is a co-operative school?' However, I can certainly offer the beginnings of a conversation that explores how ideas about 'co-operative schooling' have evolved over the last three years as they intersect across a multitude of discursive frames.

2. Faltering first steps upon an uncertain terrain

During the first few weeks of this PhD research project I speculated and reflected upon how I might go about developing a project that clarified what a co-operative school 'is' and quickly realised the impossibility of ever being able to produce a definitive answer. After all, one would not assume that it was possible to provide a definitive answer on what a faith or independent school 'is' for that matter. I could try to offer a simple description in terms of the differences in governance structures, moral values or the financial structures of such schools but I would not expect to be able to deduce how the experience of independent schooling differed in universal ways to that of a faith school for example. Neither would I be able to surmise if this experience was qualitatively different in one location or the other, as each member of every school would have a different story to tell, shaped by an infinitesimal number of standpoints. Human experience is not conducive to objective measurement or comparison. That is the point. A conundrum that has haunted social science research since it was first conceived of as a discipline, a puzzle that continues to torment feminist struggles and a problem that I have 'worried away' at throughout my research. How then, could I begin to understand what a co-operative school 'is' without reducing human experience to a set of measurable outcomes? I have wrestled with, and have been bewildered by this dilemma throughout, tangling my thoughts and

questions with the accounts and experiences of others, consumed entirely in a hyperactivity flurry of activity seeking to tell the untellable story of what a co-operative story 'is' or could be...

Coming: navigating the research terrain.

The metaphor of the research 'journey' has become something of a cliché these days, presiding as a foundational narrative, rehearsed across a range of research paradigms. Research guides and university prospectuses abound with bold statements that claim to guide prospective researchers on exciting journeys of discovery, working from the boundaries of the 'unknown' to the 'known' and so forth, yet the execution of this transition is rarely put under critical scrutiny. The research 'journey' (whether quantitative or qualitative) tells a story which easily lends itself to the predictable narrative of science, whereby its protagonist embarks upon an expedition of discovery and mastery, travelling from the unknown to the known whilst pausing to collect 'valid data' along the way. Further, this is a tale whereby a journey's final destination is signalled by the transformation of 'data' into 'legitimate knowledge' and happy endings are achieved when mysteries are made sense of through mastery of nature and of the Other. Indeed, questions that disturb how particular forms of knowledge are tested, valued and attain credible status often disappear from view, obscured by the well-worn footprints of 'real' (read scientific) research thus creating the conditions of 'truth' for what can be said to be 'known' or 'real'. This could also be said to have the effect of (dis)qualifying those methodological routes which signpost and (re)orient researchers towards the most reliable paths, those contoured by what counts is 'what works?', 'what can be 'measured?' or reliably interpreted, and therefore rationally 'known'. Avital Ronell describes this relation through a Nietzschian lens and proposes that:

> ...an elliptical circuit has been established between testing and the real: a circuit so radically installed- it is irreversible- cancels the essential difference between the test and what is assumed to be real. At this point- somewhere between Freud and Nietzsche- it is not so much the case that reality is being tested but that testing is constitutive of what can be designated, with proper precautions, as real, actual, materiality enabled. The test is what allows for the emergence of a reality to assert itself. (2003, p.665)

Bearing the self-validating nature of this relation between 'the test' and 'reality' in mind, I am inclined to argue that perhaps we need to be more *real*istic in our attempts to define the purpose of research; what exactly is it that we propose to *do*? And how can we articulate the (im)possibility of ever *doing* enough? In order to critically consider the purpose of this research (exploring what co-operative schools can *do*), I must first explain the ontological and epistemological framework that guides my approach to 'getting to know' the co-operative school and its members.

Dangerous 'data'?

If one accepts that 'knowledge' about our lives and the world in which we live can be considered from a wealth of textual, spatial, relational, and material contexts, it becomes increasingly difficult to quantify or subject human experience and interaction to 'the test' and extract 'data' in the form of metric evaluation in the same manner that 'scientific research' treats its physical objects. The discipline of physical science studies natural kinds such as gold, atoms or water. These can be coherently categorized with ease and exist in pure forms that comprise stable, predictable qualities: 'indifferent to the descriptions applied to them' (Brinkman, 2005, p. 773). Therefore, the scientific study of a natural object is more conducive to experimental laboratory methodology as one is able to hypothesise future outcomes with some degree of certainty at least. However, human subjects cannot be squeezed into the same scientific mould. This factor is further compounded by the unique dilemma that continues to haunt research that concerns human action and subjectivity[7], in that it is bound within its own fundamental paradox: 'we are *ourselves,* what we are studying' (Richards, 2002). Moreover, human experience and subjectivities resist containment and defy simple categorization in direct contrast to the ease with which the properties of physical objects are articulated and measured in scientific discourse. Geoff Bunn (2014) highlights this relation by asking how we might answer the question: 'what's the difference between a broken leg and a broken heart?' And responds by pointing out that: 'a broken leg is real in the physical sense', but 'a

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[7] In speaking of and utilising subjectivity both as a topic of inquiry and a resource for analysis here, I follow Ian Parker's definition: '…subjectivity refers simultaneously to the sense of selfhood and to the production of that sense of self at a place in relation to others in language.' (2002, p.135)

broken heart is [only] real in the psychological sense.' He goes on to reason that: 'unlike a broken bone, a heart can only be understood to be broken metaphorically- and indeed only in reference to the cultural and historical framework that makes the idea of a 'broken heart' meaningful in the first place'. Does metaphor therefore, offer a useful medium to trace and articulate an understanding of human experience and subjectivity in relation to cultural and historical contexts? According to Lakoff & Johnson (2003, p. 3), metaphor is much more than a literary tool. They argue that:

> Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature… Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do everyday is very much a matter of metaphor.

Notwithstanding this, it is not my intention to categorise and dissect alternative 'conceptual systems', but to begin to open up a space whereby contingent and heterogeneous meanings and experiences can be explored and considered in relation to wider debates about how 'data' are gathered and made meaningful in relation to cultural and historical contexts of educational research. So, rather than pursue a philosophical or cognitive explanation of how 'the mind' constructs 'reality', what is of particular interest here is the capacity of the metaphor to articulate and develop alternative readings of 'data' which deconstruct notions of 'validity' and 'transparency' and interrupt the 'usual' business of educational research. For as the dubious history of Psychology demonstrates, categorising and quantifying human experience and behaviour from within a paradigm of 'objective' science is hugely problematic. Francis Galton, often cited as one of psychology's founding fathers, was one of the first to demonstrate that psychological objects such as intelligence could be measured, compared and quantified in the form of psychometric testing. Karl Pearson's (1857-1936) subsequent formulation of universal statistical technologies such as the 'normal distribution curve' and 'standard deviation' enabled a scientific discourse of identification and regulation of 'the norm' to emerge, thus creating the conditions for a new form of 'expertise' to 'objectively' quantify, analyse and control human behaviour. The consequences of which, have had sinister repercussions for how we understand ourselves and the Other. Foucault (1980) brings our attention to the normative gaze of tests and examinations as they fuse together power, truth and subjectification and thus render the individual, subject to and of, technologies of

'observing hierarchy' and 'normalizing judgement'. For example, Nikolas Rose highlights the oblique capacity of psychological constructs such as the normal distribution curve, Intelligence Quotient and varying forms of examinations and tests legitimated by the 'psy expert', to render the person 'objectively calculable':

We have entered, it appears, the age of the calculable person, the person whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted and managed. (1998, p.88)

Indeed, Kurt Danziger (1990, p.185) argues that the acceptance of Psychology as a valid source of expert knowledge has drawn upon the: 'mystique of the laboratory and the mystique of numbers' to attain a superior position over 'lay' knowledge that has been historically rationalised by generations of 'human experience'. This has had wide ranging effects, not just for how 'knowledge' about human experience is understood within scientific discourse, but also for how people understand *themselves* and experience the effects of this, as the following poignant excerpt points out:

> When I first met Kim he was my son. A year later he was epileptic and developmentally delayed. At eighteen months he had special needs and he was a special child. He had a mild to moderate learning difficulty. He was mentally handicapped ... At nine he came out of segregated schooling and he slowly became my son again. Never again will he be anything else but Kim - a son, a brother, a friend, a pupil, a teacher, a person. (Murray, 1996, in Goodley, 2001, p.222)

Ian Hacking (2007, p.2) develops Danziger's argument further and explains that the observation of 'kinds of people' is distinct from observing 'natural kinds' due to the reflexive relationship between the researcher and researched. Hacking refers to the 'kinds' studied as:

> … Moving targets because our investigations interact with the targets themselves, and change them. And since they are changed, they are not quite the same kind of people as before. The target has moved. That is the looping effect. Sometimes our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. That is making up people.

Furthermore, the interaction of psychological categories via the 'looping effect' enable categories and labels to become internalized, which has the potential to transform mere description into constitution, generating new 'truths' or ways of

'being' a person. For example, the phenomenon of Aspergers, a more recent characterisation of high- functioning autism, demonstrates a 'kind', 'a way of being' that was inconceivable prior to Lorna Wing's adaptation of Hans Asperger's (1944) diagnosis. Hacking (2007, p. 303) illustrates how this: 'way to be a person, to experience oneself, to live in society' was only possible after 1943 and that prior to this individuals were unable to experience life in the same form. This not only has major ramifications with regard to how narratives of socially acceptable behaviours are viewed and constructed but it also creates a dangerous ethical problem for research communities in terms of how 'findings' and 'difference' are articulated and understood. Furthermore, the construction of categories or 'kinds of people' as identifiable and measurable subjects of scientific discourse, inevitably creates the conditions for 'difference' to equate to 'deficiency' (See Oakley, 1994; Shakespeare, 1998; Thomas, 1999) as those who 'fall under [and outside of] the arc of the standard bell shaped curve become subject to the 'tyranny of the norm' (Davis, 2013, p. 3). Santos (1995, p. 38) offers a route towards resisting the 'naturalisation' of knowledge inferred by the scientific paradigm through the development of 'postmodern emancipatory knowledge':

> While modern science aims at the naturalization of knowledge through objective truths, descriptions, regularities, postmodern emancipatory knowledge assumes its discursive artifactuality. For postmodern emancipatory knowledge, truth is rhetorical, a mythic moment of rest in a continuous and endless argumentative struggle among different discourses of truth; it is the ever-provisional result of a negotiation of meaning with a given relevant audience.

Therefore, in order to try and counter the danger and risk that the discursive power of 'scientific expertise' (Hacking, 2007; Rose, 1998) brings to bear upon methodological and ethical frameworks of educational research, this thesis concerns itself with developing the means to provoke and disturb the 'natural' and taken for granted notion that it is possible to *see* and to *define* what data *is* and *doe*s as part of a wider project of developing 'postmodern emancipatory knowledge' not as 'objective' fact but as Santos (1995) suggests, 'artifact'.

Sophie Ward (2014, p. 71) argues that efforts to identify scientific standards in the reporting of educational research: 'serve a socio-political agenda that seeks to atomise society by denying the possibility of collective human experience' and should be resisted as a manifestation of the 'new totalitarianism' in which oppositional discourses are silenced through the regulation of academic communication', for example those supported by large, powerful educational research bodies such as AERA (American Educational Research Association). And although as Lather observed in 1992, educational research had begun to distance itself from its roots as a: 'highly predictive educational science' (p.90), it appears that what counts as 'real' research continues to be read as that which is *visible* and *amenable* to intelligible measurement with precision, reliability and clarity. This is a form of 'clarity bordering on stupidity', argues Maggie MacLure (2005) in her scathing critique of the 'systematic review', a form of research synthesis currently dominating the discursive repertoire of educational research. Her critique responds to anxieties about the growing ascendancy of uniform research metrics and 'audit cultures', imported from the fields of 'evidence-based' medicine and health. In this case, MacLure builds a robust argument for deconstructing the language of the systematic review, a popular example of contemporary 'credibility hierarchies' which circulate and 'recycle "discourse[s] of distrust" amongst education professionals' (p.2-4), as she questions the taken for granted status of 'transparency' and ensuing 'hostility' for that which cannot be seen, measured and subject to 'quality control'. Further, MacLure brings into sharp relief the need to question the supercilious status of 'sanitised' research lexicon and underlines the need to continue to attend to 'quality' and 'accountability', 'without sacrificing the diversity of approach, interests, values and purposes upon which a democratic research community should be based' (p.17). I would also add, anxieties about quality and accountability can form a productive tension for engendering an ethical approach to educational research design, and underscore MacLure's concern that discourses of 'credibility' need to be revitalised through democratic means rather than dubious claims towards transparency, which tend to obscure more than they reveal. Therefore, this thesis aims to question why particular forms of 'data' are rendered (in)visible or (in)credible, and seeks out the

spaces where spurious sounds and unexpected events occur in the shadows of 'the field' of educational research.

The path that leads nowhere…

> The fact that deconstruction cannot refer back to any founding event, the fact that, like mourning, it has no time, is precisely what destines it to roaming or voyaging. (Malabou & Derrida, 2004, p. 227)

Staying with the metaphorical 'journey' of research for a moment longer, I now begin to question the political and ethical implications of following the prescribed research 'road map' which plots destinations according to the 'recommendations' of key educational research bodies such as AERA and its British counterpart BERA. In thinking about directions, routes and methods of research, I am drawn to Heidegger's ideas about walks and paths that lead nowhere and of using his notion of the *Holzwege* as a political and methodological tool to steer the direction of this research 'off the beaten track' towards a different space, an unknown space in which the constant renegotiation of meaning might be possible, reading through the prism of deconstruction. In remaining openly suspicious of the possibility of ever being able to fully understand or interpret what it might mean to be a member of a co-operative school, I hope to resist the pressure to engage in the immediate gratification promised by a politics of 'evidence' and take a slow path towards keeping meanings radically inappropriable as a form of methodological resistance. This does not mean, however, that this research project will be grounded by a reticence to engage with familiar forms of 'data' and 'doing' research, rather it merely alters the pace, method and direction of travel as I engage at the ethical and political limits of possibility for 'what counts' as 'real' research and data as an integral aspect of the radical research design and analysis that considers 'all tissues of meaning as texts' (Parker, 1992, p. 7).

(De)composing 'data'…

Further, by (re)conceptualsing what counts as 'data' and acknowledging the limits of its appearance and the (im)possibilities of interpretation this means that, rather than attempting to 'know' or 'read' 'data' as something that one can grasp and simplify in order to extract 'meaning', I endeavour to undo 'data' as traditionally conceived and offer 'something else', something which remains unfathomable as I work within and

against the grain of conventional routes towards interpretation and 'meaning'. In Patti Lather's words, I hope to develop an interpretive framework which foregrounds: 'an awareness of the complexity, historical contingency and fragility of the practices we invent to discover the truth about ourselves' (1992, p. 88). This project therefore, aims to disrupt the tyranny of transparent 'data' by engaging with Derrida's notion of *absent presence*. 'That which is never there in a physical or "real" sense, but that which is always already there, preceding our speaking and writing.' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 17), and navigate a different kind of research journey which manoeuvres (in)between the (in)visible, (in)audible, (in)perceptible moments that (dis)appear when 'data' are (un)done in order to produce knowledge differently. Yet even before I *do* anything further (devise research questions, consider *where* this research journey might go or take me), I'm aware of a quiet but powerful tension that creates a pervasive anxiety about the risks of deviating from the conventional research route via the haunting subtext of future 'employability' discourse in a research context where the tyranny of 'evidence' looms large across a multitude of academic disciplines.

Some thoughts from 'the field'...
3.Meeting the Master

The trouble with telling the story of what a co-operative school is or might be began with an awkward encounter at the Co-operative College in Manchester, home to the master of its creation, the college Chief Executive and Principal. Somewhat ill prepared and slightly nervous, I found myself seated at the table next to the chief executive of the co-operative college with a 'right hand woman' seated by his side. Power and authority pervaded his every word as he set forth with a passionate monologue in which he recounted how the co-operative model of schooling had been borne out of a desire to halt the 'predatory action of academy chains'. Enthralled and transfixed (and ever so slightly terrified) I listened without scribbling a single word onto my notebook, which stared back at me pristine and empty, except for the neatly scribed title, 'what is a co-operative school?' I remember little else from that first encounter, apart from an overwhelming anxiety that 'these people' at the co-operative school had clearly got the wrong end of the stick, or else I had. Somewhere along the way, the purpose of my research had become entangled with somebody else's agenda - the need to create an evidence base to

plot the 'value' and 'impact' of co-operative schools. I can clearly recall my discomfort as I fielded questions about my intentions for this research project and endured an examination of my (sparse) knowledge of co-operative schools. I had visited the co-operative college in order to percolate ideas and begin to clarify my uncertain quest but left feeling more confused than when I arrived. There appeared to be an undeniable need for the co-operative college to support their cause and build a reasoned argument that would speak the language of policy-makers and technocrats who yielded the power to enable the co-operative model to 'perform' in the mainstream. But this was not my job. It took me some time to be confident about this and I could not resist checking the advert for the studentship on my mobile phone as I travelled home. 'We are open to ideas about the specific research foci the doctoral research may wish to take within the broad context described above'. Slightly relieved but still uncertain, I set about writing my 'own' research proposal.

An uneasy relationship: (dis)orientating 'data'

Despite recoiling at the term 'data' and all that it implies, at the beginning of my research journey I felt compelled to gather a range of 'empirical materials' (Denzin, 2013) that would assist me in carrying out the bewildering task of 'contributing to knowledge' about co-operative schools, and the pursuit of 'data' seemed a dangerous, but nevertheless necessary, exercise. The task that lay before me was to produce an account of how an alternative model of schooling might be understood within a contemporary context of profuse educational change and flux. In spite of the fact that I was deeply suspicious of 'data', I needed 'something' with which to provoke a conversation about 'what' a co-operative school *is* and could potentially *do*. I felt I needed to get my hands on some 'data'! Albeit to use it/them as a 'way out of the closure of knowledge' (Spivak, 1976, p. lxxvii) via deconstruction. Given the infancy of this particular model of 'schooling' and the absence of academic research undertaken within this sector of English state education (Woodin, 2011), my methodological direction was necessarily skewed towards generating as deep an understanding of the 'co-operative' school as might be possible within the confines of a three year PhD study. As a result of this, fundamental research aims were initially borne out of questioning the need to clarify and conceptualise how the co-operative movement's historical values and principles might be (re)mediated within the context

of twenty-first century approaches to 'schooling', yet remain open to the contingent demands of democratic education in the broadest sense, regardless of the impossibility of this pursuit.

Upon first hearing about the co-operative model of schooling I was both intrigued and skeptical about the potential of this model to instigate a radical revision of dominant educational practice. And after a brief period of familiarizing myself with the political aims and ideals of co-operative ideology my thoughts were punctuated by both hopefulness and despair of the potential of this model of schooling to interrupt the momentum of neo-liberal pedagogy (McCafferty, 2010). Nevertheless, a few months into the project, and after much soul searching and deliberation, I decided to consciously position myself as a 'critical friend' to the co-operative cause, in order to convey this contradictory desire to be supportive of the co-operative movement's ethical aims whilst retaining an inherent skepticism that diffracted my lens as I engaged with this project from a critical standpoint at the same time.

From the very beginning, it became clear to me that I would need to develop a positive relationship with The Co-operative College in order to secure crucial support from key personnel who retained a measure of power in enabling access to potential collaborators and participants of this research project. From the outset, my research supervisors made it clear to me that my interests and position as a researcher of this field were in no way compromised by the university's relationship with The Co-operative College, as my studentship bursary and fees were funded entirely by Manchester Metropolitan University in order to eliminate any conflict of interests that a formal relationship between these two organisations might ordinarily imply. That said, hidden agendas, implicit expectations, obligations to third parties and Other's investments in my work constituted a source of constant ethical anxiety throughout the research process, and is a subject that is explored in greater depth later in my analysis.

Asking 'the right' Questions?

The Co-operative College have a vested interest in portraying their particular approach to schooling as a 'success' in neo liberal terms, yet aspire to remain true to the movement's historical values and principles of democracy and equality. This paradox is constructed out of a contradictory need to 'perform' education along a tightrope which traverses antithetical readings of freedom; firstly in order to develop a large enough stake within the state sector of schooling and offer an alternative, 'co-operative voice', these schools need to appear to offer educational 'impact' through the preferred neo-liberal route and repress articulating a version of educational 'outcomes' of a very different kind (i.e those entrenched in the historical socialist values and principles of the co-operative movement), and secondly this paradox is complicated further by the pragmatic need to resist 'privatisation' by any means (although this was never made explicit, but was whispered as motivating factor by some schools). This tricky position of trying to appeal to both the far right and left of the political spectrum as both an ideological and a pragmatic exercise, generates anxiety for early pioneers of this model of schooling, in that it is far from clear, how co-operative schools can fully articulate the potential of this model to make a distinct difference to social inequalities within the prevailing neo-liberal discourse of educational provision. Regardless of this, it is hoped that schools will retain a measure of security, in that, by becoming 'co-operative' they are assured protection from being 'academised'[8], but once again this ambivalent motivation complicates the 'how?' and 'why?' schools 'become co-operative' debate further.

A Co-operative Currency?

Initial communication with major stakeholders of this model indicated that they were best placed to be able to collate and configure basic units of analysis in terms of

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[8] Although, it appears that for one school (which sought protection through being part of a cluster of Special Schools in Devon) this might not necessarily be the case. After going into Special Measures the school was informed that they had to become a sponsored Academy and withdraw from the Trust by the Department for Education. The staff recently approached the school's Governors and asked them to consider working with the rest of the co-operative Trust in order to fight the impending academisation. At the time of writing the matter remains unresolved.

documenting the more superficial indications of 'success' such as GCSE exam grade pass rates and progress in *Ofsted* inspection and so on. The commercial value of such narrow measures of educational 'success' continue to be mobilised as 'hard evidence' that confirms co-operative schooling 'works' in order to garner political currency as part of a wider underlying political strategy which seeks to enable the model to grow into a significant sector of schools within the boundaries of state educational provision and thus develop a more powerful voice.

In addition, early conversations with key personnel who were responsible for 'schools and young people', also conveyed a desire to make the 'hidden' values and visions of co-operation 'more visible' alongside the more obvious, instrumental markers of educational attainment that schools are compelled to publish. Therefore, one of the immediate challenges in formulating initial research questions, and a methodological strategy for exploring these, centred on developing an argument that highlighted the need to move away from conceptualising the school as site of 'production' of pre-determined, easily measurable and quantifiable outcomes in order to challenge the ambivalent discursive frames that that co-operative models of 'schooling' are positioned (and at times position themselves?) within. Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p.9) point to ways in which a range of technologies of 'quality' (amongst many others) monitor, assess and attribute value to processes and outcomes of education from the early years through to adulthood. Thus, they argue that:

> …if we peer behind the vacant public face of quality, we can discern a technical claim: that it is feasible and desirable to find and apply scientifically based, value-free and stable standards for evaluating preschool (or other) services. Such criteria, the claim goes, replace the need for making a 'subjective' evaluation with the application of a technical, 'objective' practice. Once reduced to a set of criteria that constitutes a norm, quality can be assessed using a technical instrument that measures conformity of a service to the norm…what these normalising technologies have in common is an administrative logic, an intention and capacity to govern more effectively by ensuring that correct outcomes are delivered.

My explicit attempts to move away from the hegemony of technocratic practice placed the aims of my research project in direct opposition to the dominant framework of measuring 'value' and 'quality' in terms of 'technico- instrumental' discourse (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) and 'what works?' research methodology.

Schostak and Schostak (2008) explore the degrees to which 'normal' and 'radical' research, maintain or disrupt the status quo respectively and forward the argument that:

> The purpose of radical research, however, is to suggest an alternative to the preceding strategies. It is an approach that maintains a radical openness to difference while seeking to build communities of support for difference. To maintain such an approach means that there is a sense in which radical research is 'post disciplinary' in that it refuses to be reduced to the confines of particular disciplines and refuses to keep the boundaries of disciplines intact…where design structures, *de-sign* loosens and opens the possibilities for a play of alternatives to inform judgement and action ethically, politically' (my emphasis, pp. 8-9).

As I steered this research project towards developing an interpretative framework that would enable me to contest the seemingly incontestable technologies which align the practice and purpose of 'schooling' according to the 'norm' of narrowly defined criteria, I meddled with the 'usual' notion of questioning how schools 'add value' and began to consider how an alternative model of 'schooling' might resist 'technologies of quality' and create the conditions for exploring alternative readings of value in education. This generates an alternative set of questions to explore:

- What is taken for granted as being of *value* in education?

- *How* is schooling constructed as a *valuable* social institution?

- And *who* or *what* defines *value? What* is *valuable* to *whom?*

Therefore, in order to be able to critically explore the emergence of a co-operative model of schooling, as a 'legitimate' alternative *within* the traditional state sector model, I needed to develop a radical research de-sign (Schostak & Schostak, 2008) which pursued a 'radical openness to difference' by challenging the 'taken for granted' as a central methodological aim. The next section goes on to explain how the provisional formulation of a radical research methodology was subject to the provocation of surprising encounters, accidents and de-sign.

1.c. Accident and *De-sign*

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

(First published in *The Mountain Interval*, 1920)

'I took the road less travelled', by chance and by design.

Frost's metaphor of the archetypal dilemma, in which one has to choose between one path or another as an accretion of choice and chance, highlights the impossibility of ever separating the two, and resonates deeply with the predicament that I found myself placed within at the beginning of this research project. To 'begin' I needed to formulate a coherent approach to 'finding out' about the co-operative model of schooling, but at the same time the manner in which I approached 'finding out', the path 'I took', would make 'all the difference', and bear a significant relation to *how*

and *what* might be interpreted as a result of my engagement, notwithstanding the confusion that the iterative nature of qualitative enquiry also added to the mix. On the face of it, decisions are made and followed through, or not. Others are seemingly 'out of our control' and subject to accidents, rules, regulations and wishes of others all of which are interwoven amongst a multitude of (un)foreseeable historical, material, personal, political, circumstances and power relations. But like Frost, I doubt that: 'I should ever come back' (to an alternative path); it would be impossible to even try. That is the point. My purpose here, is not to second guess Frost's intent or rationale for writing the poem or to even discover its 'hidden meaning', but to underline the fact that when faced with a potential research project one can pursue countless theoretical, methodological and ethical positions and directions; which, from the very instant one begins to percolate ideas about a given or chosen research subject, are both influenced by, and entangled with, the material and discursive resources that shape the epistemological, ontological and ethical terrain of 'research'. Whereas many interpretations of Frost's poem turn towards regret or remorse for the road not taken, I am interested here in critically exploring *how* this path (my research journey) bears the footprints of particular relations, opportunities and events that emerged as I occupied a particular spatial-temporal-material-theoretical space; determined by both the small amount of preparation required to 'access' and 'occupy' marginal research space and a good measure of remaining alert to the unpredictable forms and unexpected places where something like 'data' might emerge.

Whereas a positivist research paradigm explicitly aims to engender reliability and replicability, poststructural qualitative research foregrounds the fact that: 'our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to supress them' (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 962) and thus research becomes entangled with the researcher's own situatedness, producing a unique, one of a kind exploration that is impossible to duplicate. As a consequence of this, some stories will invariably remain forgotten or remembered at a later stage, and at different moments different stories may beg to be (re)told again and again, but regardless of what stays 'in', transforms or gets thrown 'out', the subjects and objects of these stories are the contingent artefacts of ideas, texts, people, memories, feelings, relations, material objects and spaces that evolve and transform with every view, vantage point and reading.

Some thoughts from 'the field'…

 4. *'Truth' Games: on being put in one's place.*

I learnt very early on that in addition to managing my own concerns about my capacity to choose a 'valid' research paradigm and thus produce 'legitimate' knowledge, I also needed to learn to navigate Other's investment in my 'potential' and at least appear to have acquired the 'right' credentials. My first encounter with one member of the Co-operative College marked the beginning of an uncomfortable relation with 'truth' telling that emerged as a motif of Derrida's deferral of meaning through the notion of différance in a number of later research encounters. On this occasion, I was invited to speak with a member of staff who offered to assist me with finding ideas for drawing up a research proposal. Here, I was encouraged to think about which research topics might prove most fruitful (for 'all' concerned?), and in light of an earlier conversation with the college Chief Executive, I became increasingly aware that I was not the only person with an investment in this decision. As the conversation progressed, I was asked about my areas of interest and previous qualifications. Somewhat naively, I responded with what now seems like excruciating honestly, and mentioned that I was struggling to make sense of it all in light of the fact that I had only just completed a first degree in Psychology and although I was developing a keen interest in critical psychology and post structural theory, I admitted that I was still undecided where I might begin. I was soon put in my place as this person exclaimed how 'lucky' I was to have been offered a PhD studentship without obtaining a masters degree, then the conversation quickly turned to concerns about my ability to travel to distant co-operative schools (with regard to how I would manage childcare provisions) and of 'having a lot of ground to cover' in light of my 'lack of research training'. Regardless of stating my interest in post structural theory, I was told not to worry too much about method and offered support with NVivo[9] which was claimed to be "much more straight forward" (reading my inexperience under the subtext of incompetence perhaps?). I left feeling awkward and out of place, questioning my desire and failure to 'fit' with the category of academic researcher. I resolved that next time, I would be deliberately opaque about my marital status, childcare needs and academic qualifications in order to avoid another awkward exchange.

This 'exchange' diverted my attention to the more subtle and covert discourses of power-knowledge that circulate within research encounters yet are rarely remarked upon, destined to remain in the margins of those more appealing field notes which work to garner faith in the researcher as a detached, 'suitably

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[9] NVivio is a piece of computer software that supports the collection and interpretation of mixed methods data coding and management See http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx for a full description.

qualified' objective observer and purveyor of 'rationality' and 'truth'. As a new researcher, I had hoped to find support and collegiality at the Co-operative College, and over the last three years I have to acknowledge my immense gratitude for the wealth of support, advice and resources that have been offered by various members of the college. However, it is also important to make a space within this piece of research for acknowledging that the negotiation of 'assistance' and 'support' is not an innocent process which cannot be divorced from both the restrictive and affirmative dimensions of one's (in)visible position as a situated being performing the role of research/er.

(Re)imagining 'the field'

Defining 'the field' is a precarious business. Like St. Pierre: 'it's not just that I don't know where the field is, I don't know when it is either' (2000a, p. 262). Determining the interior or exterior architecture of 'the field' can be conceived as a productive practice which can also serve as a menacing device for 'policing presence' (Burman & MacLure, 2011, p. 289) at the same time. According to Renton the: 'field is both place and production, always expanding' (in Frankham & MacRae, 2011, p.37) which thus reflects the indistinct location of the researcher who slips between shifting thoughts and action; coming and going, inside and outside of 'the field' as an (in)visible methodological movement. As Burman & MacLure (2011, p.289) note: 'the field' is no less a textualised, power-infused space than that of theory, though its contours are different'. Moreover, as soon as the researcher specifies *where* s/he intends to *do* research, this has the effect of situating the researcher within a particular 'field', thus staking out particular boundaries and designating specific categories to which 'it' or 'they' belong. Moreover, being *here*, or *there* also demands distinguishing *where* and *who* one is not. The very task of locating a field/site that is neither here, there, or anywhere, raises a number of pertinent questions and troubles what is meant by 'field' as a 'space' and/or 'stance' and explodes the myth that a 'field' can simply be referred to as a common destination in the realm of research methodology. Marcus (1995, p. 95) navigates this dilemma in his paper on *the emergence of a multi-sited ethnography* whereby he reconceptualises the location of the researcher within new spheres of interdisciplinary work (such as, Media studies, cultural studies, science and technology studies and feminist studies) which reflect the

reflexive persona of the ethnographer as a 'circumstantial activist' situated within a 'field' of multiple locations. He reasons that this has emerged:

> …precisely because such interdisciplinary areas do not share a clearly bonded object of study, [and] distinct disciplinary perspectives in them need to be challenged. For ethnography this means that the world system is not the theoretically constituted holistic frame that gives context to the contemporary study of peoples or local subjects closely observed by ethnographers, but it becomes, in a piecemeal way, integral to and embedded in discontinuities, multi-sited objects of study… strategies of quite literally following connections, associations, and putative relationships are thus at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research. (P.97)

In light of the risk that method are utilised as 'devices for policing the present' as Burman and MacLure allude to above, I argue that we need to further develop Marcus's comment that one needs to *follow:* 'connections, associations, and putative relationships [are thus] *sic* at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research' and underscore the need to deconstruct and trouble *how*, *why* and *what* is 'followed' as an integral political and ethical tenet of research methodology.

In the beginning I felt lost and insecure without a comprehensive map and rule book to follow. I still do. Not knowing who and where to turn towards, in what seemed like a futile search for the 'meaning' of co-operative schools, led me along a number of cul-de-sacs and blind alleys. And although I didn't appreciate it at the time, my frustrations turned out to be just another stopping point in coming to the realisation that, despite the words and wisdom of decades of research providing an endless supply of ideas and avenues to follow, I could not hide behind the security of blindly following a methodological map embossed by the hallmarks of the liberal individual of Enlightenment humanism. I needed to develop a new compass with which to guide me along the demanding terrain that my research encounters (and sometimes research participants) led me along. With this in mind, I attempt to navigate a path that engages with an eclectic body of feminist poststructural approaches that cut across disciplinary boundaries and share an explicit acknowledgement of the impossibility of 'value free' science which recognizes that: 'both researcher and participant are positioned and being positioned by virtue of history and context' (Olesen, 2005, p. 248). Whilst not forgetting that: '[w]e are not single persons, but a multitude of possibilities any one of which might reveal itself in a specific field

situation' (Lincoln, 1997, p. 42), I consider my approach to research *de-sign* as one in which I occupy the precarious ground that hovers in-between the binaries of the seemingly arbitrary and the rational, the knowable and the unknowable, the static and the dynamic, the individual and the collective; here I stray from the well signposted domain of 'legitimate' research and approach 'the field' as a moving, fluid space that becomes ever more entangled with (un)expected subjects, objects and places that continually (re)form the boundaries of 'the field'. I guess you could refer to my position as that of the 'circumstantial activist' that Marcus (1995) imagines above but, more than that, I want to underline the paradoxical nature of this provisional research *de-sign* as one which is always already spontaneous, yet structured and determined; seeking to punctuate the limits of these seemingly immutable structures, all at the same time. Moreover, in building a research *de-sign* that aims to reveal how power is constituted and operates in-between the spaces and interests of the few and the many, this thesis becomes an iterative product of particular research engagements and moments whereby the *conditions* of 'seeing', 'hearing' and 'knowing' filters who, what, where and how research objects, subjects and locations come into focus and overlay the narratives that later unfold. And while I explicitly aim to engender a collective, emancipatory approach to producing knowledge about the co-operative school, I also remain aware that this intention is contingent upon the extent to which Others are constrained (but not necessarily determined) by the conditions of participation which are subject to (re)negotiation at every turn.

This bewildering entanglement (dis)orders the construction of the discursive terrain of research power-knowledge as it becomes something Other; a product of enigmatic relations between participants - space - time - discourses - theories and 'things' of which I cannot even begin to think, let alone name, differentiate or locate within the confines of 'a field' in which this research project could be said to reside. I find Karen Barad's (in St.Pierre, 2013, p. 464) notion of entanglement useful here as a means to illustrate the impossibility of plotting a smooth progression from research idea to action within any given research space or 'field':

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled

intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future.

Thus, as I try to climb out of this methodological breach, fissured by the rejection of the comfort and authority that circulates within the predictable limits and reliable spaces of 'legitimate' research, I find myself confounded by the apparent limits of ever *knowing* or ever *being* ethical enough, whilst yet never being able to define what these limits are in advance, or otherwise. Indeed I am tempted at this point to turn around and seek refuge in the ethical codes of modernity that: 'spare the actor a lot of anxious groping around in the dark [and]… avoid the gnawing feeling that the account can never be closed' (Bauman, 1995, p. 4). Still, however tempting, that will not do. And as I try to fumble my way through the shadows of this dark, angst-ridden abyss, I cling onto Barad's notion of entanglement as a useful device for loosening the threads that ensnare the powerful projects of modernity. Moreover, as I begin to question and re-think the research *de-sign*, not as 'a thing in itself', but instead as existing only *in relation* to the people and actions and things that it attempts to understand; rather than attempting to situate myself with/in a particular research space, it becomes possible to describe 'how' something that resembles 'a field' or space emerges as a result of these intra-actions. Thus producing the effect of (dis)locating the bearings of this research journey to the infinite edges where it remains impossible to discern a progression from 'here' to 'there' as a linear passage of time within a containable space as I attempt to write. With this in mind, how then, might I articulate this oblique passage that moves from thinking about research to actually 'doing' research in a manner that does not fall foul of accusations of relativism, unintelligibility or pure science fiction? For, this shift from research ideas to critical ethnographic account did not simply 'follow' the arbitrary stories of *any*one or *any* place that claimed a relation to 'co-operative schooling' without question or anxiety, no more than a clear and given path was or could be decided in advance.

Myriad forms of navigating the inevitable distance between, observation and interpretation, or 'the field' and 'the page', have been attempted throughout diverse research paradigms that cling to the metaphysical comforts of 'presence' in a bid to appear to offer unmediated access to reality (*cf.*Burman & MacLure, 2011; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). And in so claiming the unproblematic occupation of such a space which gets close to 'the real' or 'natural' origins of truth or nature, the method/s one 'chooses' can be seen as presenting to the world a particular route that captures and mediates versions of 'the real' or 'the natural' as the fundamental objective of undertaking research, regardless of whether this flawless feat can ever in fact be pulled off. Derrida famously drew attention to the impossibility of direct access to this metaphysical ground of 'presence' as he termed it, thus refusing the existence of anything 'outside-text'. That is to say that, he deemed the location of a particular vantage point which offered unmediated access to 'truth' or 'reality', that is not in some way mediated textually, a necessary but hopeless task.

Derrida also points out that this inevitable reliance upon the 'text' (by text I refer here to any sign or symbol, not necessarily only the 'written') as a mediator of 'presence' (and all that this implies in terms of proximity to the 'truth out there' and so on), sustains the 'violence' of binary oppositions which produce sub/ordinate pairings as a consequence of the difference between the two terms. For example, nature/culture, presence/absence, mind/body, reason/emotion, man/woman and so on. If one considers the binary positions that circulate within the discourse of 'good' research it is possible to consider the casualties that might occur in the production of knowledge that sustains and affirms the boundaries of research in terms of, good/bad, truth/error, reality/representation, evidence/supposition, and so the list goes on. Navigating a position for oneself as a researcher curiously present, yet absent, writing retrospectively after 'the event' that is 'research' reflects the pressures that such binary logic brings to bear upon the production of 'knowledge' as a consequence of the metaphysical privilege of presence. Derrida offers the notion of deconstruction as a way of navigating this paradox, in terms of seeking to explore the 'spacing' in between such binary oppositions, which sustain the 'violence' produced

within hierarchies of presence. Indeed for Gayatri Spivak (1976) this: 'seems to offer a way out of the closure of knowledge' (p. Ixxvii).

Therefore I aim to foreclose the possibility of any form of unmediated access to the fundamental 'essence' of co-operative schooling in advance of offering any further thoughts-analysis-writing. I also have to admit that coming to appreciate the full extent of the violence that can occur (between researcher/researched, fieldwork/theory) occurs a result of personal, political and ethical responses to articulating the ethics of poststructural research, *'in the air', 'on the ground' and 'on the page'* which only came to mind with retrospect, that is, only after the event of being 'entangled' (with)in the field'.

A Foucauldian Appeal…

Like many others, (for example, Ball, 2013; Graham, 2005) I hesitate to define my analytical framework as exclusively 'Foucauldian'. The very nature of this research problem does, however, demand an exploration of alternative discursive resources that might resist the stranglehold of instrumental views of education which continue to dominate contemporary educational research (MacLure, 2005). Therefore, Michel Foucault's ideas about the opaque workings of power through discourse cannot fail to inflect my engagement with this research problem as I probe the possibilities and challenges that a counter discourse of 'schooling' (in the form of the co-operative model) might necessarily imply. What is more, in questioning: 'what can be said, by whom, where and when?' (Parker, in Arribas-Allyon & Walkerdine, 2008, p.91) about 'co-operative schools' it is hoped that this may offer a productive terrain upon which to consider how a 'co-operative' discourse of education might facilitate or limit the emergence (or perhaps only brief appearance) of a more democratic model of state education in England at this present time. In this case, a loose form of 'Foucauldian' discourse analysis is employed throughout which also incorporates a wider poststructural lens to include, but not limited to, other key theorists such as Derrida, Butler and Lacan who offer a range of useful vantage points with which to steer the direction of travel towards unravelling the meaning of education, co-operative and otherwise.

In order to trace the discursive world of co-operative schooling and map out a range of possible ways of becoming subject to and of the co-operative school in terms of potential political, social and psychic effects, this research project concerns itself with developing knowledge that (dis)locates a range of discursive resources that are made (un)available within and across the symbolic systems of 'co-operative' school culture. Rather than focus upon forms of explicit language-based analyses, I aim to consider a wide range of materials and 'consider all tissues of meaning as texts' (Parker, 1992, p. 7) in order to examine how educational discourse penetrates wider processes of legitimation and power in the form of policy contexts, social structures and institutions in addition to the subjectivities and experiences of individual actors.

In particular, Foucault foregrounds the value of analysing the construction of dominant discourses in order that one can 'loosen the embrace' of 'words and things' as a means to conceptualise what is irreducible to language: 'this "more" that we must reveal and describe' (1989a, p.54). And it is towards this 'more', more than language, more than what *can be said* that I specifically want to move towards. A reading of Michel Foucault alongside Jacques Derrida informs this analysis as I endeavour to deconstruct how discourses 'form the objects and subjects of which they speak' in order to gain a sense of this 'more' that resists definition or capture. In aspiring to offer knowledge about what a co-operative school *is* or *could be* I am keen to ensure that this work does not fall into the trap of describing a range of 'empirical realities' as universal 'truths' that set in place limits, boundaries and categories of 'being' 'co-operative' or not. Instead, I aim to follow the impossible terrain that underlines the contestable and contingent nature of democratic education or the (im)possibility of democratic education, as Derrida might say.

Approaching Justice in De-sign

The path that emerged took its form as a result of squeezing through some almost impenetrable gaps that appeared fractionally easier, and sometimes even harder to cross, after intense deliberation and questioning of how I might purposefully pursue social justice in education and educational research. Indeed, my wavering and stumbling, was often brought about by following the ruminations of philosophical

giants whose presence according to Biesta (2001) continues to obscure the incalculable nature of justice in education, and of which Popke (2004, p. 302) claims to have been hinged upon a modern discourse that 'legislates certainty', resulting in the creation of: 'the conditions of possibility for an abdication of our ethical responsibility'.

At this point I still remain perplexed and plagued by the fear that, in bringing to light this inescapable paradox (or aporia as Derrida calls it) that afflicts the uncertain, unpredictable nature of justice as an ethical response toward the alterity of the other and the unknown; will I run the risk of perhaps being *more* irresponsible, paralysed by the endless quandaries of ever being ethical *enough* in this project that seeks the unattainable, to be 'just' in my approach to research *de-sign*? In short, I have to say an *impossible* no and a yes in the best Derridean fashion I can muster. Although, as I turn to Derrida's lecture in which he addresses *deconstruction and the possibility of Justice* (in Derrida & Caputo, 1997) I glimpse a flicker of something that might enable me to develop an approach to educational research that brings justice into sharper focus, at the very least. Moreover, in coming to Derrida's notion that 'deconstruction is justice', the necessary and complicated relation between the two might offer some hope that an examination of the ethical aporias of education might just help me out of this fix.

The tension between meeting the demands of the universal and the particular is aporetic in so far as, for a legal decision to be just, it demands a consideration of both. Derrida does not deny or dispense the need for the law or rules, yet in order to attend to 'justice to come' he proffers that the first aporia to navigate must be that of 'the suspension of the Law', which might be extrapolated to the 'rules' of the school perhaps? Edgoose (2001) further explains this aporia by pointing to the fact that there must be a continuity of legal precedent and the discontinuity of a fresh judgment with respect to each particular case and quotes directly from Derrida when he states that for a legal decision to be just:

> It must, in its proper moment, if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent it in the reaffirmation and the new confirmation of its principle. (Derrida, in Edgoose, 2001, p.129)

In Derrida's address to a critical legal theory conference on deconstruction and justice (in Edgoose, 2001, p.129) he argues his case by bringing the ambiguous relations between the law and justice into sharp relief when he explains that, in deconstructing the structures of the law and explicitly pushing its limits, this opens up a space to contemplate the impossible, outside or off centre from what is already known or possible, in this case a research journey that exceeds 'the map' perhaps? This 'experience' as Derrida refers to it, encounters an impossible passage: 'the experience of the aporia of the non road' (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 134), an excursion that propels us against the very limits of possibility for arriving at justice.

> "there is" justice, only if there is aporia, only if the way is blocked, only if we have run up against a stone wall. When the way is not blocked, then we are just sailing along on automatic, with cruise control and with our hands barely on the wheel, staying inside the lines, applying the law, remaining securely within the horizon of the possible, of the programmable and applicable. We could let a computer do it. (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 135)

If I tackle the first 'brick wall' that I appear to be hurtling towards, namely *not* 'staying in the lines' of orthodox research paths, then perhaps I could consider this roadblock in light of the first irresolvable contradiction that Derrida suggests we encounter in, 'the aporia of suspension' (Edgoose, 2001). Here Derrida argues that by merely following the law (or in this case, following the prescribed route of traditional research method), and failing to question or deconstruct its limits, that we evade the need to think ethically or make any sort of decision altogether and deny the heteronomy of justice (Derrida & Caputo, 1997). In the case of ethnography, many before me have wrestled with the traditions of observing and ultimately making the Other the same in these suspect practices of interpretation, that seek credence through rational and stable thought or what Deborah Britzman (2000, p. 28) terms: '[t]he straight version of ethnography 101' - Versions of reality that fail to acknowledge the fact that 'the authority of the ethnography, the ethnographer, and the reader is always suspect'. What is more, offering the basis for belief and authenticity, regardless of 'method' chosen, rests on this very same elusive authorial authority that is required in order to be 'believed' in the first place. Thus, although an unquestioned or uncritical eye on the traditional products and practices of ethnography might result in an 'unjust' reading of co-operative education, 'suspending' the claims of 'authenticity', 'reality' or of the validity of simply 'being

there' might enable me to work within a framework that is cognizant of the ethnographic aim, yet also allows a transgression of this space to 'produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently', as St. Pierre (2000b, p. 27) suggests. An ambitious aim, but one which I pursue, nonetheless.

As I strive to 'produce knowledge differently', in the pursuit of an elusive, more 'just' epistemology, I continually come across another of Derrida's brick walls; a wall which causes this writing to hesitate, backtrack and wander the path frequented by *The Ghost of Undecidability:*

> Only a decision is just… Justice must be continually invented, or reinvented, from decision to decision, in the occasionalistic and "interventionalistic" time of the moment. That is why Derrida speaks of a "ghost" of undecidability; for the undecidability is never set aside, never over and done with. It hovers over a situation before, during, and after the decision, like a specter of justice, disturbing it from within, divesting it of absolute self-assurance. (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 139).

Derrida does not argue that the law is superfluous or in opposition to justice, indeed just the reverse. He points out that the two are embedded within each other's (in)compatibility, and in order to resolve the unresolvable, one must begin the impossible task of deconstructing the universal and the particular: 'laws ought to be just, otherwise they are monsters; and justice requires the force of the law, otherwise it is a wimp' (p.136). So how does this relate to navigating justice as an integral facet of educational research *de-sign*? Following Derrida, Biesta (2001, p. 50) argues that: '[t]he relationship between deconstruction, justice, and education is, in other words, anything but accidental', and quotes Derrida's argument that: 'at the basis of all our decisions lies a radical *undecidability* which cannot be closed off by our decisions but which "continues to inhabit the decision" (p.49, original emphasis). Further quoting Derrida, Biesta makes the point that: 'ethics and politics only *begin* when this undecidabilty, which makes the decision at the very same time "necessary and impossible" is acknowledged (p.49). Perhaps, therefore, this might explain some of the difficulties I encounter in trying to assure myself, and you the reader, that I can perhaps put this dithering to productive use, as I continually question and deconstruct the merit of this ethnographic encounter with the co-operative school. Indeed, the presence of indecision could be said to form a central motif of this work

as the fact that painstaking processes of devising initial research questions led to ever more questions, and pushed the arrival of any sort of definitive answer further and further away, will attest. Yet whilst acknowledging the difficulty of *ever* finding an unequivocal answer to any problem, might seem to those of a poststructural bent, an inevitable consequence of deconstructive work, how can I put all of this indecision and suspension 'to work', and offer something of *use* or of *value* as I strive to lend a critical eye to the rules or 'laws' that come into play in producing knowledge about the co-operative school?

Just decide! Derrida and the ethical aporias of education.

I borrow this sub heading from Julian Edgooses's chapter in *Derrida & Education* (2001) as I approach the final brick wall and almost reach the point of abandoning this ethical soul search altogether, or at least try to stop banging my head against it. For the desire, and indeed the pragmatic need, to *do* something, *say* something, useful roars in response to spending too much time trying to navigate this unknowable, unfathomable abyss. For there comes a point where one has to act and *just decide!* Fortunately Derrida agrees. His final aporia is the contradiction of *Urgency*. The *Just decide!* appears not a second too late as I am convinced that Caputo is right. Justice is indeed 'a paralyzing paradox (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 132). But a necessary one nonetheless.

Following Derrida's three aporia in the impossible pursuit of justice in relation to the law, might it be possible to conceive an educational research methodology that is embedded in its own impossible endeavour as I attempt to produce a narrative that is pierced by the deconstruction of events that hold together and pull apart the realities that are inevitably betrayed in these openly dubious portrayals? I am not entirely convinced, but we shall see how deconstructing the 'field', the 'stories' and the 'voices' that signify the co-operative school might interrupt this untellable tale that is written as both an acknowledgement and an interruption of the possibility of seeking justice in education and in educational research. So on with the decision-making and the writing!

Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St.Pierre (2005, p. 959) argue that the practice of writing is a method of inquiry in its own w/rite, and it is towards the difficulties that one encounters in making this claim that I engage with now, as I attempt to develop an ethical self: 'engaged in social action and social reform'. In the sections that follow, I consider how I might weave together a research narrative that interupts 'the easy read' (Britzman, 2000), through a critical discursive analysis of the 'texts' produced by contemporary policy documents and the co-operative college, alongside a deconstruction of the 'textualised' spaces of the co-operative school.

1.d.
Encountering Ethnography: from the page to the field and back again

Plotting Methodological Co-ordinates

After exploring a range of methodological possibilities, I selected ethnography as the most fruitful approach with which I could generate a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1988) of 'what *was* going on here?' In this case, a critical educational ethnography offered me both a way of gathering a diverse range of empirical materials and also a theoretical resource with which to guide my thoughts-writing-analysis of *how* the material-discursive framework of 'co-operative schooling' shapes and is shaped by complex relations of power, knowledge and subjectivity. From the outset, I hoped to generate a corpus of 'rough materials' (Bogden & Biklen, 2006) that offered rich examples of the social construction and historical variability of 'co-operative' education in order to consider both the problems and possibilities that this new framework of 'schooling' and implied re-structuring of power-relations may offer to the project of engendering greater social justice in education. In calling forth Foucault's notion that:

> Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere…Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non egalitarian and mobile relations. (Foucault, 1990a, pp. 93-4)

I considered that such a depth of experience and illustration of the complex circulation of power relations would have been very difficult to map out using methods such as interviewing and participant-observation alone. Therefore, I incorporated a discourse analytic approach to both the 'collection' of materials and subsequent writing-analysis which placed the relations of power-knowledge and taken for granted acceptance of 'regimes of truth' under critical scrutiny. From the very beginning, I was mindful that this research needed to be sensitive both to the intertextual nature of material that I gathered, and also acknowledge the intersubjective frames from which these materials were and are (re)constructed and (re)interpreted. This research project sought, therefore, to understand how multiple

identities and subjectivities can be (de)constructed from outside and within the particular historical and socio-political context of 'the co-operative school', foregrounding the complexities embedded within the production of power-relations as an integral aspect of this analysis. For as Kamela Visweswaran (1994, p. 80) argues, deconstructive ethnography goes one step further in terms of reflexivity and: 'emphasizes how we think we know what we know is neither transparent nor innocent'.

Following signposts, detours and diversions…

My ethnographic engagement with the 'co-operative' school extends way beyond simply 'being there' (Geertz, 1988) at the physical sites of specific schools. Long before I stepped over the threshold of a single school gate I had spent months researching and analysing the socio-political context of contemporary state 'schooling' in a bid to begin a form of 'genealogy' which Foucault defines as a:

> …gray, meticulous and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. (Foucault, 1991)

This 'scratching over' or 'recopying' that Foucault refers to above resonated closely with the manner in which this 'new' model of state sector schooling became conceivable as part of an: 'intertextual network of texts and events' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 420) which intersect the current educational policy landscape and the historical social and educational ambitions of the co-operative movement. Despite the fact that Foucault dedicated a significant proportion of his attention to mapping out a historical account of the formation of contemporary ideas about 'words and things' [*Les mots et les choses*] (Foucault, 1989b), my aim here was substantively less ambitious. Nonetheless, I hoped to ground my exploration of 'co-operative' schools within the wider historical, cultural and political frameworks of education policy, practice and pedagogy which have shaped contemporary concerns and motivations about what 'co-operation' and 'schooling' *is* or can *do*. Therefore, in order to gain a sense of how these two discursive frameworks might come together or indeed collide as they are variously 'worked out' within contemporary educational sites, I attempted to map out the points from which ideas about a 'co-operative' model of public schooling were

articulated and became a 'thinkable' option, amongst many others. Alongside extensive literature reviewing of historical and global approaches to democratic education, my attempts to sketch out the footprints of 'co-operative' schooling entailed the following research activities.

Visiting the archive

I spent two days examining the National Co-operative Archive at Century House, Manchester and exploring how the 'co-operative spirit' was inculcated in a variety of periodicals, propaganda materials, journals and teaching aids. In addition, I reviewed a number of the earlier publications of 'Our Circle' (1907-1960) and 'Woman's Outlook' which specifically addressed a young and female audience respectively in order to gain a sense of how historically disenfranchised membership groups were addressed. Yet even at this early stage, I could not help but be nauseated by the sanctimonious tone which rendered axes of class, race and gender subject to salvation and redemption from the deficits of 'nature' and 'culture' via the propaganda machines of the co-operative movement.

Alongside Twigg's (1924) thesis, *An Outline History of Co-operative Education*, I also searched copies of 'The Co-operative Educator' (1917-1939), which set out the educational aims and objectives of the movement and included many articles about educational philosophy and practices of the time. The movement's key aspirations for education were highlighted as:

> The objects of co-operative education are, primarily, the formation of co-operative character and opinions by teaching the history, theory, and principles of the movement, with Economics, and Industrial and Constitutional History in so far as they have a bearing on co-operation; and secondarily, though not necessarily of less import, the training of men and women to take part in industrial and social reforms and civic life generally. (The Co-operative Educator, 1939)

This declaration encapsulates how the historical treatment of education was conceived as simultaneously 'technical'[10] and 'civic' minded. It appears that from the days of the Rochdale Pioneers education constituted a key organizing principle of the movement. Although, the extent to which education was considered primarily as a means to improve 'efficiency' or 'character' might be considered an ambivalent objective that continues to complicate contemporary educational concerns, albeit that 'efficiency' and 'character' are reframed within dominant discourse of the 'enterprising' global citizen.

Developing and maintaining contact with key personnel at The Co-operative College

In addition to reviewing the historical artifacts that explicitly set out the educational aspirations of the movement, I also engaged with key personnel who had played an instrumental role in developing the co-operative model from 'ideal' to 'reality' at the Co-operative College, Manchester. In the earlier months of this project, staff at the College offered me a wealth of insight and training materials aimed at schools wishing to adopt 'co-operative' status which are referred to in the main body of the thesis, with a number of indicative examples of contemporary co-operative school promotional and instructional materials provided in the appendix. Maintaining relations with key personnel at the college enabled me to access a number of training events, conferences and seminars (see appendix 1 for a full list) at which I was able to converse with a range of co-operative school staff, Governing Body and student members. Members of staff at the college were extremely accommodating and helpful in assisting my contact with other co-operative schools and in providing a wide range of promotional materials. However, as time progressed I felt under increasing obligation to produce a piece of research that reflected the model in a positive light. As a result of this, I decided to maintain minimal contact with Co-operative College personnel after this point in order to be able to pursue a more critical approach to analysis as I became increasingly uneasy about the heightened possibility of conflicting interests and investments in my work.

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[10] As Vernon, (2011, p. 38) points out, the term 'technical' should be read in respect of the fact that co-operative education in this sense relates to retail activities and more 'commercial' educational subjects.

Attending regional, national and international co-operative conferences and seminars enabled me to speak to a wide range existing of co-operative school staff members (non/teaching staff, school governors, parents) in addition to conversing with members from schools who were contemplating transition to the co-operative model, trade union representatives and other interested academics. For example, as a result of attending the 'Co-operative schools – where values matter' conference in November, 2011 I also developed significant contacts who later offered up their schools as potential research sites. Moreover, in the course of engaging with conference delegates in break out groups or coffee breaks in a much more informal manner (after I had made it clear that I did not 'work' for the co-operative college), these early 'research conversations' offered frank exchanges which helped to me to develop research questions that addressed concerns and uncertainties about what 'co-operative' schooling *does*, in addition to providing material for later analysis which developed at the writing stage. Attending the Co-operative Identity Mark Pilot training (April, 2012) enabled me to observe how early convertors of the model were beginning to develop a sense of what co-operative schooling might 'mean' in the longer term for their schools, whilst I was also able to observe how delegates drew upon dominant discourses when articulating their own school's position in the current 'market', in terms of provision and practice examples. These experiences also drew attention to the ways in which disparate schools, often located at opposite ends of the country, collaborated and worked together in a non-competitive arena in order to move towards shared educational aims, values and principles. Often, the extent to which delegates or participants of these events spoke amongst themselves, speculating about the future trajectory of the co-operative model or expressing uncertainty about how they should proceed in 'becoming co-operative', evoked a sense of camaraderie and trust between schools which some later participants of my research project remarked upon.

Contemporary media debate: online and offline platforms…

Early database searches positioned the co-operative model at the margins of the public education sector, indeed even during an all-party political debate the extent to which co-operative schools attracted little central government support and scant media coverage was remarked upon by the current Member of Parliament for Cardiff West, Kevin Brennan (see, Column 124WH, House of Commons Hansard, Debate 23-10-13/569, 2013). In contrast, the extent to which the academy reforms for public schools appear to have been executed at 'break neck speed' (Roach, 2013, p. 274) garnered substantial political media debate. These ongoing debates informed my approach to both initial research questions and later analysis of the articulation of 'choice' within contemporary educational discourse. In addition to this, I received a weekly update of any co-operative school developments as a weekly subscriber to the Co-operative College's mailing list which highlighted the ongoing development of 'co-operative' schools as an emerging sector within local, national and international news platforms. Further, I also maintained a keen interest in contemporary articulations of recent policy reform by monitoring the development of diverse Free School or academy approaches. For example, I monitored the rise and fall of the proposed Phoenix Free School in Oldham as an example of contemporary approaches to 'choice' in public education[11] in order to maintain a sense of evolving educational policy debates and potential significant changes to state school provision and practice.

(Dis)locating the Field

Through the process of familiarising myself and critically engaging with the key debates which shape the genealogy of 'co-operative schooling', I began collate and explore a range of resources that highlighted the complex political terrain within which it became possible to conceive of an alternative co-operative model, located *with/in* the state sector of education. In addition to this, as I developed relationships with personnel from the Co-operative college, I compiled a wide assortment of

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[11]See appendix 2 for screen shots and examples of the campaign for a 'military style' Free school in Oldham. In addition to this a timeline of events can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/PhoenixFreeSchool in the event of the current school website being withdrawn.

'materials' - some of which were authored, produced and organised by The Co-operative College and included; media reports, website pages, training guides, engagement at annual conferences, meetings and training events. Moreover, as I 'worried away' about the suitability of this analytical framework or that, and the (im)possibilities of thinking differently about what it is possible to 'know', I tried to gain a sense of how alternative educational memories might be weaved together or pulled apart from the fabric that binds together a grand narrative of education and co-operation; loosening threads, delving into pockets and patching together the discarded remnants that do not appear to 'fit'. For as Clough (2002, p. 6) reminds us, '[t]hese research acts happen, but in postmodern methodology they are not easily separated into distinct analytical stages'.

Within the first three months I had accumulated a wealth of 'texts' which could have formed the basis for an in depth critical discursive analysis that systematically examined how an emerging discourse of co-operative education was being variously defined by the co-operative college as it attempted to forge a space for a distinct 'co-operative model' within the boundaries of recent education and social policy 'reform'. However, from this early stage, I was mindful that this collection of 'stuff', although rich and valuable, represented a more or less coherent version of what a co-operative school claimed to 'be' in terms of an ideal model, an educational object and a set of values to be followed. What appeared to be absent, however, was a sense of how this utopian space might be (re)configured within the materiality of actual co-operative schools. Therefore, there also appeared to be a pressing need to engage amongst the physical contexts where the conditions of possibility for subjectivity were being (re)defined, contested or 'worked out'. I began to consider how I might trace the threshold that bridges the gaps between the abstract language of the co-operative model and the material-discursive space of the 'co-operative' school. And although I had listened to, and engaged with a number of head teachers and senior members of staff at conferences and training events, I had yet to explore the places where the ideological tropes of the model collided with the marginal voice/s of Other members and stakeholders who as yet, were only *referred to*, and *spoken about*. Therefore, in addition to monitoring and analysing wider social policy discourse, engaging with debates about the purpose & practice of education and reviewing the organisational

structure of co-operative schools, both 'on' and 'off' line, a substantial proportion of 'empirical materials' were developed as a result of engaging with co-operative school members within local contexts of educational practice and provision at a number of 'co-operative' schools.

Going from the 'page' to the 'ground' of the 'co-operative' school

This movement from 'the page' to the 'ground' required a significant detour from the texts of pedagogical aspiration to the subject/s and material footprints of 'the co-operative school', yet this relocation was not undertaken in a bid to occupy the 'real' materiality of the school as a more or less superior site. This departure from the 'text' of the model to the discursive arena of 'the school' was undertaken with the intention of seeking out, *how* the two spaces were/are entangled with/in, against or in spite of each other as I aimed to trace the intertextual and interdiscursive chains of co-operative discourse (See, Fairclough, 2010) that (dis)locate individual experiences and universal ideals. Indeed it was at this point that I encountered Barbara Johnson's consideration of *The Feminist Difference* (1998) in which she employs a psychoanalytic reading of female subjectivity through a critical analysis of the shifting relations which (re)define women as both the ground and/or (re)cursive figures in a range of literary genres. In particular I would like to draw attention to some of these literary techiques as a possible way of transcending the inward/outward dichotomy that locates educational subjects as inside/outside the space of 'the school' as both (re)cursive figure and ground in order to offer a more complicated version of how life is lived as a movement between these two spaces. For as Holloway et al (2010) remind us, the geography of education:

> …is bounded into/and shapes wider social/economic/political processes… [and is] experienced by the pupils/students, families and educators in the spaces of learning which form key sites of interaction in their everyday lives (pp. 595-596).

Encountering voice in ethnography

Despite the innumerable problems associated with speaking for Others in research contexts (a subject which later becomes a central tenet of this thesis), and the 'disappointment of voice in qualitative research' (MacLure, 2009). I join with Alcoff (2009) in rejecting a total retreat from speaking *for* others and instead acknowledge the inevitable contortion of 'voice' as I strive to develop a methodology and analytic response that conceptualises the notion of 'voice' as provocation. That is a provocation that deliberately resists an unfettered reading of voice, of the 'easy' story to tell or to listen to and instead gathers together a collection of unpredictable, disparate, troubling and troublesome moments, texts, collisions and relations as a collectivity of 'voice/s' that drown out a singular, knowable 'subject' of the co-operative school. In light of this, it remained important to take steps to generate a deeper understanding of the complex conditions for 'voice' in education and educational research and actively recruit potential 'sites', in which to explore the remnants of voice that might emerge as result of a more in depth ethnographic engagement within the everyday space of 'the school'. Furthermore, in order to gain a sense of the debates and dynamic power relations that might be created when two competing ideologies occupy educational space, my ethnographic field work opened up (and continues to be influenced) by (re)viewing the historical contingencies, cultural assumptions and texts that have cultivated the educational landscape that presents itself as the socio-political context of my enquiry. But first, a reflexive interlude that marks out my 'rationale' for occupying research space in particular schools.

Some thoughts from 'the field'...

5. Serendipitous Sampling

Faced with a 'choice' of hundreds of schools to explore that spanned the length and breadth of England, I sought the advice of personnel at the Co-operative College. Whittling down potential ethnographic sites from hundreds to just a few could have proved to be a very lengthy exercise. However, after considering the practical implications of sustaining a lengthy commitment to 'occupying' potential ethnographic locations, the number of feasible sites rapidly reduced to a handful.

The next hurdle presented itself in the form of finding schools that would be receptive to ethnographic intrusion. The staff who regularly advised and administered support to co-operative schools were keen to help and I was slightly surprised to find that despite the majority of these schools being relatively 'new' to the co-operative model, there already appeared to be an informal league table of 'co-operativeness' developing amongst them. As I named schools aloud which were located in parts of the country that I could feasibly travel to for extended periods, staff looked to one another and raised eyebrows at the mention of some, and more openly tried to either persuade or dissuade me from contacting others. 'Criteria' of 'good' and therefore, possible ethnographic sites, seemingly appeared to rest upon the extent to which head teachers or co-operative champions had proven themselves to 'get it' [how to 'do' co-operative schooling] or not. And although this might have been a productive direction with which to pursue, I decided that rather than risk skewing this project towards locations within which the Co-operative College deemed 'fit for purpose', I troubled the scientific notion of 'random sampling' and developed a playful interpretation of 'what works?' of my own and decided to approach this decision in terms of what 'worked' for me. That is to say, 'choosing' those schools in which it was feasible for me to travel to and visit for a significant amount of time without causing huge disruption to the people in my Other, non-academic life. This narrowed the search down to five prospective sites which varied dramatically in terms of demographic composition, location and length of time spent as a 'co-operative school. At this point I considered the relative merits and dangers of making a comparative study of a number of co-operative schools positioned within a particular geographical location and decided to begin with the first school on the list and to follow Marcus (1995, p.97) in quite literally: 'following connections, associations, and putative relationships' that emerged…

A Story From 'the field'…

1. *"Getting there": points of entry, the calm before the storm…*

In the event, finding schools that were amenable to the prospective invasion of ethnographic occupation proved to be surprisingly easy. Reconciling the ethical anxieties that haunted my *presence* beyond the school gates however, proved to be a much more complex affair. Agreement in principle was offered immediately by all of the schools in which I eventually occupied a research space. Being granted permission to roam the corridors and the classrooms unaccompanied was another

matter entirely. Tom, a member of the senior leadership team and head of school improvement became my first ally and tour guide of the first 'co-operative' school I visited shortly after we first met in a breakout group at my first co-operative education conference in November 2011. At this point I was completely unaware of how this unremarkable encounter would prove to become a pivotal point of my research project, as will become clear in the remainder of this thesis.

Meeting Tom changed everything. He became gatekeeper, tour-guide, chaperone, confidant, coordinator, introducer, comedian and storyteller all rolled into one; and the presence of his support, knowledge and enthusiasm are implicitly if not explicitly entangled within this thesis through the stories that unfold as a result of our association. My connection with Tom, in the early days at least, was supported by a mutual inquisitiveness about the 'value' of a 'co-operative' model of schooling. As an early pioneer of the co-operative approach to education, Tom was keen to transform the neo-liberal model of 'school improvement' and develop a mutual response to 'adding value' to education. I had begun visiting Tom at the tail end of the summer term 2012, often chatting for a couple of hours at a time as we discussed our various impressions of what the co-op could *do* for democracy in education. Tom shared my interest in trying to re-think education differently and enthusiastically recounted the trials and tribulations of trying to 'live out' democratic ideals within the space of a challenging secondary school. After an initial, brief chat about the embryonic stage of my PhD thesis he offered up his school, Blackbrook High as a potential site to consider the challenges and promise of the co-operative model for as long as I wished. After receiving a verbal green light from Tom about undertaking ethnographic research at Blackbrook High, I eagerly sent off my Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application in July before the school broke up for the summer break with the intention that I would be able to begin my in depth ethnographic research at the beginning of September 2012. Well before receiving the all important go ahead from the University ethics board, Tom had already sought and secured permission from the head teacher at Blackbrook but I remained grounded in his office bearing the badge of 'visitor' until both the university ethics board and the relevant DBS checks were completed.

An extensive list of ethnographic activity is provided in appendix 1, however at this point I also need to draw attention to the ways in which my engagement with co-operative schools was shaped by my embodied response to the material-discursive framework of undertaking qualitative research within educational contexts where the grand narrative of 'evidence' looms large. A substantial proportion of these 'ethnographic materials' or 'data' as they are more commonly referred, emerged as a result of taking field notes as a participant observer, ambiguously positioned on the sidelines of 'ordinary' school life. This ambiguity reflects my precarious position as an adult-other-but-not-teacher in encounters with students and also points towards how my uncertain presence within these schools constituted a potential reputational risk on the part of head teachers and senior staff, should I 'observe' incidents that might reflect the school in a less than positive light.

Indeed, there were many moments whereby it was not appropriate or practical to write or audio record exchanges between participants and myself 'in the moment' and I found myself anxiously waiting until I had physically left the school building to hastily document my responses and observations whilst the remnants of these conversations and observations remained fresh in my memory. Therefore, I often pulled over in a neighbouring street to note down contentious thoughts and commentaries away from the gaze of the all encompassing technologies of school surveillance as the 'conduct of conduct' drove deep into my psychic and affective response to 'being there' and negotiating 'least harm'. Moreover, I often referred to these surreptitious 'souvenirs' of 'being there' as I began to transcribe connected interviews in subsequent writing practices and endeavoured to create a narrative response through the lens of ethnographic encounter and audio recorded word. For, although I approached the process of orthographic transcription in a conventional manner[12] I acknowledged that this procedure was not as innocent as it first might appear. Therefore I offer a minor detour within this chapter as I draw attention to

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[12] Initially I transcribed Interview material using a traditional orthographic approach, noting down exactly what was said by whom verbatim and including significant pauses, hesitations, repetitions or false starts and non-verbal communication such as laughter. A total of 22 hours of recorded speech was transcribed over the course of 132 hours writing time. This was undertaken as soon as possible after visits between ethnographic sites.

the curious ways in which the passage of 'voice' made its way from audio recorder to 'the page'. Despite noting the words of participants verbatim as soon as possible after visits between ethnographic sites, a significant proportion of time was spent 'listening again' and referring back to relevant field notes over the course of six months before I finally committed to (re)writing these events and accounts in the form of a (dis)located collection of 'stories' as a narrative intervention of 'voice'. Moreover, the words and worlds of participants and their schools often crossed over the boundaries of my (non) academic life as memories and flashbacks that occurred in the shower, in the middle of the night or in the course of 'listening again' and 'again' whilst I undertook other part time cleaning jobs which supplemented my studentship bursary. In the end each interview or short exchange was listened to on at least five separate occasions as I endeavoured to counter the 'valorizing of speech' (Mazzei, 2007, p.1) and engage with the contrary sounds and images of 'transgressive data' (St.Pierre, 1997). In point of fact, the unshakable presence of these stories and 'voice/s' began to spill over into my dreams and nightmares as I worried away at how best I might represent the most sensitive and authentic account of 'co-operative' lives lived that I could muster.

Before 'recruiting' participants for interviews and focus group discussion I decided to spend a few weeks 'getting to know' the rhythms and rituals of daily school life in each of the schools. The first two weeks were therefore spent observing assemblies, attending community events and hanging around on the school corridors and in the canteen as I spoke to members of each school on a more informal basis, behind the reception desk or in the staff room. In retrospect, these first few uncomfortable weeks spent trying to disappear into the crowd and agonizing over how to interact with new people in unfamiliar spaces turned out to be some of the most fruitful and productive data 'hot spots' that I later pursued (MacLure, 2010) - although articulating these awkward affective responses to people and place became a constant source of anxiety that reflect multiple crises of 'representation' and 'interpretation' throughout. As I 'worried away' about the consequences of including 'unsantised' field note scribbles and placing memories that blatantly resisted the repertoire of the 'rational', distant observer 'on record'. MacLure (2010) offered some comfort. In her wanderings amongst the 'ruins' of qualitative inquiry, she points out that these unnerving tensions constitute a creative force for further examination as she employs Michael

Taussig's (1993) notion of 'productive disconcertion' as a resource to navigate the threats imposed by the dilemmas of 'representation', as she goes on to add:

> These gut feelings point to the existence of embodied connections with others that are far more complex, and potentially more wondrous, than the static connections that we often assume between self and other, researcher and researched (MacLure, 2010, p. 14)

However, it wasn't until I approached the writing stage of this project that I came to realise the full complexities of transgressing 'static connections' and pursuing these 'embodied connections' as I grappled with the crises of representing my affective response to uncertain relations with participants and navigated the conceptual, methodological and ethical dilemmas that ensued.

Although, at the outset I had hoped to undertake a large number of recorded interviews with members of management, governing body, teachers and students, I soon came to understand the perils of pressing 'record', and the power that the panoptic gaze impressed upon the production and circulation of 'evidence' as easy, informal conversations quickly transformed into a much more measured response (For examples of interview questions and a sample of interview transcripts see appendices 17, 18 & 19.)

A Story from 'the field'…

2. The costs and benefits of something 'for the record'

During countless conversations with Tom that occurred over the summer and autumn months of 2012, it was easy to scribble away as we chatted comfortably in the safety of his office that he shared with Neil, another member of the management team. Occasionally Tom added his own visual maps and haphazard diagrams to explain concepts (such as the school's legal framework) that I was struggling to comprehend in a more 'linear' fashion, and Neil offered his own contributions every now and then if the conversation transgressed into 'his domain' of recording 'value added' or if he disagreed with something that either Tom or I mentioned. Yet

although 'evidence' of our 'research conversations' took up significant space in my increasing stockpile of research notebooks, it wasn't until my final few weeks that I broached the subject of 'the semi-structured interview'. Tom happily complied but suggested that we spoke in one of the media editing rooms in order that we wouldn't be continually interrupted and he could speak 'more frankly'. It was an encounter most strange as over the previous months we had chatted easily in his office, yet the 'rules' of the interview soon overlaid our spontaneous exchanges with what appeared to be a much more calculated response. Indeed, Tom made light of the different relations that surround the 'official' interview as he opened the interview by parodying the discourse of police interrogations with: 'so… for the tape as they say' (Story 5, para 2). Furthermore, as I progressed through this project I began to notice that I utilised the dictaphone less and less frequently and conceived it as a necessary evil for offering an authoritative nod towards 'validity', with the impending 'examination' of my thesis in mind. However, 'writing in' the dynamics of researcher/ed relations and responses without the security of the transcribed 'voice' also became the source of unease as I worried away about the 'validity' of field notes when my affective response to 'data' and events cast my competence as an 'effective' researcher in a less than positive light. Therefore, my relation to 'recorded' data in the form of interviews, focus group discussions and lesson observations offered an ambivalent source of disturbance and comfort that I later came to appreciate in terms of adding a contradictory measure of 'validity' to my analysis; despite the fact that I tried hard to resist the spurious 'value' that 'hard evidence' lends to a poststructural approach to the capture of 'data'. In the end, the lure of the 'recorded' voice remained partially triumphant as the majority of 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman & Pitt, 2003) that appears later on in the 'stories' of part three, oscillates between the safety of the transcribed word as it appeared to lend credence to my Other field note observations, 'just in case' the integrity of my ethnographic observations was called into question. However, this ambivalent relation to 'evidence' and 'validity' created further problems. In so much as this recognition propelled me to consider how I might maintain both anonymity for participants *and* the illusion of authenticity as I began to craft an analytic intervention that offered an anthology of composite narratives and 'voices' which weaved between reflexive field notes and the authority of the identifiable transcribed 'voice'.

Relieved at finally securing 'ethnographic residency' at my first ethnographic site, I set about convincing the university ethics committee that I would 'do no harm'. Given the difficulties that surround *defining* the ethical terrain of one's research in advance of actually 'being there', I struggled to articulate the infinitesimal dilemmas that might arise as a result of navigating, what was at that time, an unknown territory of ethical relatedness. Particularly, in light of the fact that I wished to critically consider the performance of 'student voice' within the co-operative school and more specifically its place within this piece of educational research whereby the conditions for articulating 'informed consent' are continually contested. The process of gaining informed consent, therefore, was also reflected upon as an integral consideration of the whole research *de-sign* and indeed, reflexively as a subject that was enmeshed within the iterative generation of research questions that emerged as a result of the obstacles I faced in including students as co-constructors of research knowledge.

Prior to the early 1990s, the majority of research focused primarily on adult interpretations of children's physical, cognitive and moral development (*cf.* Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932), children's capacity to become actively involved in the process remained largely ignored (Clarke & Moss, 2001; Mayall, 2002). Jens Qvotrup (1990) describes this as the 'quarantine of childhood' and proposes that children are routinely excluded from large-scale quantitative research, as concerns regarding children's cognitive ability and capacity to respond are based on normative assumptions of the child as 'an incomplete adult'. Currently, transformations in the study of children and childhood have increasingly adopted an inter-disciplinary approach that benefits from drawing upon from a variety of academic fields (see Prout, 2005; James et al., 1998). Paradigmatic change offers a reconceptualisation of the child as:

> A person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences- in sum, as a social actor…this new phenomenon, the "being" child, can be understood in its own right. (James et al., in Holloway & Valentine, 2000, p.764.)

Darbyshire et al (2005) convey how the point is being missed in their exploration of *The missing child*. This is an absence I specifically want to interrogate further. I aimed to ground this research in a psycho-social approach to the autonomous child within the context of UK citizenship, viewed through a transdisciplinary lens, in order to offer the opportunity to consider young people as competent and valid contributors to the production of subjective knowledge. Although research aimed at improving the lives of children and adolescents appears in abundance throughout natural and social science, Derbyshire et al (2005, p.419) reflect upon how the principal approach to researching children's understanding of the world is: '…grounded in "research on" rather than "research with" or "research for" children' (See also, Christensen, 2004; Scott, 2008). Research undertaken by Holloway & Valentine (2000) Mannion (2007) and Prout (2000) also underscores the need for children and young people to participate as competent narrators of their own experience. This research project aims to enable young people to make a positive contribution to the production of knowledge in this field, whilst interrogating the conditions of possibility for 'full' participation. Therefore, this research approaches the understanding of children and young people's worlds, with an underlying ontological assumption that constructs young people as active agents, able to reflect upon and verbalise meanings and understandings of the world around them, constructing the world in which they inhabit through different forms (Qvotrup, 1990; Scott, 2008). Thus I adopt a position that generates a set of different, but significant conceptual challenges all the same.

As an integral part of this study I also consider the ethical dilemmas that arise as a result of asymmetric positionings that variously define a range of 'adult-student' interactions, in response to calls for the reframing of childhood research (Mannion, 2007) as a fundamental methodological and ethical concern. Indeed, Tracey Skelton (2008, p. 21) makes an observation which echoes my own experience and frustrations within this research project in that:

> The increasing recognition of the competence of children and young people combined with their right to participate, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, has not yet been adequately integrated within institutional ethics frameworks. This places those conducting research with children and young people in an invidious position of trying to follow their political respect for the rights of their research participants at the same time as

meeting the strictures of research practice defined by their institutional ethics committees.

As a researcher with over ten years experience of working with children and young adults, I was able to anticipate, albeit to a small degree, the competing discourses which ambiguously position young adults as in/competent participants within research contexts, and I acknowledged that navigating this difficult discursive terrain might compromise the ethical and democratic ideals of this research project. However, this prior knowledge in no way endowed me with the super natural capacity to foretell how troubling 'ethical moments' (Usher, 2000) might later unravel as a result of complex power relations and unforeseen situations. Although, I agree that there can be much to be gained from anticipating the types of ethical dilemmas that might occur in advance, and underscore the unquestionable need for a foundational ethical code to guide one's thoughts and actions (especially when interacting with people so defined as 'vulnerable'), I could not shake off the feeling that despite my absolute commitment to interrogating troublesome power relations, pledging my proposed activities in advance offered little assurance that 'no harm' might occur. This reticence to blindly accept and conform to the published British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines placed me in the impossible position of being grounded by the undecidability of ethical justice, before I even set foot across the school gate. At this moment, the unnerving presence of Derrida's aporia of urgency compelled me to confront this predicament face on, in order that I could move forward and concentrate my energies upon what, House describes as *the ultimate ethical acts*.

> Some of the most intractable ethical problems arise from conflicts among principles and the necessity of trading one against the other. The balancing of such principles in concrete situations is *the ultimate ethical act* (Emphasis added, House, in Piper & Simons, 2011, p. 25)

In spite of this, I am obliged to advise that this research was conducted in accordance with the BERA (2011) Guidelines of Educational Research and permission was sought and granted from the Ethics Panel of Manchester Metropolitan University (appendix 3) prior to my engagement 'in the field'. However, despite the undeniable need for ethical protocols and prior agreement from institutional ethics committees,

the *real* Ethics, ethics with a capital E, cannot be considered as anything other than a collection of situated practices, which are ultimately decided upon from within research *moments*. For the time being, suffice to say, that I endeavoured to give my upmost attention to matters of informed consent, rights to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity, and matters arising with regard to pre-publication access as a response to being ethical 'in advance', but it is from 'on the ground' and 'on the page' where the full extent of the impossibility of ever being ethical enough as the 'realities' of student's ambiguous positioning emerge in the stories that later unfold. Moreover, the extent of my ethical situatedness is revealed as a reflexive response to the ethical dilemmas that arose as a result of both interacting with participants within particular historical, socio-political educational contexts and through the dilemmas of writing, which constitute a significant place in the remainder of this thesis. But for now, I close this chapter with a reflexive reminder of how ethical aims of 'doing least harm', plays hand maiden to the materiality of child protection discourse as the visible sign of trustworthiness via the adornment of 'right' badge determines my research activities and relations as I remain grounded in the office of one co-operative school, for a while at least.

Some thoughts from 'the field'...'

6. Still Grounded… Inside/outside – staff/visitor?

A few years earlier I had undertaken ethnographic research with some pupils at a primary school where I also worked part-time in the capacity of offering learning support. At the time I recall going to great lengths to ensure that the students who participated in my project, did not feel obligated to take part, given my dual roles within the school. Moreover, I only engaged as a 'researcher' on days when I was not being paid to attend and wore 'my own clothes' (jeans and a t-shirt, as opposed to the more formal attire, expected as an educational professional) to literally 'mark out' my movement from 'staff' to 'researcher'. Nonetheless, despite these visual cues, there were many occasions where my two roles collided and became confused (See, Davidge, 2011). It seemed ironic that a few years later, as my role within a different school theoretically conferred much less ambiguity and greater clarity, (surely this time I could be considered an educational researcher, no more, no less) I became caught up in the business of masquerading as staff.

Despite obtaining notice of agreement from the university ethics board and receiving confirmation that the relevant enhanced disclosure checks were 'in order', I had one more hurdle to jump before I could even begin to negotiate 'informed consent' with the research participants that I most wanted to include, the students. For the time being, I remained a refugee stuck within the four walls of Tom's office or else on the tails of anyone who was willing to babysit me and let a visitor walk in their shadow as they went about their daily work. It appeared that, until others could see that I had graduated from 'visitor' to 'staff', via the adornment of the correct badge, I would be at the mercy of other people's hospitality and school timetabling - spending time with students continued to remain outside my grasp. From my first day onwards, it became obvious that staff resources and energies were perpetually pushed to the limit. I felt inconsiderate and awkward asking staff to give up even more of their precious time to my project when the urgency of their daily charges demanded and deserved so much of their attention. I wished I could just let them get on with their demanding jobs and press on with mine. From my perspective the badge was irrelevant, to others it offered a crucial shortcut to visible trustworthiness. More than that, I considered myself nothing more than a long-term visitor and it seemed odd and perplexing to be considered 'staff', despite the promise of free movement within the school. What proved more incomprehensible, however, was the fact that despite the relevant personnel observing, copying and authenticating the required documentation and identity papers weeks beforehand, the only thing that appeared to be holding me back was the material presence of the actual 'staff' badge which perhaps once 'made up' would finally secure my passport to student voice and smooth a passage from outside to inside, whatever that might mean…

This chapter has traced my rationale for undertaking a critical-discursive ethnographic approach to researching the 'co-operative' school and lays out the processes and relations that also informed and shaped my approach to gathering a range of 'empirical materials', as I go on to explain, 'what I did', and 'how I did it'. This chapter has also highlighted the extent to which engaging with the 'co-operative' school 'off-site' (i.e. at conferences, training events and seminars) 'off-line' (exploring the archives and materials produced by the co-operative college) and 'on-line' (following emerging debates that shaped the wider educational landscape) offered valuable 'data' which informed subsequent analysis that examines how the 'co-operative' school is constructed in a variety of contexts. After highlighting a number of contexts in which the 'co-operative' school and its members were discursively produced, this chapter also illustrates how I attempted to gain 'access' to the physical sites of 'co-operative' schools and engage with their members. As I began

to consider how I might 'speak', with, for and of member's experiences of co-operative schooling, I examined some of the innumerable problems that surround the complexities of articulating 'voice' in education and educational research. Following this, I explored the demands of the ethics committee and pointed out that the contingent nature of a radical research *de-sign* also requires an ethical relatedness 'on the ground', 'in the air' and 'on the page'. Moreover, in this chapter I have argued that a critical examination of how 'informed consent' and 'least harm' are negotiated orients the production of research knowledge towards the 'ultimate ethical acts' (House, in Piper & Simons, 2011). This chapter draws to a close with a reflection upon the ambiguities of occupying a research position that troubles the traditional boundaries of 'staff' and 'visitor', simultaneously positioning the researcher as 'insider' and 'outsider'. The following chapter goes on to explore how one might begin to negotiate 'the gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't' (Geertz, 1988, p. 130) as I tangle with the textuality of the 'co-operative' school and open a Pandora's box of ethical, political and epistemological contradictions and challenges that surround my approach to writing as method and provocation of 'voice'.

1.e. Writing as method: A provocation of 'voice'

This chapter opens with a few stories and reflections from 'the field' that illuminate a number of methodological constraints, dilemmas and disclosures that have guided how narratives about the 'co-operative' school and its members were variously 'written in' or excluded from this thesis. These stories bring to the fore a number of relations that framed not only the crafting of this research *de-sign* as a response to the conditions within which I encountered the 'co-operative' school and its members, but also illustrate how these stories shaped the subsequent analytic focus and (re)telling of co-operative school members' accounts. Following this poignant and important de-tour, this chapter then reverts its focus back towards the challenges and promises that surround utilising 'writing as method' (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005) and provocation of voice. I subsequently go on to examine how my interests and commitment to this research project might disturb the easy acceptance of claims of empowerment and emancipation as I write and critically engage with the promise and disappointments of 'voice' in education and educational research with these stories in mind.

Methodological (dis)closures and dilemmas

In order to establish long-term connections with a number of co-operative schools located in the North of England, I developed significant relations with 'gatekeepers' of three co-operative secondary schools. Depending upon the school's approach and commitment to developing the co-operative model, the professional status of these members of staff ranged from senior leadership, head of department and non-teaching staff. The extent to which each of these individuals were able to assert various levels of agency and enable me to develop a more 'participatory' approach within their respective schools offers an important point of reference for understanding emerging relations of power that later ensued between myself as a researcher and key participants in their various roles as gatekeepers of 'voice'. However, the extent to which I was able to engage with co-operative members (especially students) at a deeper level also depended upon other regulatory regimes of

contemporary 'schooling', is also particularly significant to note and is considered in much greater depth throughout the thesis.

Further, I draw attention here to the particular challenges I faced in enabling meaningful research conversations and ensuring anonymity for participants in light of substantial reputational risks for both schools and staff members as the co-operative principle of 'openness and honesty' was put to the test in myriad contexts. More specifically, it is essential to highlight here how particular relations with two important participants steered the direction of this research project toward a critical examination of 'student voice' within the context of the 'co-operative' school.

Thoughts from 'the field'…

7. Gatekeepers of 'voice'

As a member of the school senior leadership team and a fierce campaigner for democracy in schools, Tom fought against the regulation of curriculum time (see Jenks, 2001) *and '…the terrors of performativity'* (Ball, 2003) *in ways which enabled me to trace the performativity of 'student voice', albeit on the margins of other timetabled activity. Contrary to my experiences of engaging with staff at the other schools which I visited, Tom appeared to understand the need for open and honest debate about both the promise and pitfalls of 'co-operative' schooling. This was demonstrated in the countless conversations we shared about the prospect of reputational risk to the co-operative model when schools appeared to engage with the values and principles of co-operation at a more superficial level[13]. However, that is not to say that Tom didn't have an agenda of his own, or that his school should be held up as an exemplar, quite the reverse. As my research project at his school developed, I became aware of a wide range of interpretations of co-operative values and principles which often became a source of conflict between both staff and students. In particular, Tom and other members of staff and management appeared to have 'irreconcilable differences' (Story 16, para 2) in their approaches to various articulations of 'school improvement' according to their respective 'standards driven' or 'co-operative' approach. Notwithstanding the fact that this may have been the case at other co-operative*

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[13] This matter is discussed at length by a range of contributors in a special edition of the following journal: Making Co-operative Ideas Work. FORUM for Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education, 55 (2), 2013.

schools, Tom remained the only 'gatekeeper' that brought this tension into explicit focus. At other schools I visited, despite (or perhaps because of) explicitly stating my interest in how schools navigate the precarious position of students being accorded equal rights and parity of 'voice', my movement around these schools remained heavily censored. Specifically here, I wish to draw attention to the extent to which the instruments of 'the educational market', and the risks of failing to recognise full responsibility for child protection rendered my attempts to hear 'student voice' oxymoronic. As a result of this and also of Tom's intervention with these obstacles to undertaking participatory research (which become clear in subsequent stories and reflections from 'the field'), I began to conceptualise the motif of 'voice' as a source of 'trouble' and provocation which enabled me to consider the performativity of student voice in light of ambivalent constructions of childhood competence and ambivalent conditions of possibility for 'student voice' in educational contexts.

Writing about complicated lives, complicated relations and messy research boundaries

It is also necessary to draw attention to another significant participant who steered the direction of this project as I came to 'know' one co-operative school student in a number of different capacities. In the beginning, Kate was an enthusiastic 'co-operator'. She fully engaged with my research and expressed great interest in developing initial ideas and recruiting other students to get involved with this project in meaningful ways. I would like to think that over time Kate came to understand my desire to contribute to a more democratic approach to contemporary 'schooling', and realised that I genuinely wanted to 'listen', and *do* something, *say* something useful in the very least. However, as time progressed it became apparent that more than anything, Kate, amongst others, demonstrated the urgent need to recount a catalogue of failures of 'student voice' rather than invest time and energy in a new research project. To this end, I tried my best to intervene and offer myself up as a 'pen for hire' (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005) and developed students' comments about the failures of 'voice' in the form of a narrative account that plotted a series of conversations that described their attempts to participate as equals as something of a (non)event. Later, as my ethnographic fieldwork drew to close I was approached by a concerned member of staff who indicated that Kate was "really struggling to find a purpose in life at present", and she asked if I might be able to help by becoming her

mentor during her remaining months at the school. Kate was already made subject of a number of 'interventions' which were put in place to support her and also 'monitor' Kate's mental health, yet I represented the only adult with no formal affiliation to the school or outside agency and she had expressed a wish to speak to me. I was extremely gratified to have been placed in a position that offered me a chance to 'do something useful' and in some small way begin to repay the generosity and commitment that one member of staff in particular had displayed in his undying commitment to my research project - which might never have taken flight had he not intervened. At this point I became entangled in transgressing the 'usual' researcher/researched boundaries and my role in the school as 'mentor' required a completely different approach and an explicit recognition of my 'new' position.

Our mentoring sessions took place once I had completed my ethnographic fieldwork. After a lengthy discussion with both Kate and other teachers, I drew attention to the need for a clearly differentiated role and boundaries as a mentor, not researcher, from that moment onwards. I underlined the fact that these sessions would remain private and confidential unless I had reason to believe that Kate was at risk of harm. I reassured Kate that I would not refer directly to anything that we spoke about in these sessions within my research thesis, this remains the case throughout.

A story from 'the field'…

3. Portrayal and Betrayal: A difficult encounter with 'voice'

Following my mentoring sessions with Kate which took place over the final summer months of 2012, I became privy to some deeply unsettling and highly confidential information that cast the danger of promised 'voice', the demands of neo-liberal performativity and effects of social deprivation in catastrophic terms. I cannot betray Kate's trust, yet to say nothing feels the ultimate betrayal of my position as a researcher seeking to foster greater social justice in education. I remain perplexed as to where this story might 'fit' amongst the patchwork of 'voice/s' which are sewn into the forthcoming anthology of the 'co-operative' school. In short, Kate's story doesn't

appear to correspond anywhere in particular, and yet it must. Kate's story is central, but untellable. The compulsion to weave her account into this ethnography remains strong, despite the conditions of my hearing her words preventing any sort of intelligible recapitulation. Her experiences constitute so much more than a chapter or an epilogue on the 'effects' of 'schooling', co-operative or otherwise. Moreover, deciding whether or how to include Kate's experiences of (not) 'having a say' within the emerging narratives of 'co-operative schooling' continue to make trouble for us both and mirror the uneasy central storyline of her short life so far.

Anonymity and analytic interventions

It's impossible to say how being a member of a 'co-operative' school made a difference (good, bad or otherwise) to Kate's life, but nevertheless I can only speculate that in some respects it did and in others it didn't, or couldn't. For her life was animated by so much more than the 'education' she received and the structures of inequality that tied her to a life not quite of her own making. Whether by accident or design, or as a result of empty promises, Kate came to know and to feel what it was like to be 'given' a voice - only to find that her 'best interests' evacuated the presence of sound. Her biography epitomises the complex relations of power that mediate, challenge and define the conditions of 'voice' for student members of the co-operative school as the discursive regimes of neo-liberal childhood wreak havoc and collide in the recontextualisation of this pedagogic space.

Foucault notoriously observed that where there is power there is resistance. Kate's story, if only I could tell it, could easily be read as an embodied resistance of many things. Demands made upon her time, energy, and creativity via the regulation of academic and psychic 'assessment'; the right to self-determination, resistance of conformity to norms of behaviour, appearance, sexuality, and so the list could probably fill the page. Yet the only course of action that remains at my disposal is to offer an oblique gesture towards trying to understand how the discursive apparatus of 'the co-operative' school might interrupt, betray or challenge opportunities to resist the closure of 'voice' and in Kate's case, perhaps illustrate how the continual disappointment of 'voice' can also have devastating effects.

In order to prevent the risk of further disclosure I decided that rather than (re)presenting Kate's story as a solitary account, her experiences can only serve as a poignant reminder to be skeptical of universal claims to 'give voice' and of the particular and the general challenges that young people face in navigating 'a say' as marginalised subjects of the school and society as she floats in and out of these stories and informs my analytic response to the various conditions of 'voice'. Her story drives me to never give up questioning how we might think education otherwise in her name as she buries and tunnels under syllables and sentences, jumping out as another 'voice' every now and again. Her opaque yet unremitting presence within these stories offers an acknowledgement that despite the fact that 'we can only do so much' (Alex, Story 8, para 6), education matters. It matters in indescribable, ungraspable ways - ways that almost always evade capture but nonetheless are felt and are real. Of course, Kate's story is inevitably unique, yet it is a story that repeats itself over and again every time we question the ethics and politics of education through the lens of a different life(story). Moreover, the imprints of her experiences of alienation from schooling after a number of events that underlined the disappointment of 'voice', reside in the unconscious rhythm and tissue of the stories that follow; she is always there, fidgeting uneasily on my shoulder as I write. Sometimes in the shadows, almost forgotten - but never quite, as the memories of her triumphs and nightmares which led to an acute psychological crisis compel me to question the complex relations between education, equality and social justice with every word I write.

Artful Voice/s

> The gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't, always immense but not much noticed, has suddenly become extremely visible. What once seemed only technically difficult, getting "their" lives into "our" works, has turned morally, politically, even epistemologically, delicate. (Geertz, 1988, p. 130)

The demand for moral, political and epistemological delicacy that Geertz points to above, stretches and contorts my authorial 'voice' throughout, as my attempts to construct an account of co-operative schooling hesitate and falter under the weight of articulating the voices and experiences of Others, or 'getting "their" lives' onto the

page, as Geertz refers. From the outset, this research project aimed to catch a glimpse of 'their lives', that is 'observing' and 'participating' with those who are entangled within the 'realities' of co-operative schooling, in order that I might highlight both the possibilities and the challenges that surround articulating (hearing, seeing, performing) 'voice' within a discursive framework that variously defines 'the co-operative school' as a site of democratic action. However, as many before me have pointed out (*cf.* Alcoff, 2009; hooks, 2011; Jackson & Mazzei, 2009), the threats posed by writing *in*, writing *out*, or writing *with* the voice/s of Others, are immense. The full weight of fashioning an *authentic* account proves almost too much to bear, opening a Pandora's box of contradictions that render research activities 'guilty as charged' to the crime of masquerading an unattainable proximity to authenticity. Further, Stronach and MacLure (1997) alert us to the paradoxical nature of the 'authentic account' when they warn:

> …that it is those accounts which seem most 'natural', 'transparent', 'real' or 'rounded' that are most carefully wrought with a view to producing just those effects in the reader − that the writer is never more present in the text than when she seems to be absent, and the subject seldom less audible than when he seems to be speaking for himself. This is not to suggest that there are other, more genuinely innocent or transparent ways of writing, but simply to state that the appearance of artlessness is a rather artful business. (p. 35)

Therefore, in seeking to expose the impossible gap that cloaks 'the artful business' of articulating proximity to the 'real' or 'authentic' I am placed in a double bind. On the one hand I wish to pay close attention to the (in)credible movement and *presence* of 'real?' 'voice/s' and indeed silence, as I begin to 'write up' this ethnographic encounter, yet in order to succeed in this endeavour I will have to convince the reader that the 'voice/s' that I (re)present are the products of my faithful tenure; of actually, 'being there' and hearing 'genuine' unadulterated voice/s, whilst at the same time contesting the possibility of ever being able to pull off this 'offstage miracle' (Geertz, 1988, p. 5). It seems that I will have to be very artful indeed, or else openly admit to the crime of fabrication (See MacLure, 2003). And in that case, as Clifford Geertz points out: '[e]thnography becomes, it is said, a mere game of words, as poems or novels are supposed to be. Exposing how the thing is done is to suggest that, like the lady sawn in half, it isn't done at all' (1988, p. 2).

Indeed, writing in, 'how it is done', might appear to collude with those devices of 'policing the present' that Burman & Maclure (2011, p. 289) alluded to earlier, in terms of erasing the rhetorical and claiming a space on the page for the 'real', thus supporting the illusion that one *can* clearly define and mark out the boundaries between fiction and fact as a process that can be laid bare for all to see, survey and authenticate. Yet, these 'straight-forward' texts, or 'real' voices that purport to occupy the ground of 'plausible' representation and proximity to reality, are perhaps the most dangerous texts of all, for they forget to remind us to keep the 'self-evident' in check, and to always question the taken for granted. Perhaps, we should heed the words of WH Auden's (1953) poem *The Truest Poetry is the most Feigning* and question the *presence* of every word. In putting forward a methodology of writing *as* provocation of voice, I question the distance that ethnographic writing brings to bear upon the uncertain presence of 'voice/s' that (dis)appear within and outside of this research narrative; the *space between* observation and (re)presentation, feeling and naming the un/spoken and the un/sayable, or simply that which goes without saying. Here, I tune in and seek out the mediation of 'voice/s' as art(e)facts of the 'real' account, yet also pursue the background noises that inflect the wider historical and socio-political location of 'voice/s' that can be presupposed, concealed or drowned out in the business of writing a convincing research(er's) account. As I reflect upon the ways in which 'voice/s' are represented and 'read' in writing about education and educational research methodology, Maggie MacLure (2003) offers an artistic detour through the example of illusionist art, as she draws attention to the: 'irreparable split between the text and what it seems to refer to…'

> But the biggest threat of *trompe l'oeil*, as Levine notes, is that it stages, in a particularly disconcerting form, what is true of *all* representation - namely that there is an irreparable split between the text and what it seems to refer to. As viewers - and as readers… - we are *always* divided. We can focus upon the referent- truth, reality, meaning, the object; *or* we can focus on the material, the texture, that 'conveys' that deeper stuff. But we can't do both simultaneously. *Trompe l'oeil* forces us to try, and it is the impossibility of the task that creates the vertigo, or the nausea – the fascination at any rate- of oscillating back and forward between these two impossible positions. We are caught in the space between painting and the real. (p.152, original emphasis)

Thus, in the 'stories' that follow I try to illustrate that there are parallels here; between what might exist in the *space between* 'the painting and the real' and the *space*

between research texts and the 'real' (encounters of ethnographic practice) that these texts seek to represent. Moreover, I argue that what is 'going on' in this *space between* are the (extra)ordinary challenges that we face as researchers trying to navigate the impossibility of writing 'the real' or 'hearing the voice/s' that one can never quite faithfully re-present. Further, by critically attending to the experience of being caught up a space that tangles the ethnographic text and 'the real', (a textual *trompe l'oeil* perhaps?) this offers the opportunity to keep the constant negotiation of an *authentic* representation of 'voice' in a productive tension that resists the grasp for transcendental signifiers which can threaten the ethical and political value of radical research methodology.

(Re)cognising Outcomes

But before I even begin to unravel this conceptual ragbag into a more productive portmanteau, I must first consider how this ethnographic account is troubled by this aspiration to open up productive spaces for engendering social justice within public education, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that 'speaking' in this space requires one to navigate the hegemony of 'clarity, transparency and certainty of outcomes' (MacLure, 2005) in order for others to 'listen' and 'make sense' of one's 'findings'. Are the measures of possibility and authenticity incommensurable here? As Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p.3) point out:

> Too often, however, this ethical and political subject- our responsibility for others- is replaced by a technical question: how effective are preschools/schools/school age childcare in producing certain outcomes?

These anxieties are beginning to mount up and create what Caputo (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 135) refers to as a 'stone wall'. Here, contradictory desires illustrate the need for an aporia of suspension (referred to earlier, chapter 1c) in order to acknowledge the (im)possibility of ever being able to offer a truly 'authentic' or 'measurable' account or indeed articulate 'pure' unmediated voice/s, whilst at the same time striving to interpret and understand what *it is* that co-operative schooling claims to offer the project of democracy in education in terms of discernable

outcomes. What is more, this need to make the essence of 'co-operative' schooling tangible, and therefore visible, is borne out of an awareness that the future sustainability of the co-operative school model relies upon garnering support from central government policy makers who *insist* upon speaking the language of metrics in terms of offering 'hard evidence', measurable outcomes and identifying universal solutions of 'what works?' Nevertheless, I cannot also fail to consider 'what is at stake?' in rendering co-operative school accountable: 'to a measuring stick of the wrong size' (Mazzei, 2007, p. 5), or of falling foul of supporting the neo-liberal instrumental measurement of educational outcomes as a normative ideal in the same vein that surrounds the conflict of interest in feminist struggles against patriarchy. As Carol Tavris argues in *The Mismeasure of Woman* (1993, p. 149): '[m]any women experience tremendous conflict in trying to decide whether to be "like" men or "opposite" from them, and this conflict in itself is evidence of the implicit male standard against which they are measuring themselves'. Articulating the *value* of democratic education in terms of neo-liberal outcome attracts similar points of collision as the ideal standard fails to comprehend the Other's terms of engagement. Are we comparing apples and oranges here?

At this point I am suspended from the 'business as usual' of conventional research activities and hover in-between safety and risk by refusing to commit thought to text. These worries are put to work as terrorists of authenticity, inserting simultaneous moments of doubt and truth as I continue to 'worry away' and fail to ever reach the comfortable safety of the w/rite word throughout. What is more, as Deborah Britzman (2011, p. 6) reminds: 'if language is ambiguous, it is only because it is a human creation that conveys more than it means and conceals more than it conveys'. Further, one could accuse instrumental articulations of educational outcomes of concealing more than they convey by erasing all visible traces of 'human' ambiguity as Britzman points out. It seems I am not alone in having trouble with navigating ambiguous or incompatible ideas and wishes. Derrida also recounted the difficulties one can encounter in the face of im/possible, *absent-present* subjects. And Freud devoted his academic life to this struggle as he strained to articulate the existence of the unconscious to predominantly hostile audiences. And it is at this crossroads between speaking 'with' or ' 'against' the grain of '~~good~~' research practice that I am

rendered mute for a while until I can navigate these ethical dilemmas with enough certainty to negotiate a tenable place 'to start' and ask:

- *How are the ethics, values and practices of 'co-operative' and 'mainstream' schooling variously defined?*

- *What are the possibilities for redefining the value of education through a different set of 'outcomes?'*

- *What kind of voice is possible when one 'speaks' as a member of the co-operative school?*

Agitating Voice/s

As my interests and commitment to this research project lay explicitly in disturbing the easy acceptance of claims of 'empowerment' and 'emancipation' through collective governance, or a 'co-operative voice', I strive to offer a critical engagement with some of the key tensions that emerged in the course of asking these questions, especially within the context of a sustained history of inequality in public education (*cf.* Francis & Mills, 2012; Perry & Francis, 2010; Reay, 2012). In order to reduce the risk that my: 'good intentions slide into colonial smothering' (Smyth, 2004, p.156) I acknowledge that I cannot easily traverse the ground of 'giving voice' and instead follow Judith Butler's (1990) tradition of making 'trouble'[14] and aim to offer the beginnings of a critical dialogue that also considers the fragments of conversations that become unspeakable in the 'easy story to tell' which haunts the legacy of anthropological research (See, Clifford & Marcus, 1986 ; Geertz,1988). This direction is pursued in the hope that, by engaging with the tensions and counter-politics that arise in discerning 'voice/s' or writing an un/intelligible research narrative, that this may offer an alternative point of entry for considering the (re)production of voice/s as it/they become entangled within the ethics and politics of authorship. Moreover, as part of my on-going struggle to interpret texts and re-tell the events, conversations and relations that I have encountered within this research process, I have turned to a range of feminist poststructural resources which tangle

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[14] Deborah Youdell offers a further theoretical resource with which to conceptualise a counter politics of schooling in her book *School Trouble* (2011).

with multiple, disciplinary borders as a source of inspiration and guidance when dealing with the slippery subjects of equality, voice and interpretation in this work. For as Barthes (1986, p.71) warns:

> To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a subject (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating an object that belongs to no one.

In the course of trying to get to grips with the epistemological problems that arise in 'creating an object that belongs to no one', I also find myself wrestling with the recurrent conundrum of how my response can include and articulate the voices of Others that ~~speak~~ with/in this research account as the words of bell hooks resound in my head and demand a considered response.

> No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (hooks, 2011, p. 241)

As hooks eloquently points out, desires to include or represent the voices of Others are contaminated by traces of colonialism that belie the 'good intentions' of anthropological research and contradictory demands that continue to thwart the painless insertion of 'voice/s' with/in more recent research narratives. As I turn to the ever-increasing stockpiles of 'voice' that have accumulated in response to working its 'limits' (See, Jackson & Mazzei, 2009), it seems that even the most innovative readings of 'voice', continue to 'disappoint'. Perhaps, we expect or invest too much in the possibilities of voice. 'Voice will always turn out to be too frail to carry the solemn weight of political and theoretical expectation that has been laid upon it.' (MacLure, 2009, p. 97) This fragility, as MacLure points out, 'confound[s] both authenticity and analysis' of voice, and as she later goes on to explain, this 'loss' or insufficiency' of voice is inextricably bound to the fantasy of *presence* that haunts both the audible and written voice that appears 'as it should be' (2009, p. 101).

In light of MacLure's comments above, this thesis therefore concerns itself with how voice 'evades capture' and 'with what gets lost' in its translation to the research

narrative. In other words this thesis aims to interrupt the conventional conceptualisation of 'voice' as a route to the 'authentic' and lingers in the shadows where voice/s are irrational, diverse and often confused. For, I acknowledge that I cannot simply extract a singular voice in purified form, erasing a cacophony of variance, unadulterated by my engagement and undressed of social construction. Neither can I attempt to privilege one voice over the chorus of a many Others. Instead I work with remnants of voice/s, my own and Others, as I attempt to unpick how these threads of silence and sound resound against the metronomic acoustic of educational discourse. Here, curious voice/s come together, the tongue-tied and the expansive, offering stories to tell and secrets to keep; whilst others remain in the shadows offering dissonant snatches of sound that one can only imagine and pursue in the never ending quest to 'give voice', make trouble and drown out the din of 'evidenced-based' research. In order to begin to make sense of situated, multiple and entangled voices, debates and subjectivities produced within this particular assemblage (voice-school-co-operative), I begin by offering my own incomplete and messy account of how strange and particular 'voices' found their way into this research narrative and following Jackson's (2009) reference to Foucault, I consider *what am I doing when I speak of* 'voice' here in this research project?

What am I doing when I speak of 'voice', here in this research project?

Attending to the ethical and political complexities of doing research with different stakeholders of the school commands a critical consideration of the provocative nature of voice/s as it/they weave in and out of this research narrative. As a result, this research *de-sign* aims to strike up a conversation between the interests of the few and the many and reflect upon the conditions of possibility for a 'co-operative voice'; the who and what and where and how 'voice/s are listened to and are (mis)understood in the (re)construction of these research stories.

(Re)viewing 'voice' in contexts of co-operation

Given the immature status and contingent nature of co-operative approaches to mainstream public education within the U.K. context, the task of examining the

potential of this model to engender wider qualitative effects for learners and society was (and still is) fraught with uncertainty, ambiguity and challenge. Indeed, it was at this juncture of uncertainty that I marked out the nature of my research problem and asked:

- *What is a Co-operative School? (And is this an unanswerable question?)*
- *How might a co-operative methodology (re)mediate the conditions of 'voice' in education and educational research?*
- *What are the conditions of 'co-operative voice'?*
- *What is at stake for co-operative school members, communities and wider society when education is organised on the premise of co-operation and mutuality*?
- And, *what can co-operative member's stories tell us about their experiences of 'co-operative' schooling?*

These questions remain in constructive tension with the democratic aims of this project throughout, as I argue that the 'value' of co-operative schooling demands a new language with which to speak about the a/effects of 'schooling', an articulation of voice/s which cannot be simply inserted into a 'what works - is what can be measured' framework of analysis. This paradox has required me to attend to how 'geometries of power' (Hey, 2008) are present within the unspoken subtext of the methodological choices, authorial signature/s and interpretative frames that are *present* throughout this research process. In order to 'begin' to write and (de)construct statements that refer to what a co-operative school *is* or might *be,* I must first make this troublesome position as explicit as possible whilst acknowledging that this does not absolve these tensions but does, in the very least, open up a productive space to theorise and conceptualise the complexities of my ethical engagement in this process of knowledge (re)production. Therefore, I endeavour to lay bare the personal and political encounters that have shaped the epistemological and methodological direction of this thesis in a bid to illustrate how this text walks a tightrope between the personal and the political as a result of the intertextual frame that simultaneously writes 'me' into what is already written into a text that always already bears the *trace*

of other texts, before I even make a mark on the page,[15] as Ian Stronach (2002b) points out, *This space is not yet blank.*

The Time-travelling writer: On being troubled by time…

> Memory then is ordered and disordered by mythic time and is in conflict with something that is not history at all, namely, the unconscious. With these constructions, Freud defined the dynamic unconscious: an area of mental life that escapes time, negations, and contradictions. It urges the logic to wish. This new affected subject, he argued, rewrites what becomes of "wild education" and what education can become. (Britzman, 2011, p. 11)

As I write, I am deeply perplexed by the notion of time and its spacing within this account. Time coming and time going, persistent memories hanging there in the air, time-less yet meaning-full, a research process still unfinished. It is not over yet. I am actively involved in my ethnography and this research remains contingent upon 'what I do with the data' and 'what the data does' as 'it' and 'I' interact. This process is not yet finished, so do I write in the present? Or refer to the past? What is the correct grammatical format for describing the processes of engaging with 'data'? In which time-space/s does data reside? In what spaces does 'data' become dead and/or alive as it dis/locates the boundaries of 'truth' or 'reality'? My confusion and deliberation is wedded to the knotty problem of trying to separate out the processes of thinking-doing-theorising and thinking again in order to *accurately* translate, 'what is-going on here?' within this or that moment of interpretation and of research moments past. That is to say, how do I locate the field-notes, interviews and texts collected during my engagement 'in the field' as they weave between memory, artifact and theory and back again onto the page, altered by my interaction with them and the ongoing passage of time? The conventional language of time veils the incoherent movements of research praxis (action and theory continuously interrupting the other, yet still in conversation) and fails to ever pinpoint *when* the

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3. The concept of intertextuality reminds us that each text exists in relation to others. Michel Foucault declared that: '[t]he frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands... Its unity is variable and relative. (Foucault, 1989a, p25-6)

messy business of research thought, action and writing takes place. I find this schizophrenic movement impossible to pin down to a consistent grammatical structure as I engage actively with old thoughts of mine and new insights and voices of others, until I no longer feel comfortable performing the action of 'writing' in any tense at all.

Developing a 'script': tangling with textuality

But write I must. And so, it was with some relief that I came across Richardson & St.Pierre's (2005) notion of *Writing: A Method of Inquiry* (if only I had read this earlier!) in which Richardson assures: 'there is no such thing as "getting it right", only "getting it" sufficiently differently contoured and nuanced' (p.962). In forwarding a notion of ethnographic writing as a 'Creative Analytic Process', [16] Richardson proposes that the creative, analytical ethnographic project pushes the boundries of conventional triangulation, extending the range of the trifocal lens to one of infinite proportions whereby:

> What we see depends on our angle of repose… [thus enabling an exploration of] the boundaries of observation and imagination, witnessing and retelling, memory and memorialising…Crystalisation, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity'; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystalisation provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 963)

However, as Richardson is quick to remind, these potentially useful 'Creative Analytic Processes', do not offer a shortcut or prescriptive path to unbridled ethical and political embeddedness with one's work, rather: 'the work is harder and the guarantees are fewer. There is a lot more for us to think about…Self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing. Truth claims are less easily validated now; desires to speak "for" others are suspect' (p. 964). Yet despite this warning, shards of tension that bowed and

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[16] See Richardson & St.Pierre (2005, p.962) for an indication, but by no means exhaustive list of examples that reach outside the boundaries of conventional social scientific writing.

bound what was becoming a habitual stoop, finally began to loosen just enough to offer a spark of respite; in coming to a new *reading* of writing, (via the endorsement of published research) I bathed in the comfort of Richardson and St. Pierre's words, and stretched out and filled my lungs with the fresh promise of a way forward:

> Writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery. (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p.967).

This simple string of words offered a huge inflation of oxygen to the life this thesis, as I experienced what Lacan might describe as a form of intellectual *jouissance*[17] for the first time. However fleeting this new-found elation might be, I clung tightly to it; reveling in a newfound optimism of 'writing as method' that hushed my despair for a while and endowed me with the confidence to write (on).

Summary of Part 1: The research journey thus far…

This research journey thus far has explored the socio-historical construction of 'education', 'the school' and 'the student' in order to develop a deeper understanding of the discursive terrain that intersects the current English educational policy landscape and the historical and social ambitions of the co-operative movement. This section has explored a number of key debates that have shaped the cultural and political status of education in society and reveal how complex relations of power circulate and shape both the purpose and practice of public education and its relation to collective well-being and 'schooling'. This section has outlined my rationale for undertaking discourse-oriented research which seeks to offer a provocation of 'voice' within a new and emerging sector of state education in the UK. Throughout this section, I have considered the merits of exploring the development of a 'co-operative' model of public education through the lens of critical ethnography. I have drawn attention to the complexities of sustaining an ethical, political engagement throughout this section, paying particular focus to how I might 'collect' and interpret 'empirical materials' and (de)construct stories of co-operation as an ethnographer and

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[17] *Jouissance* is a term which continues to evade an adequate translation from the French *Jouir* - 'to enjoy'.

other. In addition, I have also considered the capacity of this methodology to serve as a key resource for informing the theoretical underpinnings, ethics and actions of my work around social justice and 'voice' in educational research, and in the 'co-operative' school. It was at this nexus between critical thought and action that I went on to consider and reflect how multiple narratives of 'co-operation' and 'schooling' may be deconstructed in order to question what it might mean to be positioned and to 'speak' as a subject of co-operative education within this nascent terrain.

Having spent the last few years coming and going and exploring various accounts of co-operative schooling within and beyond the traditional boundaries that mark out 'the field' of 'co-operative' schooling and traditional ethnographic research, I now find myself preparing to embark upon a different journey, one that moves beyond 'how to get it', to include 'what to do with it' (Fabian, 1991). Suspicious of 'data' and all that this term might imply, I remain ever-mindful that: '[d]ata themselves are not necessarily sensitive or particularly harmful, but the possibilities of harm accrue from the uses to which data are put' (de Laine, 2000, p. 14). I now go on to occupy myself with the dilemmas of attending to the political and ethical implications of 'doing' and 'writing' critical ethnography as I examine the consequences of putting something, otherwise known as 'data', 'to work' within this thesis and other publications.

Part two begins with a consideration of the limits of 'voice' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009) and the failures of ethnography (Viswesweran, 1994) as I get caught up in the dilemmas of (re)presenting the 'real'. Here I begin to lay the ground work for understanding how the 'co-operative' school model emerged from idea to action, as a result of changes to education policy and in conversation with educators who aspired to offer a different agenda for education and social transformation via a 'co-operative' approach to school governance and pedagogy. These chapters explore how a number of 'co-operative' legal frameworks of school governance evolved in response to being positioned as one of many other 'providers' within the current educational 'market'. Alongside this, I develop a discourse analytic approach to understanding co-operative school membership as this section considers how various articulations of 'co-operative schooling' mobilise the trope of 'voice' as a signifier of democratic subjectivity. This section goes on to deliberate 'what can be said about the co-operative school by whom, where, and when?' before moving towards

developing a deeper understanding of the tensions that surround one school's transformation to 'co-operative' trust. This section concludes by sketching out the conditions of possibility for 'everyone having a say' as I critically examine the how co-operative school navigates equality and difference through co-operative governance structures and separate categories of membership.

Part two: Co-operative Co-ordinates

Part Two maps out a series of 'co-ordinates' that illustrate how the co-operative model emerged from idea to action through a number of member's accounts and discursive analysis of 'co-operative' texts. This section begins with a story which incorporates one school leader's portrayal of the process of 'becoming co-operative'. Reflections of this journey trace the first footprints of co-operation until the moment when ideas about 'co-operative' schooling turned to action and models were 'made'. This section then makes a slight detour through the labyrinth of co-operative legal structures and then brings into focus an example of how one school is attempting to articulate a 'co-operative' approach to school governance in the public domain. Following this analysis, another co-operative co-ordinate is examined via 'Hayley', who offers her thoughts on 'putting the co-operative to work' as an integral aspect of her new professional role in the school. Finally, this section closes with an attempt to untangle the promise of voice and the disappointment of membership as I lay the groundwork for a detailed narrative inquiry about the construction of 'student voice' at Blackbrook High School.

2.a (Re)writing 'the real': *An 'author' under erasure*

A Foreword and Forewarning…

Here, I follow Goodley's (2011, p. 131) move to employ narrative both as cultural artifact and as a resource for deconstruction, in order to offer: 'stories [and 'voice/s' that] ask unsettling questions rather than claiming final answers'. Within these narratives I offer my own partial accounts which tangle with the voices of Others and engage with the: 'practices, texts, assemblages of knowledge, documents, experiences and narratives of given social and cultural locations in which subjectivities are constructed' (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 115). Turning to Foucault I question the problematic construction of subjects and 'voice/s' within these stories as they emerge from ethnographic engagement to the page, unraveling contradictory interpretations and tracing competing regimes of truth along the way. What is more, I press the reader to notice what structures the telling and retelling of these stories as I question the circulation of power-knowledge as it speaks through the tensions and tales of the lives of participants who engaged with this project. Moreover, these narratives are crafted as a means to trace and tease apart the discursive practices that 'make up' co-operative schools and their members. Further, in adopting a Foucauldian frame of analysis I strive to examine how 'conditions of possibility' for social justice in education might be inferred through a critical reading of these stories about the co-operative school as I go on to examine the material-discursive frameworks within which such accounts are located and understood. That is to say, I consider how particular narratives render co-operative schooling thinkable and understandable in the socio-political context of the contemporary English public education system by asking questions such as, 'what does co-operative schooling do?' And 'how is it understood?' This line of questioning is undertaken with the intent of exploring a counter narrative. One that troubles the more superficial descriptions (often found in social policy documents or the glossy prospectuses of such schools) of what co-operative schooling claims to be, in order that I may deliberate the precarious construction of democratic subjectivities as they transgress the conventions of 'co-operation', 'schooling' and 'storytelling'.

In (re)writing 'the real', I consider the limits of 'voice' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009) and the failure of ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994) as I construct composite accounts that speak of Others' experiences - accounts that participants willingly shared but did not knowingly construct. Further, in deconstructing foundational narratives of ethnographic knowledge such as 'the real' or 'lived experience', I remain mindful of getting caught up in the dilemmas of plausibility and persuasion. Especially, as Deborah Britzman (2000, p. 29) points out: '[i]f the relationship between the real and the representation is always in doubt, what is the basis of belief and identification?'. In refusing: 'the primacy of voice as the teller of experience and truth' (St.Pierre, 2009, p. 228), I must openly admit to the contortion, and possible violation, of 'voice/s' which have traditionally offered a shortcut to the authentic *presence* of 'lived experience'. Moreover, there remains something deeply unsettling about (re)presenting Other lives in a form that contests and transcends normative disciplinary boundaries which have traditionally lent authority to the ethnographic gaze. In developing a post structural reading of the *real* 'co-operative' school as a discursive site of struggle, I place the worlds and the words of Others into question and begin a struggle, that by its very nature, does not build consensus but creates dissensus and agonism in the construction of new knowledge that seeks to reflect the heterogeneity of a 'public' organisation, multiple 'voice/s' and individual positionings that 'make up' life at the 'co-operative school. Therefore, as a result of much 'worrying away' I came to approach the re-telling of this ethnographic account in the form of an anthology of 'messy texts' (Marcus, 1995) whereby I offer a collection of more troublesome readings of the co-operative school. After careful consideration and reflection upon the difficulties posed by articulating 'truths' and speaking for Others within educational research (See for example, Alcoff, 2009; Britzman, 2000; Clough, 2002; Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005), I hope to provoke critical readings that are troubled by incoherent, multiple and sometimes, contradictory voices, - mine and others- in order to draw attention to the complex ways in which narratives are: 'constrained, partial and determined by the discourses and histories that prefigure, even as they promise, representation.' (Britzman, , 2000, p. 36)

These narratives are also constrained by something other than the 'discourses and histories that prefigure' that Britzman points to above. In addition to various 'crises'

of representation, I am also compelled to face a significant writing dilemma that compounds the (im)possibilities of enabling participants to speak with their *own* 'voice' which also foregrounds how the ethical and political imperatives of radical research *de-sign* (Schostak & Schostak, 2008) become entangled amongst a number of difficult tensions that offer anonymity alongside inclusivity at the cost of naming and undertaking a sustained examination of the specificities of cultural backgrounds and distinct standpoints. At this juncture, I now consider the prospect of securing anonymity for participants who maintain a substantial stake in how their 'voice/s' are portrayed. Before this thesis progresses any further, it is important to point out the peculiar absence of an explicit reference to the identity categories of race and class (and to some extents gender) in the accounts and stories that follow. In order to preserve anonymity for a number of participants who shared 'dangerous knowledge' throughout the course of this study, I established pseudonyms and disguised locations throughout my early analysis and writing. In spite of this, it appeared that regardless of how hard I worked to bury the identities and locations of participants and their schools within complex and intricate fictions, there always remained a trace, a hint of something revealing and it soon became apparent that other details in participant's stories or mentions of the histories or demographic composition of the schools involved could easily be recognised by insiders.

Therefore, it was not without a great deal of deliberation (and anxiety!) that this thesis became structured around the narrative intervention of 'voice' that develops in the form of fictionalised account which takes place within one composite school (Blackbrook High) throughout subsequent chapters. During the course of this ethnographic study, I spent a significant amount of time with a group of diverse individuals who were working, learning and living within specifically marginalised contexts sutured by sustained exposure to extensive social inequalities. A significant proportion of members recounted their experiences of 'schooling' from within a 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000) and thus offered stories which intersected varying dimensions of difference and oppression that could and should be drawn attention to within this body work that examines the relation between 'co-operative' schooling and democratic subjectivities. Moreover, despite the relevance and urgent need to engage in critical debates that question the relation between democratic

deficits and naming the social inequalities that skew contemporary approaches to socially just schooling (Reay, 2012), the immediate risks of disclosing participant's identities (which could be easily revealed by naming the effects and challenges posed by specificities of inequality as they intersect positionings of class, gender and race) prove almost impossible to name. In spite of this dilemma, the following collection of 'texts' and 'stories' are shot through with more implicit references to the nature of classed identities, subjectivities and psychic effects of inequality. And although I am confounded by my inability to expose the extent to which the changes I have had to make to assure anonymity within the space of this account, I hope to underscore and engage with these significant debates in further research and subsequent writings. At this stage it is also pertinent to point out that, whilst undertaking this ethnographic study I was also often asked if I would report my 'findings' to the Co-operative College and it took a significant amount of time to encourage participants to share their experiences of the co-operative school 'warts and all' and build up relations of trust that I must now respect at the expense of violating the need to highlight the complex constitution of individual 'voice/s' and subjectivities.

I remain caught in the contradictions of wanting to include and illustrate the particular challenges that specific members faced as a political strategy that reveals the social conditions and subjectivities of individual lives 'in their own voice', yet in so doing I anticipate that this has the potential to cause significant harm (both psychological and material) to a number of participants and also carries a number of reputational risks for the schools within which these members are situated. Therefore, In evading an easy identification of 'the co-operative school' and its members (in both a physical and an ideological sense), I develop a composite account which intervenes analytically with the dangers of (re)constructing the biographies of co-operative school members as singular, 'knowable' subjects or of presenting the social life of 'the co-operative school' as a coherent, unified structure of education. Following Clough, (2002) the cultural patterns of institutional life of the co-operative school that are reflected in the stories that follow: '…derive from real events and feelings and conversations, but they *are* ultimately fictions: versions of truth which are woven from an amalgam of raw data, real events and (where necessary) *symbolic equivalents* (Yalom 1991)' (p.9 original emphasis).

In seeking to be as faithful as is possible to the 'lived experience' of those who shared their thoughts and understandings of the co-operative school, I offer this anthology or collection of narratives as allegorical snapshots of events, statements, feelings, relations and conversations that render the discursive terrain of the co-operative school thinkable and understandable as it becomes entangled with 'lives lived'. These accounts include the *actual words* uttered in interviews and focus group sessions and observations of events that *really took place* during September 2011 to July 2013. And although these stories predominantly refer to this period, I also refer to communication with a number of key participants who engaged with me well beyond this phase as they continued to inform me of new developments and events that constituted important sites of retrospection as I re-visited their tales anew and again with a poststructural imagination. However, in order to address the need for anonymity as I point out above, the characters that 'speak' within these stories are 'made up' from a number ethnographic research encounters whereby co-operative school members spoke to me within recorded interviews and focus groups and engaged with this research in a variety of capacities. The stories that follow offer a pertinent reminder of the dilemmas and tensions that characterise a textual portrait of 'being there', as my researcher subjectivities, commitments and relations to participant 'voice' developed in response to my accountability to Others as a partial and situated ethnographer.

Bearing this in mind I wish to underline the fact that I offer the truth *as I see it*, yet at all times I cannot fail to acknowledge the shaky ground upon which these 'truths' are articulated, observed and re-told. That is to say, whilst I endeavour to be as truthful as possible, I cannot escape the fact that I can *only* offer a particular version of events, as a situated and partial author of these tales. For, I am inclined to agree with Freud in this case as:

> ...it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. (Freud, in Britzman, 2011, p. 37)

2.b.
Stories from beyond the school gate: 'telling tales' out of school…

A story from 'the field'…

4. Introducing Blackbrook…

Blackbrook High is situated on the outskirts of a tired but once industrious town. The imposing factories and former cotton mills finally closed their gates in the 1960's and 70's but continue to cast long shadows over small patches of jaded grass that punctuate the stubborn brickwork of chimneys and mills which remain dead, but not quite buried. Around the corner lies the High Street where the mood echoes many other small towns in England, struggling to survive in the midst of unsparing economic downturn. The last time I visited this town was over twenty years ago when I came to visit an uncle who has since moved away. I can understand why. Here stands a town robbed of its original vibrancy. Time has not been kind. Vivid memories cast years ago, scream sharp insults toward the dreary overtones of hollow life that pervade the path I walk along today. Many properties remain vacant or vandalised, separated by clusters of charity shops, which decorate the streets with untidy stacks of bric a brac spilling out of the doors. Not even a coffee shop or bakery adorns these exhausted streets. The heart of this town stopped beating years ago, reveals an elderly passer-by, who is keen to stop and chat with me by the curbside. She angrily waves her stick in the direction of the train station, 'when that monstrosity over there opened up, it took over everything. I mean, there's nothing you can't buy there… and it's cheap mind, I'll give you that - but it's ruined this place it has '. The 'monstrosity' this veteran resident refers to, takes the form of a huge supermarket situated slightly out of town, just out of sight from the few weary remains of independent businesses that have managed to keep their doors open against all odds. Wishing the silver old dear goodbye and heaving a sigh of disappointment, I give up on the prospect of a coffee and a cosy spot to watch and soak up the rhythms of the town. Instead, I decide to head for the familiar safety of the school, in the hope that I could catch Tom in time for a quick coffee and a chat.

Blackbrook High is a larger than average-sized secondary school situated in the North of England. It serves a challenged population of students and families who are recognized as living in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. Here, the number of students who have been identified as having special educational needs (supported through school action or school action plus) is above the national average and is increasing, according to the school's most recent Ofsted report undertaken in 2014. In addition to this, the proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average[18]. According to a recent local government report, more than half of the 0-19 year olds who live in one of the Local Authority's nearby communities are recognised as living in poverty. During the months I spent visiting Blackbrook High, it also became apparent that these official recognitions of deprivation fail to tell the whole story. A couple of months into my ethnography, I discovered that there were also a significant number of pupils attending this school (who did not qualify for free school meals (FSM) due to the fact that family incomes fell just above the threshold for FSM) who often went without food and warmth due to a rapid rise in basic living costs[19]. The embodied effects of living with this level food poverty on a long-term basis became worryingly clear after the school noticed a sharp increase in the number of students who were not receiving FSM being unable to concentrate, fainting or feeling unwell during the school day. Indeed as I write, I am aware that the situation appears to be escalating further; as I read the news that the town has just opened up a much needed food bank after a local charity discovered many of Blackbrook's residents were walking over three miles to another facility, in order to obtain much needed supplies[20].

From the moment I arrived at the school car park, I could not fail to notice that this space was designed with protection (or perhaps containment?) in mind; from the imposing iron fence that separated the perimeter of education 'in here' from the dangers of the world 'out there', to the display of policy mandates which served to

[18] The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
[19] The morning and after school café at Blackbrook school featured in a national news report that confirms the effects of rapidly increasing living costs on students and their families.
[20] See http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/hungry-britain-welfare-cuts-leave-more-than-500000-people-forced-to-use-food-banks-warns-oxfam-8636743.html for more examples.

lend credence that this school was indeed, a 'safe' place to be. The material-discursive apparatus of protection frames the very fabric of school life at Blackbrook High, and perhaps any other school for that matter. Like many other schools I have visited, and I have visited many different types, the physical boundaries of Blackbrook High are continually monitored and censored through the gaze of incessant CCTV surveillance which censors passage through an alarmed school gate. Permission to enter is granted by Julie, the guardian of the gate, as she gauges potential threats to the equilibrium of school life with a quick glance at the monitor behind her chair. Once through the gate I am greeted at reception with a smile and polite request to sign the visitor's book, which once completed is returned with a nod and a badge. Today I'm 'visitor' - just passing through - although hopefully, in time, I can stay a little longer and watch and learn what it means to become a member of a 'co-operative' school like this.

Moths to a Flame…

An entourage of students surrounded Tom, like the proverbial moths to a flame, seeking sanctuary in what was becoming an increasingly overcrowded office. I was beginning to recognise one or two of the regulars but as yet, their names remained a mystery. I clocked scooter-boy crouching under the desk, smiling intently at his pallid cupped hands. Tom caught my eye as he returned a wink under the table and softly whispered: 'come out and show this lady what treasure you've hidden in that pocket all day'.

I later found out that Scooter-boy was actually called Harry but I couldn't help but always think of him as Scooter-boy - the boy who religiously deposited his scooter behind the door of Tom's office every morning for safekeeping. This regular morning routine meant that Harry kept his scooter safe, and Tom knew that Harry was safe - during term-time at least. Of course, Harry didn't realise this. He was just happy to find a safe haven for his beloved micro-scooter, and sometimes if he was lucky, the added bonus of a biscuit and a chat. He was a tiny lad, all skin and bone with strawberry blond tufts of hair that almost disappeared into his pale gaunt face. He seemed too fragile to be here, dodging the burly year elevens as he ran the regular morning gauntlet on the corridor. Besides, "he was a survivor", and had suffered

"far, far, worse things" than the hustle and bustle of high school life. I never did find out what 'far, far, worse' entailed but I could only guess from Tom's sinister tone that Scooter-boy had every reason to hide under his desk from time to time.

'Go on, show her, I'll bet Miss here has never been so close to such a rare little mite', Tom coaxed.

Sensing Harry's discomfort I crouched down to join him and smiled, 'you keep your secret well hidden, don't mind him! You don't have to show me, some things are so precious that you can't risk showing any old person, or else it won't be special anymore, will it?'

Harry made eye contact with me for the first time ever that day, as he replied with a silent, measured nod. Gently scooping his 'treasure' up into his blazer pocket, he cautiously climbed out from under the desk and picked up his scooter with his left hand cradling the lump in his pocket all the while. Then he was gone. The next time I saw Harry, he was perfecting the art of disappearing into the crowd with his brother as they stood waiting to buy a sandwich to take home for their tea - but that as they say is another story, for another day.

I was so engrossed in wondering what lay protected beneath Scooter-boy's pocket that I didn't notice the others leave. Tom interrupted my wandering thoughts frantically waving his hands like windscreen wipers in front of my face – 'anybody there Miss?' he touched his watch and he mouthed 'time for a brew?' Grateful for some much needed caffeine at long last, I offered to make the drinks whilst Tom began to reorganise the furniture until it resembled less of a war zone and something more like the office he was supposed to reside in.

As I gingerly opened the cupboards searching for clean mugs, a short stocky man with deeply furrowed brows opened the door and glared at me disapprovingly, 'That's my cup you've got there. Whatcha doing here?'

I inhaled sharply and spoke quickly, tripping over my words as I tried my upmost to disguise my faux pas, 'I'm so sorry, I didn't realise. Can I, can I make you a drink? I was just making a brew for Tom. He's helping me set up a doctoral research project on co-operative schools. I'm Gail by the way, pleased to meet you.'

The stranger curtly replied, 'I see' and refused to meet my outstretched hand with his so I quickly returned it to the counter, still smarting from my rebuke. With one hand on his hip and the other remaining on the doorknob, he gruffly reminded me not to forget that the red mug was his. And then he was gone. I groaned with embarrassment a few moments later when Tom revealed that the stranger I had just encountered in the kitchen, was *only* the school's deputy head. Not the best first impression I could have made with management…

Tom is an extraordinarily tall man with unruly hair that sprouts from his head in all manner of directions. He makes an attempt at 'playing the game' and "being *just* smart enough" but never quite seems to pull it off, on account of the "wild Cornish blood" flowing through his veins, he says. According to Tom, he's a 'natural' misfit, and at every opportunity he wistfully refers to a misspent youth in the tiny Cornish village where he grew up. Living on the only council owned street in the village of Trebah, he was no stranger to gross inequality. He told me once that his childhood friends were sons of poor fishermen and wealthy landlords alike; although he said it was difficult to tell who came from which family as they all traipsed about wearing little but a scruffy pair of shorts and sandals- if they were lucky. Tom often recounted blissful days spent at his school exploring the pebbly cove that became their favourite playground and science laboratory.

'No health n safety in them days mind, probably still ain't! It was just like one big family – not always happy though, there were plenty of scraps and folks falling out but we all stuck together in the end, had no other option really. Well except for the head. *He wasn't like us*, he was a mean old bastard from Truro. But we all had each other's backs, looked out for each other you know? Especially when it came to the holidays. We kind of just took it for granted that we 'ad to amuse ourselves - make our own entertainment - there was only a handful of us see? So if one lad couldn't go cos they didn't have any bus fare or somethin', we always seemed to find a way round it. We sorted it out together we did. It would be boring anyway with just two or three. Aye got up to all sorts of mischief backalong in those days ...always stanked up to our eyebrows [really mucky] you wouldn't think it now eh? Not now with me being all respectable and middle class an all.'

Tom certainly hadn't lost his love for mischief making. He often mocked my mancunian accent and pretended to be posh but regardless of how hard he tried, he couldn't quite erase those Cornish hues, especially when an 'h' was involved. I cannot say how much Tom's Cornish upbringing shaped his adult mind's eye, but I do suspect that his enthusiasm for co-operation runs deeper than childhood solidarity against injustice in the world. For as we are about to see, Tom's passion for co-operation followed him straight into the world of education and continues to influence his attempts to 'make trouble' within the current status quo.

A story from 'the field'…

5. *Management memoirs*

Excerpts and paragraphs that refer to our recorded interview are numbered by paragraph for later reference and are interspersed within my analysis and reflections as we 'hear' Tom's version of events. This narrative intervention is repeated through the remainder of stories from 'the field' in order to enable easier referral as I reflect back on these paragraphs later on in the thesis.

Here, Tom recounts his experience of trying to find a *different* agenda after spending many years visiting a range of schools 'struggling' to implement 'school improvement' via the 'standards agenda'. This interview took place after spending two terms 'coming and going' and trying to 'get it' at Tom's School.

1. G.D: So then Tom, what dragged you away from your beloved Cornwall and into this place?

2. T: Right, 'for the tape' as they say…

3. Prior to being employed at Blackbrook Tom described a history of being employed within the field of education for most of his adult life. He moved away from his "favourite place in the whole world", at an early age when he found work at a youth centre in the city of Bristol. Not long after that he met Julie, his wife, who enticed him further north and into the world of teaching.

And it is here, tucked away in the suburbs of one of the North's most diverse cities, that he has resided with his wife and three daughters for the last 30 years or so. The interview excerpts below trace Tom's involvement with the co-operative movement from his most recent experience of managing the previous Labour government's attempts to tackle underachievement in Schools via the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative[21]. This role involved liaising with a number of Local Authorities and head teachers with the aim of raising the educational attainment of students living within socially disadvantaged areas. Extensive research into the relationship between schools and social inequality undertaken by Kerr & West, (2010) concurs with elements of Tom's experience whilst acknowledging the limited nature of the existing 'evidence base' for measuring the 'impact' of a range of social policy interventions. Tom recalls his time spent implementing the EiC initiative as:

4. T: …very much focused upon the managerial raising of standards in terms of you know, if you hit certain performance based criteria around exam results, behaviours, teaching and learning, then you improve the standards within the schools.

5. He went on to explain how for the first five years, schools appeared to respond well to the initiative and fulfilled the criteria of 'improvement' according to "the new managerialism agenda" but that after this phase "they hit a glass ceiling", and it remained extremely difficult to sustain the same pace of improvement, which led a large proportion of head teachers deciding to move on or retire.

6. T: So for example, the last fifteen head teachers that I worked with, all but two remained within their schools. The rest either went to bigger schools to earn more money, or retired thinking 'job done' – I'm satisfied that.

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[21] Excellence in Cities (EiC) was a government policy designed to raise standards and promote inclusion in inner cities and urban schools. This government initiative ran from 1999 - 2006. See http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715

7. G.D: So how did you come to be at Blackbrook then?

8. T: Well okay. Truthful answer is that I woke up one morning thinking that if these relationships [generated through a standards agenda approach] can't be sustained then there must be a better way of improving school standards - beyond the standards agenda. So I wondered… if you bring stakeholders together in a *different* way and form a different sort of institution that would enable a *different* way of engaging in education in a social setting within an economic model to push - not only the educational standards up - but also then do other things which become apparent - say in the excellence in cities work - that bounded, if you like, the ability of young people to succeed in their own community and in their own society. And that turned out to be called a co-operative, and it had been done 150 years ago!

First Footprints of the co-operative school

It is important to recall that the social, political and educational ideas of Robert Owen, a man considered 'ahead of his time' (Cole, 1930), expressed 'A new view of society' (Owen, 1817) more than half a decade before the first whispers of universal state education were articulated. Owen's thesis placed education as the primary vehicle for ensuring collective well-being and equality amongst his workers, adults and children alike. His vision sought to promote widespread social change through co-operative communities that supported the development of 'character' and secured the equitable status of its members. For Owen: '[t]o train and educate the rising generation will at all times be the first object of society, to which every other will be subordinate' (1830, p.47). As a pioneer of modern socialism, Owen played out his own more benevolent brand of industrialism in the form of his experimental village in New Lanark Scotland that sought to: 'replace the profit motive with the fruits of co operation, and the vices of individualism with mutuality' (Thompson in, Friberg, 2011, p.118). Thereafter, Owen's commitment to mutuality inspired a variety of social, economic and educational endeavors that have attempted to respond to the competing rights and responsibilities of the individual and the community through 'co operation' (MacPherson, 2011). As the 'father of the co operative movement',

Owen's dedication to educational provision has remained an important tenet of the movement's fundamental values and growth as an internationally significant approach to organisation. In very practical terms it promoted:

- Libraries and Reading Rooms funded by subscriptions
- Periodicals, publications and films
- Lecture Tours and adult education
- Schools
- Training and Certification
- Co-operative Colleges

Such initiatives impacted critically upon the everyday lives of people to such an extent that the co-op movement, at the start of the 21st century, is now fully global with over 1 billion members worldwide. Shortly after the world's population touched 7 billion, the United Nations declared that 2012 would be dedicated to raising public awareness of the movement's contributions to social and economic security and declared 2012 'year of the co-operative'. Despite 2012 being a landmark year in promotional terms with renewed interest in the sustainability and capacity of the Co-operative model across a variety of sectors, the emergent role of co-operatives is still often referred to as an *invisible* component of formal education. Indeed, this problem was noted as challenge which the co-operative movement faced many years earlier by Keith Vernon (2011, p. 53-4) as he points towards the contradictory means and ends that thwarted aspirations for a more comprehensive approach to co-operative education throughout the inter-war years in terms of the extensive methodical organisation of educational materials: 'far in advance of what was taking place elsewhere' and the 'adhoc means of delivery' which were often at odds with each other. The inherent complexities of distinguishing between technical education *for* local producer co-operatives from the less tangible moral and ethical tenets of learning to *be* co- operative within historical accounts may explain the ambiguous status of educational provision across a variety of co-operative groups. Moreover, this may also account for the significant paucity of research within studies of education and of co-operation (Woodin, 2011). Furthermore, reconciling these tensions

continues to constitute an enormous challenge for establishing a definitive meaning of 'co-operative education'.

A glance towards the historical roots of The Co-operative College, established in 1919, offers some insight into how contemporary understandings of 'co-operative education' have been shaped by the creation of a dedicated educational institution for co-operators all over the world. In its early days, the college concerned itself with developing a systematic structure for managing curricula, materials and resources as an ongoing source of support to a wide range of co-operatively managed groups. This model of educational organisation was subsequently adopted and adapted where necessary on an international scale (Shaw, 2009). A significant number of european and international models of co-operative schooling have evolved since this time. For example, there are 600 Co-operative schools in Spain, employing nearly 20,000 teachers today (Webster et al., 2011). However, in the UK, as compulsory state educational provision became firmly established, the co-operative movement's involvement with primary and secondary schools gradually declined and it focused the majority of its resources on co- operative training for adults (Facer et al., 2012). From its early days to the 1990's the Co-operative college's influence remained outside the realm of traditional forms of state educational provision. It therefore, focused its efforts towards the provision of residential training courses and higher education in specialised subjects, alongside investigation and research which remained a focal point for 'cultivating the co-operative spirit' (Shaw, 2009). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the college returned to its former location at Holyoake House in Manchester where an extensive review of its activities coincided with an era of profound educational policy change. Moreover, as a new educational landscape emerged, a unique opportunity for the co-operative movement to become involved in the provision of public education presented itself on an unprecedented scale.

Turning Towards Co-operation

Tom's turn towards Co-operativism might be seen as a resistant move away from a neo-liberal reading of competition as the only driver of 'school improvement'. This

offers the opportunity to think about 'improvement' otherwise – that is to say, through (re)creating a 'standards agenda' that considers the interests of those who are most marginalized by the dominant neo-liberal approach, one is able to question taken for granted assumptions that surround particular readings of 'standards' and 'improvement' (how are they defined and measured?) in order to ask, in whose interests do universal 'standards' or interpretations of 'improvement' serve? Indeed it is hoped that a more critical reading of a 'standards agenda' might place addressing issues of social in/justice at the top of educational 'agendas' or towards democratic means and ends, which Fielding & Moss (2011) argue should be paramount in their exploration of *Radical Education and the Common School*. In his own research, Tom found that there were some interesting examples of groups co-operating for mutual advantage across the globe that took the form of single stakeholder co-operatives. Below, Tom describes his attempts to follow a different 'agenda' and of how this eventually led his school to adopt Trust status and become one of the first co-operatively governed multi-stakeholder schools in England.

A story from 'the field'…

6. 'Co-operative' Thinking? Pie Charts and Line Diagrams…

> 1. T: I think I'd come to a point in my own research to be able to say that this status quo will always exist if there is only one legal structure. So if a maintained school looked like this, then a maintained school would always look like that - and the leadership and institution will perpetuate through time. So the approach to both the [co-operative] college and the group at that time was to be able to say – can we not break that? Can we not say Ok, if these values [of social justice] improve education, why can't we build a school that's based upon that? Cos there are examples from all over the world where that's gone on. But the examples tend to be around a single stakeholder co-operative. So you know the railway workers in Spain? You know were just railway workers that wanted their kids to go to a school that shared the same values as them. There was other schools you know in South America where it was basically

teachers that had set up their own co-operative. And there's different examples of where there's just like one stakeholder group coming together.

2. And although Tom could see distinct advantages in the adoption of this type of governance framework, he also wondered if there might be a more suitable alternative that fitted in with the particular context of UK education at that time.

3. T: The interest I think for the UK would be if I was to say, why can't we have multiple stakeholders? And that was an ambition that was shared by both the co-op group and the college. I think Gloria [at the Co-operative College] was considering that. And we both drew a separate chart. I drew a line diagram with - these are the stakeholders - this would be the forum that would sit in the middle - and then this would be the governing body, if you like, would sit above it. And Gloria drew a pie chart with all the people in it. And I said this is what I was thinking - as so obviously we were both aligned erm with the group by our ambition really to want to do that.

4. Over the following months, a shared ambition, underpinned by mutual desires to embed the ethos of the co-operative movement mobilized a group of individuals to come together and develop an approach to schooling that offered *something else*, something that perhaps evaded the grasp of a dominant standards agenda but as yet remained impossible to define.

5. T: So we undertook if you like a feasibility study. At the same time we are working on a legal model, working with a guy called Paul Jones then to say, is it legally possible to do this? *They had just changed the Trust legislation* and we'd rejected, erm, one part of that, that we were looking to align to, and we were looking at a different kind of alignment- rather than a faith based alignment *we were looking for something else*. The something else if you like was the co-operative model of trust. So we worked with Paul and the co-op college, who was supported by the group to develop a model.

6. We had specific links with the department [of education]…And basically, the request was- we've got a different way of doing this that we'd like to pursue. Please may we do it? And the pressure from the department was NO. Just convert. So, just get yourself to be a Trust. We're really not interested in the co-operative stuff… Now, I'm not saying that they were against it. It was just, if you like, an unnecessary confusion- you know? Why should we invest our efforts into rewriting UK education when we have a clear programme of Trusts developing between schools?

It appears that a few years after the luke warm reception Tom received at the mention of 'co-operative stuff', central government were at pains to point out the potential 'impact' 'co-operative' schools might have on 'standards' in the foreword to the DCSF (2009) document *Co-operative schools- making a difference.* Within this document Ed Balls, (the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families at the time) hails the definitive value of co-operative Trust schools in terms of it having a 'huge impact on standards' (p.3). Still, as is an all too common occurrence in education policy rhetoric (*cf.* Purcell, 2011), the mobilization of the 'standards agenda' invokes an unquestionable benchmark to aspire towards (who would argue that we need to lower *standards* for instance!). And true to form, there is an absence of any sort of explanation that sets out exactly what these universal standards are or indeed who and what might benefit or lose as a result of their 'huge impact'. Indeed, it appears that the regulatory framework of the 'standards agenda' has become so normalized that we *think* in terms of standards, we *measure* the value of schooling in terms of these standards yet one has to ask the question, how often do we stop and interrogate what these 'standards' are and what this agenda' does? It seems that even when thinking about the value of co-operative schooling, the 'standards agenda' continues to occupy a prominent place and acts as the dominant discursive regime of truth, *par excellence.* Within this document Ed Balls goes on to say that it is *as a result* of this potential 'huge impact on standards' that he 'want[s] to see more schools based on the principles of social enterprise and co-operation'. Notwithstanding the complex range of tensions that may arise when the values of enterprise *and* co-operation are assumed to coexist unproblematically, or as this statement implies complement one another, the inference that a simple, direct relationship between co-operative

principles and 'raising standards' exists without question, offers a succinct example of the thorny ground that emergent understandings of co-operative schooling are translated within. Here, even a co-operative approach to schooling is rendered thinkable in terms that support the normalisation of the regulatory framework of the standards agenda which could be said to have the effect of suppressing a more critical interrogation of *which standards*? *What impact?* And *For whom*?

Over the last decade, the diversification of traditional, state-led school governance models has attracted a hybrid of public, private and third sector interests in the form of Academy, Trust and Free schools (amongst many others) which offered a myriad of 'pick n mix' options for the co operative organization to pursue. Academy schools were originally introduced by the previous Labour government in 2000 with the intention of replacing the very lowest performing schools in the most disadvantaged areas. These schools were state funded but also drew upon the expertise and resources of sponsoring bodies, such as businesses, charitable organisations, or faith groups (Kerr & West, 2010). When the Labour government handed over power to the present Coalition government in 2010, there were just over 200 such academies (Smith, 2012, p. 48). Subsequently, very shortly after the new coalition government came to power, they seized the opportunity to radically alter the scope of the academy model and rapidly produced the Academies Act (2010) which had dramatic effects upon both the scope and the number of schools which were able to, and have since, 'adopted' this status. (See Appendix 4 for a description of schools)

From ideas to action: making models

The Co-operative College first seized the opportunity to play a more active role in the state sector in 2003, when it recruited the support of educational charities and advocacy organisations such as Mutuo, who helped identify how the college might take advantage of potential changes to governance models first made available under the 2000 Education Act. These first steps towards a 'co-operative model' were established as a result of sponsoring ten secondary schools that developed a specialism based in business and enterprise based upon the values of the co-operative movement. The previous head of a Co-operative Business and Enterprise College

recounts how a network of like-minded schools developed from this initiative: 'because the schools [sponsored by the co-operative] shared values that were removed from the competitive pressures of neighbouring schools, they were willing to share ideas and experience.' (In Wilson, 2013) In addition to the success stories recounted by sponsored schools, Ofsted reports also recognised the positive 'impact' of aligning towards co-operative values (Wilson, 2013). The opportunity to further develop a co-operative approach to 'schooling' presented itself a few years later through the 2006 Education and Inspection Act which enabled schools to become Foundation schools and establish Trust status. It was at this point that a co-operative lawyer became a crucial ally and drafted the first constitution for a co-operative trust which enabled the very first co-operative trust school to make the transition from idea to reality in 2008. By 2009 there were 36 such schools adopting this model of school governance and in 2010 this number had almost tripled to105. In just over two years, the co-operative college had managed to reach a milestone of just over a hundred schools, yet celebrations were short lived as the inception of a new Coalition government in 2010 also brought with it yet more educational policy revision and ethical dilemmas which needed to be considered, in order for the co-operative model to sustain a position within this rapidly expanding educational 'marketplace'.

The radical restructuring of state school governance models has been subject to vociferous debate both within and outside of Whitehall. A large number of critics (*cf.* Apple, 2001; Ball, 2008; Giroux, 2004; Mc Cafferty, 2010) point to the cumulative effects of decades of neo- liberal educational reform and the introduction of market competition in education as a gateway to the eventual privatization of public education[22]. Stephen Ball (2003, p.215) warns that the effects of such policy reforms reach further than: 'changing what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are'. What is more, for those schools who have chosen to adopt the co-operative academy model, a co-operative structure offers a small amount of respite from these pressures. However, as one Co-operative Academy head teacher points out, although his job remains 'tough' the subtle workings of power (or what Foucault refers to as governmentality) prove much more difficult to escape.

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[22] For example http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/secret-memo-shows-michael-goves-plan-for-privatisation-of-academies-8488552.html

I'm certain that we haven't had as difficult a year as the last one in my career [prior to becoming a Co-operative Academy] due to the seemingly endless message that we are not doing a good enough job from those at the top, *as well as the pressures that we have put on ourselves.* (Secondary school, head teacher, 2012, my emphasis)

However, before I even begin to consider the motivations, contradictions and effects of what has been described by Mervyn Wilson as a 'quiet revolution' in education, a difficult, but nonetheless necessary, detour through the complex legal governance structure of co-operative schools is required. I now consider how a range of co-operative groups have constructed a democratic basis for membership and governance and explore the political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential implications of adopting a 'co-operative' model of schooling.

2.c.
De-*signs* on 'voice'

(De)constructing co-operative school membership

In order to consider how individual members of co-operative schools might interpret 'democratic member control' and take up the position of 'stakeholder', it is first necessary to ascertain how broader notions of ownership, membership and 'voice' are so defined within the existing legal and organisational structures, and institutional 'texts' of a range of co-operative groups at the outset. This task is undertaken with a view to examining the context within which a new 'co-operative' model of schooling might variously (not) 'fit in' with the wider institutional aims and organizational structures that are said to typify 'a true co-operative' (Co-operatives UK, 2009). There are a myriad of legal forms available for co-operatives to take up which for example, can alter the scope of such groups to issue shares, release assets, offer returns for investment and obtain charitable status, all of which present a range of material and discursive effects for (re)constructing the conditions of ownership, responsibility and 'voice' in a variety of ways. (Refer to appendix 5 for a summary of legal forms that co-operative groups may consider.)

Nuts & Bolts: A 'Legal' Voice? Legal Considerations for co-operative groups

But first, a little background. There is much slippage between the terms 'co-operative' and 'collective', and whilst it must be agreed that there are some similarities, these two terms have distinct meanings and important implications for understanding membership, ownership and 'voice', in addition to resolving the tensions that surround how the needs and desires of the individual and the group are 'worked out' within these types of structures. Both types might describe themselves as 'bottom up' organisations, although in practice and in theory, decision-making processes could be said to be much less simplistic than this term necessarily implies. Moreover, whilst both co-operatives and collectives reject the hierarchal ownership

structure of the more dominant traditional organisation, the two different approaches to management structures produce varying relations of power.

The term 'collective' refers to how members participate in the management structure. Collectives manage groups such as; worker-owned co-operatives, consumer co-operatives, not-for-profit or volunteer activist projects. A collective could be described as an organisation that comprises a group of individuals who have equal decision-making powers and manage without formal hierarchy. For example, a worker co-operative is a co-operative in which the workers are the only member-owners. This means that each worker owns one voting share and is able to participate in the governance and often the day-to-day management of the business. In collectives, all members typically participate in the decisions that directly affect them, however, depending upon the type of collective, some decisions may be delegated to individual members or sub-committees, but usually no one member usually has more authority than another. Although, there is much that could be said about the relative merits of collective and co-operatively managed organisations more generally, of primary interest here is to foreground the fact that co-operative schools are not collectives, and to explore the democratic potential of co-operative structures placed within the particular context of public education.

A co-operative is an organisation that is owned and democratically governed by its members. Within the traditional structure of a co-operative each member owns one voting share, and has one vote on major decisions as outlined in the organisation's governing document; although the larger co-operative, the more likely it becomes that decisions will be managed through numerous layers of representation via committees and governing bodies. In a co-operative with a hierarchical management structure, the manager or management team makes most operational decisions. In co-operatives with hierarchical management structures, every member is also an owner[23] (or every worker, in the case of worker co-operatives).

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[23] Indeed a recent report undertaken by Lord Myner following recent difficulties experienced by the Co-operative Group has revealed that: 'the Group's present governance architecture and allocation of responsibilities is "not fit for purpose" as he argued that urgent reforms were needed in order to address a 'significant democratic deficit'. (The Co-operative Group, 2014)

In the section that follows, I aim to develop a deeper understanding of how co-operative members are variously defined, both as '(un)equal' members and as (ambiguous?) collective owners of the co-operative school in relation to the legal structures that re/define them as such[24]. However, that is not to say that this is an easy transition to make or that the processes of becoming an equal (or otherwise) member of the co-operative school are not contested or remain untouched by multiple axis of differentiation. Moreover, at the outset it is important to be able to understand how the organisational structures of co-operative schools feed into the material, discursive and affective conditions and effects of 'voice' and 'participation' in this instance. Therefore, I now begin to explore this complex discursive terrain in order to (re)consider *how* a co-operative model of schooling might trouble the traditional deployment of power in school structures, especially in terms of the possibilities for collective participation, for example, who is able to participate? And at what level?

According to the ICA principles, membership must be 'voluntary and open', outlined further by the ICA as:

> Co-operatives are *voluntary organisations*, open to all persons able to use their services and *willing to accept the responsibilities of membership*, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. (My emphasis, International Co-operative Alliance, 2011)

However, students cannot be described as 'voluntary' members of 'co-operative' schools as they are already positioned as compulsory subjects of state school regulation. Following recent changes to legislation in England, students born on or after 1 September 1997, are legally required to stay in some form of education or training until their eighteenth birthday. (Gov.uk, 2014) In addition to this fundamental paradox, it is also less than clear whether all students (and adults for that matter) are aware of the responsibilities of membership. Hayley's story (which appears later in chapter 2e), takes up this anomaly as she endeavours to raise awareness of the 'benefits' of co-operation as part of her role as 'co-operative' co-ordinator. Nonetheless, it is also important to draw attention here to the more obvious problem of students' contradictory, (in)voluntary positioning within the co-

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[24] A description of different co-operative legal structures and governance arrangements are set out in Appendix 5.

operative membership structure at the outset.

The values and principles contained in the statement established by the ICA are claimed to typify 'a true co-operative' (Co-operatives UK, 2009). These values and principles are not legally binding: 'but are the agreed basic principles of the international co-operative movement and provide a series of benchmarks against which to judge an organisation's claim to be 'a co-operative' (p.62). Nonetheless, any group of people may join together in order to pursue common aims in an informal manner and choose to define themselves as a 'co-operative' and it remains unclear how an organisation's claim to be 'co-operative' might be contested, or indeed who retains the power to decide as the ICA defines 'co-operatives as autonomous organisations who undertake responsibility for managing *themselves*.

> A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. (International Co-operative Alliance, 2011)

Whether the motivation for becoming a co-operative is led by environmental, ethical, financial or philanthropic aims, ICA membership represents close to one billion individual members[25] and there are in excess of 1.4 million co-operatives that operate across the world in a wide range of activities that secure the livelihood of over 3 billion people (Co-operatives UK, 2012, p. 25). However, co-operative organisations continue to be positioned as marginal subjects of wider global economic policy debate. The extent to which co-operative groups remain at the periphery of global economic policy discourse appears to be dependent upon whether a distinct, easily generalizable statement can be made about how co-operatives can 'fit in' with 21st century assumptions about what constitutes 'valuable' development and growth. (Co-operative schools offer a case in point here.) Yet, conversely an argument can also be made that as a result of diverse interests and organisational aims subsuming under the colossal weight of the co-operative movement as a whole, 'voice/s' become

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[25] These statistics are calculated from the subscription formula on ICA's 270 members from 94 countries as at 20 October 2013. See http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-facts-figures accessed 27/11/2013)

increasingly stretched and diluted across a wide range of actors, sectors and geographical locations. Thus, rendering explanations of what a co-operative group *is* hostage to a double bind. Explanations either become so complex and multifaceted that they become obscured by the sheer complexity of multifarious definitions and legal structures, or so vague and generalised that the heterogeneous nature of membership is inevitably obscured. As a response to this dilemma, the ICA launched a campaign that aims to develop a *co-operative blueprint for a co-operative decade* in 2013 (Mills & Davies, 2013). This is discussed in greater detail later in part four, but for now our interest remains in considering how schools articulate the boundaries of ownership, membership and voice from within their own particular context of need and desire.

Engaging with Multiple Models: Inspirations and Motivations…

Initially, pilot models of co-operative schooling were primarily based on adopting 'Trust' status. Trust schools are maintained schools that continue to receive funding from the local authority but are also supported by a charitable foundation that comprises one or more partners who usually provide support in the form of experience, resources, expertise and appointment of governors. Common partners include local colleges, universities, businesses and community organisations. Moreover, there is no expectation that trust partners will make a financial contribution to the school. This model bears many similarities in legal status to maintained Faith schools and is arguably the least controversial co-operative model as these schools continue to maintain a significant relationship with the Local Authority in addition to actively involving the wider community in the running of the school. The process of becoming a Trust school involves a formal procedure which begins with deciding upon and finding local partners who are willing to become members of the trust. A consultation process then begins which considers the views of parents, staff, trade unions and members of the local community for a minimum of four weeks. After this time, statutory proposals for the trust are published and representations from different stakeholder groups are invited. At this point, the school's Governing Body then makes the decision whether or not to proceed after considering all views expressed by stakeholders. Finally if a decision to go ahead is agreed by the governing body, the school's land and buildings are transferred to the

trust to hold on the school's behalf (they cannot be sold without permission of the LA and/or the Secretary of State) and the school's governing body is reconstituted[26]. *The role and responsibilities of the head teacher and governing body of a trust school essentially remain the same.* This is an aspect of upmost importance, and is discussed at length later in the analysis.

> There will be no reduction in the role and responsibilities of the governing body of trust schools. The governing body of a trust school (which retains parents, staff, community and local authority governors) remains responsible for all major decisions about the school and its future as well as all aspects of the conduct of the school (including the schools budget and staff) and so responsibilities and accountabilities remain clear. The trust holds the land and capital assets on trust for the Governing Body of the school. Head teachers will retain their responsibility for the day-to-day running of their schools. (The Co-operative College, 2013a)

What can the Trust do?

Trusts are responsible for the guiding *the strategic direction* of the school and play an important role in creating and sustaining the co-operative ethos of the school but unlike Academy trusts, they are not directly responsible for the operational running of the school. They are official legal entities however, and receive a certificate of incorporation from Companies House but they do not receive the same amount of orchestrated support or funding from central government as Academies, although they must appoint a company secretary, formally appoint trustees and report to Companies House on an annual basis. Trusts are constituted as not-for-profit charities and any income that is generated must be used to support charitable aims that focus upon the advancement of education and community cohesion. The Trust is responsible for inviting members from all constituencies (staff, learners, parents, community organisations) and for managing the membership process. They also have a right to: 'deny an application from anyone it has good reason to think will be an unsuitable member' (Gardner et al., 2013). Once the Trust is established, members of the Trust elect a stakeholder forum. The exact constitution of the stakeholder forum varies from school to school but essentially the fundamental

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[26] In a recent House of Commons debate it was revealed that more than a £4 billion of assets have been transferred from local education authorities to co-operative trusts to date. (House of Commons, Column 113H, 2013)

purpose of the stakeholder forum is to provide a number of representatives (Trustees) that can speak on behalf of their constituencies at trust meetings[27]. This forum acts as the main conduit of 'voice' between the trust and constituency members and is, according to The Co-operative College, what makes a co-operative school *different*.

> These governance arrangements ensure key stakeholders parents/carers, staff, learners and the local community *have a voice* through membership.' (My emphasis, Co-operative College, 2013a)

Within a co-operative model of public schooling, representatives of stakeholder groups are invited to participate in Trust Board meetings through the medium of the 'stakeholder forum'. It is hoped that all stakeholders are enabled to 'have a say' through participation at a constituency level meetings and the Trust's AGM. All stakeholders are able to participate as members at this basic level. However, it is also important to note that the majority of the stakeholder forum are unable to access the participatory space of the Trust Board directly and must take up a position of trust as they ultimately rely upon their elected representative as an intermediary agent of 'voice'. So to be clear, all members can vote and speak at individual constituency and stakeholder forums. A small number of representatives of the stakeholder forum (usually two) are elected as representatives (of all constituency groups that 'make up' the entire stakeholder forum) and appointed as Trustees to raise concerns and debate issues at Trust board meetings on behalf of the entire stakeholder forum. For an illustration of Blackbrook High school's governance structure, see Appendix 6.

Shared Trusts

In addition to single Trust schools, clusters can be formed whereby a number of schools work together and share co-operative values and key resources in addition to gaining substantial purchasing power in terms of procurement strategies and so on. The advantage of smaller schools developing a collaborative relationship with neighbouring schools in this instance offers an opportunity to resist the fragmentation of community relationships between other schools and community groups competing

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[27] It is important to note here that not all stakeholder constituency groups share the same rights to participation at Trust board meetings. Often two representatives from across a spectrum of different stakeholder groups are elected as Trustees or in the case of Academies and Free Schools, directors. Often a representative is only chosen from staff or parent constituencies and only in some cases are students allowed to engage but not vote 'on account of their age'. A description of the governance model at www.theswanageschool.co.uk illustrates this point well (see Appendix 8).

for scarce local authority resources and has the potential to unite a larger body of voices towards local social justice agendas. Early in 2012 the London Institute of Education hosted a seminar entitled: '[p]utting the community back into community schools? Learners, teachers, parents and community in co-operative schools', one delegate from a cluster of trust schools spoke of the need to harness collective resources and illustrated how 'living out' the value of solidarity enabled members to form a more powerful lobbying group in which they had started to think about wider issues that affect the school community such as housing problems in the hope that: 'pooling our voice with others can start to make a difference'. Yet whilst there are positive repercussions for extending the voice of community members, sharing resources and subsequent increases to collective bargaining power, these gains are tempered by bringing about a further fragmentation of the collective resources of the local authority. Does the restructuring of power relations in this instance warrant the further fragmentation of an already vulnerable public resource? The growth of multi-school co-operative trusts in the South West and other parts of England is another case in point here as Mervyn Wilson (2012, p.178) explains:

> Many shared trusts build on existing collaborative partnerships, providing a formal legal framework through which deeper collaboration can emerge. This aspect is exemplified by the rapid growth of co-operative schools in the South West, where there are now 11 shared trusts in Cornwall alone involving a total of 86 schools, with many more preparing to start the formal consultation processes. Some of the larger trusts now provide a range of services to support schools, and *are in a position to tender for services previously provided by the local authority* as its role in the delivery of education steadily erodes. (My emphasis)

This type of structure was also extended to accommodate Academy schools in April 2012, when the college announced the creation of the first multi-academy co-operative Trust in the country in Thurrock, Essex. This multi-academy co-operative emerged as a result of an infant, junior and secondary school deciding to extend their history of co-operating together as equal partners by way of a formalised Co-operative Academy Trust. Moreover, this appears to be a very attractive proposition for schools with existing informal community relationships and many other co-operative Foundation Trusts and Academies have subsequently chosen to formalise networks of collaboration by becoming part of a wider trust in the same manner (See Appendix 20 for example).

So…What about Academies and Free Schools?

The Co-operative Group, the UK's largest consumer co-operative, currently sponsors seven 'type 1' academies in Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent and Leeds. However, it is important to understand that these academies differ in significant ways to the 'usual' co-operative academy model in that they are *sponsored* by The Co-operative Group and only represent a tiny proportion of academies that are guided by co-operative values and principles. Of central interest here are 'type 2' academies, these are academies which are supported by The Co-operative College and are referred to as 'converter academies'. Both primary and secondary Free Schools can also be established under the Academies Act (2010). To all intents and purposes Free Schools are simply a different type of academy, as their legal structures are the same. The main difference being that, unlike existing schools converting to Academy status, these are entirely new schools which have demonstrated the required levels of need for additional school places and sufficient levels of expertise in running a school as set out and assessed by current DfE guidelines. (See, Department for Education, 2013a). Although there are some critical implications connected with the type of model that schools 'choose' to undertake, it is important to acknowledge that The Co-operative College have developed a bewildering array of suitable legal structures that can be appropriated for any type of co-operative school. The Academy and Free School models are presented alongside a myriad of other options that all strive to:

> …have a clear co-operative governance methodology that gives key stakeholders a central voice and role in ownership of the school (whilst recognising that for free schools those key stakeholder groups can vary). (The Co-operative College, 2013a)

Notwithstanding this, critical questions can and should be asked about The Co-operative College's involvement with enabling existing co-operative trusts to adopt academy status, especially in view of fundamental concerns about the undermining of local democracy, the transfer of publicly funded assets to school sponsors, and threats to teacher's pay and conditions to name but a few. Substantial opposition to the academy model has been well documented within academic debate as well as continuing to be the subject of considerable local and national activism. (See Ball, 2009; Chitty, 2008; Glatter, 2009; Purcell, 2011, for examples of mounting critique.) Yet, whilst substantial critique about the effects of 'academisation' continues to

attract substantial political, academic and media scrutiny, shortly after the publication of the Academies Act 2010, The Co-operative College reported that increasing numbers of schools were expressing an interest in becoming an academy (whether by 'choice', or as result of warding off impending forced academisation). Therefore it became imperative that The Co-operative College had to 'take a position' and decide whether or not it would support a growing interest in adopting academy status and develop the legal and administrative resources required to support this. The Co-operative College website states:

> Whilst not advocating or promoting academies, we recognise that many schools are now seriously considering the option in view of local circumstances and competitive pressures, expectations from local authorities, and the financial advantages. (The Co-operative College, 2013a)

A similar stance is undertaken by the Co-operative party in relation to Free Schools. It appears ironic that in an era of increasing fragmentation of the public schools sector brought about by recent educational reforms that seek to offer unprecendented levels of 'choice', that the Co-operative Party proposes that they 'may have no choice' but to accommodate the Free School and Academy model in order to continue to engage in the provision of education within the state sector.

> Free schools are not something Labour and Co-operative members should be in favour of… At our recent full council meeting the Labour & Co-operative Group proposed supporting the principle of Co-operative schools as a way of dealing with the fact that *we may have no choice but to accommodate free schools and more academies*… We need to engage with the process, influence how these free schools and academies are set up and run, wherever and whenever possible as co-operatives rooted in the community and run by the community, on a not-for-profit basis in partnership with the local authority and other local educational bodies. (My emphasis, Morgan, 2011).

Multiple models, much confusion…

This short chapter has offered a somewhat tedious, but necessary, description of some of the institutional frameworks which shape an emerging 'co-operative' school discourse. These descriptions highlight significant nuances between collective and co-operative structures, especially in terms of the extent to which collective membership appears to offer a greater stake in decision-making processes, and for the 'co-

operative' school, 'voice' is constructed through the insertion of a stakeholder forum. Fundamental tensions were identified within ICA membership criteria in terms of defining student's membership within the 'co-operative' school as 'voluntary', whilst at the same time it is vital to acknowledge the fact that students are 'always already' positioned by the dominant discursive frames of childhood 'development' that inform the regulatory regimes of 'traditional' educational discourse.

Mills and Davies (2013) also point to a widespread lack of recognition of co-operatives within global media, business and educational sectors and argue that such lack or misrecognition with regard to what a co-operative *is*, contributes to the confusion that surrounds co-operatives across a diverse range of legal jurisdictions across the globe. So in effect, co-operatives occupy a complex and somewhat ambiguous position within financial, legal, and regulatory infrastructures; this difficult position is further compounded by being placed within a legislative framework that defines the fundamental role of 'development' in capitalist terms, that is, with profit oriented, shareholder-owned businesses in mind (Mills & Davies, 2013). Moreover, it appears that co-operative organisations continue to be positioned as marginal subjects of wider global economic policy debate, and this uncertain position is also further compounded by the extensive array of legal models of 'co-operative' schooling that have been adapted and adopted in order to 'compete' in an educational 'market' shaped by recent educational policy reforms. Notwithstanding the benefits of this in terms of being able to appeal to a larger number of schools and diverse communities (for example, a number of faith schools have become co-operative academies or trusts) there remains much confusion about how these differing governance structures offer the means within which *all* members are able to understand this 'democratic model' and progress to 'democratic action'.

This chapter has also highlighted some of the benefits of multi-school shared trust structures which engender collective solidarity in terms of extending community debates and 'voice', in addition to securing greater 'bargaining power' for schools. Yet, the joining together of local schools within a co-operative structure also has the drawback of depleting an already vulnerable public resource as the steady erosion of

local education authorities' powers come under dual attack from both co-operatives and enterprise led academies.

To sum up, it appears that a brief comparison between the worldwide aims, objectives and membership criteria of the ICA and the contemporary context of 'schooling' reveal some significant tensions that need to be managed and navigated in order to 'make sense' of 'co-operation' in the context of the school. It appears that in order to begin to understand the extent to which 'co-operative' schooling might be variously defined a number of tensions are at play. On the one hand, the co-operative model might be perecived as a legal construct which reinforces or 'plays by the rules'; or alternatively on the other hand whether the 'co-operative' model might allow sufficient room for manoevre and offer the conditions, or indeed even stimulate the possibilities, for authentic democratic debate and decision making to take place. Indeed, there appears to be much ground to cover in this respect. Therefore, in the sections that follow, I consider the extent to which the complex organisational structures of the co-operative school become part of a bewildering range of conditions and possibilities that shape how voice, membership and ownership are understood, performed or contested by members of the co-operative school. Moreover, by questioning how subject positions are defined within the organisational structures of 'the school', it becomes possible to explore the relationship between an emerging 'co-operative' discourse, democratic subjectivity and the institution of 'the school'. Therefore, with a Foucauldian eye on the task at hand I go on to ask:

- How are different stakeholders positioned within this framework?
- What relations of power are produced?
- What are the possibilities for resistance?
- How do members of the co-operative school take up their subject positions? What are the consequences of this in terms of subjectivity and action, that is to say, what do stakeholders stories tell us about how they think and feel? What can they do (or not do)?

2.d
The promise of 'voice', the disappointment of membership…

For the moment at least, I am interested here in examining *how* co-operative models of school governance, be they trust, academy or free school, mobilise the trope of 'voice' as a signifier of democratic subjectivity. As will become clear throughout these chapters, the notion of 'having a voice' is understood, within a co-operative school context, as an effect of (re)structuring particular relations of power and reversing dominant hierarchies. In this chapter, I examine the governance structures of a co-operative 'Free School' as one of many contexts from within which, discourses of 'democratic participation' are (re)articulated at the intersections of 'co-operation' and the traditional institution of 'the school'. For, as Michel Foucault (1989a, p. 55) points out, in order to examine the formation of enunciative modalities which shape: 'what can be said, by whom, where and when?', one must first discover the rules that link particular statements to discourses and 'the place from which they come'. Carla Willig (2008, p.113, my emphasis) further underscores the merits of adopting an analytic framework inspired by Foucault's ideas in that:

> …a Foucauldian version of discourse analysis also pays attention to the relationship between discourses and institutions… discourses are not conceptualised simply as ways of speaking or writing. Rather, *discourses are bound up with institutional practices* – that is, with ways of organizing, regulating and administering social life. Thus, while discourses legitimate and reinforce existing social and institutional structures, these structures in turn also support and validate the discourses.

Therefore, I examine 'what can be said' about co-operative school governance with an eye on the institutional sites from within which this discourse 'derives its *legitimate* source and point of application' (Foucault, 1989a, p. 56, my emphasis). This lays the groundwork for further analysis later in the thesis where I specifically explore the relationship between a co-operative school discourse, democratic subjectivity (how members think and feel), educational practices (What is it possible to do?) and the material conditions within which these experiences take place. Especially, in terms of how the 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault, 1980) for 'voice' invoke a wide range of subject positions within which co-operative school members are positioned and

'speak' from. In order to think differently about how the trope of 'voice' is mobilised and (mis)understood as a master signifier of democratic subjectivity, especially in terms of the power relations that circulate within the discursive terrain of co-operative schooling, I adopt a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach to exploring emerging discourses of the 'co-operative' school and informed by Parker (1992) I ask:

- *How is the notion of 'voice' constructed within co-operative school discourse?*

- *What can be said? By Whom? Where and When?*

Claiming 'Voice'

Statements that claim co-operative schools offer the opportunity to *have* a 'voice', 'a say' or even 'a stake' abound within explanations of co-operative schooling, both at a local and institutional level. Indeed, even a perfunctory glance at a range of materials produced both by individual schools, the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) and The Co-operative College, reveals that 'voice' and 'co-operative' schooling often appear side by side in a variety of mediums[28]. For the head teacher of daVinci Community College 'voice' delivers local accountability, as he claims that following his schools conversion to co-operative trust: '[s]taff, students, parents, community groups, *all have a voice* in how this school is run'. (The Co-operative College, 2012b, p. 7)

Moreover, whilst claims that co-operative schools enable members of the school to have a '*real* voice' continue to circulate, the elusive effects of 'voice' often remain unqualified as a taken for granted 'given' source of 'empowerment' that requires no further explanation or support to ensure that *all* voices are included and listened to. Moreover, these 'texts' often equate co-operative forms of 'democratic ownership/membership' and 'voice' as mutually constitutive; an equation, I will argue, that belies the oblique workings of power and the performative aspects of 'voice' which render some voices more audible than others (if audible at all). Listened

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[28] For example, the SCS states that co-operative school structures ensure: 'that the key stakeholders such as parents, staff, learners and members of the local community have a guaranteed 'say' in the affairs of the organisation.' (Schools co-operative Society, 2013a)

to with the enlightenment humanist ear, 'voice' can be defined as an essential category of human agency, as something articulated and possessed by calculable, 'rational' human beings who thus secure the requisite level of 'development' and are deemed to be able to enunciate 'intelligibly'. Therefore it is important to point out that, 'democratic membership' cannot not simply be read as 'giving a voice', anymore than 'democratic ownership structures' construct all voices as equal. Further, as Maggie Maclure (2009) and many others (*cf.* Alcoff, 2009; Jackson & St.Pierre, 2009) remind us: 'voice always evades capture' and it seems that in between 'voice' and 'silence' there are many different shades of sound that might be articulated or read as engendering a political space whereby 'voice/s' are heard and can act. And so, in the case of the participatory framework of co-operative schools, 'voice' takes on the structure of a promise of something (in)tangible and inevitably escapes the traditional *absence/presence* binary. Alecia Jackson (2009, p. 173) offers a reading of voice that foregrounds this precarity when she says:

> Voice as at once desiring, discursive and performative sidesteps the simplicity of representing a multiplicity of voices and instead hones in on analyzing dimensions and textures of voice- especially the fragility and failure of voice to provide coherence, comfort and presence.

How does 'voice' happen?

Therefore, rather than accumulate a collection of themes that might point to continuities of understandings of 'voice' as I 'read' the emerging 'texts' of the co-operative school, I ask a series of questions that illustrate the contradictions and possibilities for a range of (non)participatory actions at the site of a co-operative schooling. Therefore, instead of simply asking 'how do co-operative structures *give voice*'? I am driven to ask, how does the notion of 'voice' become entangled within the material-discursive frameworks of school governance and membership. In particular, I want to consider the effects and functions of a 'co-operative' distribution of power as a relational and productive force that shapes the conditions of possibility for co-operative school membership and 'voice', in other words, I attempt to ask Foucault's 'little question' and ask how does it *happen*?

Before I attempt this task, it is also salient to note that as the founder of the co-operative model of schooling, The Co-operative College is positioned as an organisation that has a particular and complex role to play both *within* and *outside* the context of contemporary public education provision. This new role attempts to accommodate a long history of offering educational support to existing members of the movement (co-operators), and the creation of a specific sector of 'co-operative' schools within the public sector, its mission: 'putting education at the heart of co-operation and co-operation at the heart of education'. The College presents itself as an organisation that actively supports a recontextualisation of contemporary education policy 'reforms' at the site of 'the school' whilst remaining fully committed to the multiplicity of social, political and economic concerns and interests that have historically been at the centre of the worldwide co-operative movement, situated outside of state control. In particular, navigating the tensions that arise when public schools and their members attempt to interpret the possibilities of 'co-operation' with little knowledge or experience of the movement's socialist history or aims, presents a significant challenge that both parties are only just beginning to comprehend. To pre-empt any further confusion, Mervyn Wilson, the college Chief Executive, tries to make the relationship between public schools and 'the co-op' crystal clear:

> There is no blueprint for a co-operative school. There is a framework…it's not about 'the co-op' running *your* schools. These are *your* co-operatives that will serve the needs of *your* communities.' (The Co-operative College, 2013b)

In the first instance, the declaration set above brings to the fore the inference that degrees of uncertainty exist with regard to The Co-operative College's role and its responsibilities towards co-operative schools. And importantly here, that this confusion has led to further ambiguities concerning who is invested with the power (not forgetting the associated responsibilities that come with this) to 'run' schools. Indeed this is a question that is not isolated to the governance of co-operative schools alone, but has dominated debate both inside and outside Whitehall following the profusion of public sector governance models made available in recent years[29]. I will not rehearse the concerns regarding the threats that these reforms pose in terms of instigating further social inequalities and democratic deficits in public education here.

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[29] A recent enquiry into the role of school Governing Bodies was recently commissioned (see, The House of Commons Education Committee, 2013).

What is of particular relevance though, is developing a set of resources that can help untangle the complex relations of power which shape the 'conditions of possibility' for 'co-operative' schooling. So to be clear, as Mervyn Wilson points out above, The Co-operative College (or the Co-operative Group for that matter), do not retain the rights and responsibilities to 'run' schools in the English state sector. The college does however, offer a wide range of support for schools who 'choose' to adopt a co-operative ethos and so offer a significant collection of resources and training materials which are aimed towards embedding 'co-operation' in the areas of governance, pedagogy and curriculum[30]. What is more, as this statement explicitly points out, there appears to be some convergence here with the neo-liberal project in that both contemporary policy 'reform' *and* The Co-operative College both seek to place ultimate responsibility for 'success' firmly in the hands of 'the school community' as responsibilised subjects.

Co-operative Schools: Stronger together?

A discursive reading of the 'co-operative school' invites a consideration of co-operative schooling as an emerging counter discourse (in the form of 'bottom-up' co-operative school organisational structures), which could be understood as offering a form of resistance that troubles the legitimacy of the traditional 'top-down' dominant model. *Co-operative Schools: Stronger together* (Appendix 7) is a short information brochure compiled by The Co-operative College for schools wishing to 'find out more'. As the title infers, the reader is immediately alerted to the possibility that schools may need to adopt a defensive position as this model of schooling becomes *thinkable* in response to an *absent present* danger. (Brought about by the possibilities of increasing fragmentation under recent policy 'reforms'?) The solution to which is understood through the premise of resisting the precarity of individualised 'voice/s' (see for example, Lazzarato, 2009) and gaining strength through solidarity and collectivity.

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[30] For examples see, (www.co-op.ac.uk) schools and young people

The opening statement conveys a clear purpose and a simple message. Co-operative schools claim to offer a '*real* alternative':

> The co-operative approach is a *real* alternative to the top down one size fits all society which has dominated in recent years. It develops social responsibility, balancing the needs of consumers with those of providers, *giving stakeholders a real say*. This new bottom up approach is already resulting in sustained improvements, through a *real* sense of ownership by staff, students, and other stakeholders. Much of this experience is shared with other countries, from Sweden to Malaysia and from Spain to North America, where co-operation is playing a central role in reforming public services, building with communities and dealing with social problems. (The Co-operative College, 2013b, my emphasis, p.2)

Within this short statement, the contradictory interests of social responsibility and 'the [individual] needs of consumers' are presented as a complementary force for enabling 'voice' in terms of 'giving stakeholders a real say', and the potential collision of competing individual and wider collective social interests remain mysteriously absent as they 'simply burrow underneath the distinction between state and market' (Hall, 2011, p. 715). In supporting the all too common slippage between public and private ownership and consumption, one could argue that this has the effect of establishing a 'co-operative' reading of 'voice' (giving stakeholders a say) as a regime of truth that renders the co-operative solution *thinkable* in terms of the neo liberal 'Big Society' agenda. In that, the inclusion of co-operation 'playing a central role in reforming public services' on a global level, further endorses the discursive regimes of 'self-help' whereby, positioned as responsiblised community stakeholders, co-operators govern *themselves* (*cf.* Rimke, 2000; Rose, 1999; Miller & Rose, 2008). Thus, as Stephen Ball (2013) points out, this reconstitutes:

> ….a "politics of the social" and an ontological framework that displaces the principles of the welfare state… *Insecurity* is the basis for both responsibility and enterprise. We must take responsibility for our own needs and for our well-being…and for dealing with risk and uncertainty and organizing protection from them, we can no longer rely on the state. (Original emphasis, p. 134)

In order to examine the claims that the co-operative model offers a 'real alternative to the top down one size fits all society', an examination of the ways in which schools are beginning to articulate their own approaches to 'bottom up' governance structures is instructive. A discursive reading of how one particular co-operative school describes its position within the 'education marketplace' (Ball, 2012a; Reid,

2002), in terms of promoting a model of democratic school governance, offers a useful resource with which to expose the discourses and power relations that frame the subject positions available for members to 'take up' as simultaneous, owners, members and 'governable/governing' subjects. To begin, I examine how in the case of this particular school, co-operative governance structures recognise 'voice' as a 'conduit' of power and democratic subjectivity. (Refer to Appendix 8, The Swanage School governance structure)

(Re)viewing governance

The Swanage School (TSS) is a newly formed Free School Academy, which was established in the South West of England in September 2013. TSS offers a detailed description of its governance structure, which is easily accessed within the public domain[31] (www.theswanageschool.co.uk). The school identifies itself as 'a locally accountable academy run along co-operative principles' and states that the school supports and practices co-operative principles but it is not sponsored by the Co-operative Group and has not formally adopted Trust Articles of Association. In particular, attention is drawn to the fact that Education Swanage aims to make the Trust 'as open and transparent as possible'. This aspiration is further qualified by the fact that it is believed: 'that this will increase the school's resilience and long-term sustainability because it will genuinely represent the needs of the community while maintaining a culture of ambition and constant improvement'. I am reminded here of Marilyn Strathern's (2000, p. 309) warning that: 'there is nothing innocent about making the invisible visible' in her paper 'The Tyranny of Transparency' whereby she argues that: 'visibility as a conduit for knowledge is elided with visibility as an instrument for control' and therefore feel drawn to question, who and what are brought under the gaze of increased exposure in this instance? Moreover, what is

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[31] As part of my research practice of continually examining national news articles, and undertaking regular web searches and following social media updates in order to maintain a sense of evolving educational policy debates and changes to state school practice, it is interesting to note that very few schools made explicit reference to the nature of Trust Board and Governing Body responsibilities or to the ways in which their respective schools maintained (democratic) governance structures. As the organizational structures of Co-operative Trust and Academy models differ in significant ways to the traditional local authority model, it is important to note that very few schools in this sample offered sufficient public explanations of governance structures, democratically organised or otherwise. TSS was unusual in this respect.

being concealed in this 'open' acknowledgement of transparent governance? The following line answers my question quite clearly as the reader is informed that 'transparency' helps to: 'maintain a culture of ambition and *constant* improvement'. Consequently, in casting a critical eye upon this motivation for adopting a co-operative governance structure, I worry, along with Ball (2013, p. 140), that:

> Systems designed to "support" and encourage those who are unable to "keep up" continuously teeter on the brink of moral regulation. The force and brute logic of performance and its "modest and omniscient" (Rose, 1996, p.54) practices are hard to avoid. To do so in one sense at least, means letting ourselves down, in terms of the logic of performance, and letting down our colleagues and our institution.

It is not long before the co-operative values of 'self-help' and 'self-responsibility' make an appearance and the case for the co-operative school is further warranted in terms of the responsibilisation of communities and families as (proven?) key players in raising attainment levels. 'It has long been proven that schools which involve parents and the wider community wherever possible achieve higher levels of attainment.' Along with the previous Labour government's endorsement of this model's 'huge impact on standards' (DCSF, 2009, p. 3) this co-operative school is rendered *thinkable* and indeed *valuable* as an instrument for improving 'attainment', whilst being able to offer greater transparency and *make visible* democratic lines of accountability and so members can govern *themselves*. Greater local accountability is constructed in relation to a reciprocal arrangement whereby, in actively encouraging the involvement of community members, it is hoped that this will strengthen the: 'wholly accountable and democratic governance structure.'

Inviting Voice/s?

The text goes on to position the school at the centre of the local community and reasons that 'by i*nviting* parents, staff and the wider community to *actively* participate [the other *inactive* form of participation being Academy/LA models perhaps?] in the governance of the school through membership of the Trust and through Parent, staff and Community Forums, and by *genuinely listening* [which other forms of listening are

not genuine?] to the student voice through a Student Council, The Swanage School will be at the heart of the local community from the start.' (My emphasis)

There are some substantial claims made in this short paragraph. Participation is 'invited' by the school, thereby devolving ultimate power to participate in the hands of 'the school' (i.e. governors or Academy Directors[32]). This highlights a significant tension in that it still remains unclear *who* is ultimately included or excluded. If the school retains the power to 'invite' participation, what becomes of those who try to participate but are not recognised as having a 'legitimate' stake or 'voice' in the eyes of the school. (For example, a student who has been excluded by the senior management or Governing Body of the school).

It also becomes increasingly apparent that The Swanage School is at great pains to set their school apart from Others, in terms of offering *active* participation and *genuine* listening, thus positioning themselves as powerful gatekeepers of 'voice' in 'the heart of the local community'. The absent/presence of Other schools opens up the implicit suggestion that steers the reader towards making TSS their school of 'choice'. This is based on the premise that prospective parents and students will be positioned as *subjects* that will 'genuinely' be listened to in a restructuring of power relations that afford opportunities for 'active' participation. The web page goes on to describe how one might 'choose' to become involved in terms of participating (at a distance) in decision making activities that relate to the governance of the school where it is made clear that '[o]ur school is run by the principal and staff, overseen by the Governing Body, who are appointed by the Academy Trust Swanage'. *Membership is open to all*, provided members agree to pay a membership fee (currently £1) and agree to the Trust's values. Members of the Trust retain power to 'appoint the majority of governors, who have an overall responsibility for the school'.

So to clarify, it appears that authority and accountability for the day to day management and strategic development of the school *remains* in the hands of the principal and Governing Body respectively (as is usually the case under traditional models of public schooling) and that, the key point of transformation of power

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[32] In the case of a single Academy Trust, the directors and the governors are the same people.

relations resides within the composition of the Trust Board who retain the right to appoint the majority of governors in the first instance. Therefore, in opening up the composition of the Trust Board to allow a number of trustees from the stakeholder forum to actively participate, this opens up a channel of direct communication from 'the bottom up'. However, it is important to note here that the number of Trustees that represent the stakeholder forum can vary from school to school and the exact number of stakeholder trustees allowable is set out in the school's Memorandum and Articles of Association. In some cases, as few as two trustees represent the views of the overall stakeholders and therefore comprise only a small minority of the overall Trust Board composition. Therefore, the distance brought to bear between including all as members and including all members in decision making processes is extensive, especially considering the fact that many schools only appoint two members of the stakeholder forum as trustees.

Membership 'Regimes'

At TSS members of the Trust appoint the majority of Governors and the composition of the Governing Body is as follows:

Head Teacher (automatically appointed)
2 Parent Governors (elected by parent constituency)
2 members of staff (elected by staff constituency)
Up to 12 governors can be elected by Education Swanage
3 additional governors can be co-opted by the G.B
All Governors are also Directors of Education Swanage[33]

However, a closer reading of the governance structures as laid out by the school, reveals that although membership is open to any member of the community, the conditions of 'voice' are also subject to the 'regimes' of differential membership. As a result, this governance model therefore works as an institutional partitioning of knowledge that establishes differential levels of competency and agency for particular

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[33] A detailed description of the composition of the Governing Body (G.B) completes this window into how governance 'works' at TSS whereby we are informed of the particular qualities and skills that 'make up' the good governor. With the exception of two governors, who remain named and described 'parent governors' the reader is advised of the employment status, family backgrounds and relevant skills of the remaining fourteen members of the G. B. It is interesting to note that amongst the catalogue of skills and experience that are that are brought to the readers attention, at least two-thirds of which one might usually associate with the demands of running a business rather than a school (Appendix 8).

'categories' of stakeholder groups, thus creating a range effects for understanding the various subject positionings[34] that members can 'take up'. Membership of each constituency (parents, staff, students and wider community) is described as offering 'a conduit between' said constituency group and the Governing Body. However, for parents (not students or community members) this is offered 'in addition to the day to day open door policy of the school'. Therefore, it becomes possible to consider the rationale for extending the channels of communication open to parents in a different manner to that of other members. Are parents' views constructed as being of greater value than those of students or community members in this instance? Indeed, almost twenty-five years ago Philip Brown (1990) warned that the socio-historical development of British education was shifting from an 'ideology of meritocracy' to what he referred to as an 'ideology of parentocracy'. Therefore, it could be argued that in this case that the relations of power that exist between the Governing Body and the parental constituency are also shaped by a parent's capacity to 'choose' this school over another, or indeed withdraw their child from the school if they so wish (See also Reay, 2012). This is underscored later on in the text when the opinions of other members, namely those of community and students, are qualified on account of having to be *constructive*, when it is stated that: '…the school would like the student constituency *to feel* that their *constructive* opinions are valued', and that they are part of a team that makes The Swanage School a success' (my emphasis). This sentiment is repeated in exactly the same form for community members. However, it appears that the qualification of being *constructive* is mysteriously absent when the same invitation is extended towards parental views. It is also instructive to examine how 'the school' is constructed as a body which invites (rather than demands) the student constituency '*to feel* valued' as part of a team responsible for the 'success' of the school. Moreover, as Foucault himself points out, power is not necessarily always exercised as domination but can be a productive force that results in 'empowerment' or 'responsibilisation' of subjects which ostensibly enable the 'freedom' to 'decide' for oneself. In addition, an examination of the circulation of power and class structures in discourses of 'choice' also offers another lens with which to view the differential

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[34] A subject position refers to 'a location for persons within a structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire' (Davies & Harrè, 1999, p.35)

effects of educational markets premised upon 'choice' as a spurious leveler of equality. Indeed, Ball and Reay (1997, p.89) argue that:

> …for working-class parents choice can sometimes involve complex and powerful accommodations to the idea of 'school' and is very different in kind from middle-class choice making …and that choice is a new social device through which social class differences are rendered into educational inequality.

Voting and 'voice'

Community membership appears to be understood in terms of reciprocal value. The school aspires to become 'an asset to the community' and in return hopes that the wider community will also be able to make use of the school's facilities (for a modest fee!) and that community members can share their resources and skills and become an 'asset' to the school. 'It has long been proven that schools which involve parents and the wider community… achieve higher levels of attainment.' However, community constituent's participation is confined to the level of 'sharing views', 'giving feedback' and 'constructive opinions' as this group are prevented from electing governors unless they are appointed to do so by the Trust. The reasons for this are not made explicit. Likewise, students are not allowed to vote for governors but their exclusion from participation at governance level is at least made clear and reasoned as being: 'on account of their age'. Students are also prevented from becoming governors in the first place 'on account of their age'. Despite this, or even as a result of this, it is stated that: 'the Governing Body would like students to have *a voice* in the running of the school and we intend to seek their opinions on meaningful issues' and some measure of autonomy appears to be granted in that the student constituency: 'will set its own rules for electing and running the Student Forum', but yet again this is subject to 'the approval of the Governing Body'. Despite purporting to uphold co-operative values and principles which include: 'equity, equality and democratic member control', the (im)possibility of positioning *all* members of the school as 'equal' remains a significant challenge. Especially, in light of competing discourses which construct ambiguous levels of autonomy and competence for a significant proportion of members, in addition to those subjects who lack the tangible assets or skills that are deemed 'valuable' in the running of the school. Therefore, one

must also interrogate the instances whereby the conditions of possibility for *real* 'voice' and democratic participation are qualified on account of member's age, position in the community, assumed levels of expertise and competence in addition to the levers of power which might override these assumptions. Therefore, it is apparent that numerous competing discourses of eligibility and are at play. This calls into question the possibilities and conditions for open and voluntary membership – one of the fundamental principles of membership outlined by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) [35]. Further, it also becomes clear that some 'voice/s' command a more attentive audience than others resulting in a differential positioning of the 'equal' co-operative subject, thus resulting in the creation of a discursive field that underscores particular 'truths' or rationalities about who is constituted as the (less than) political subject (*cf.* Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2005). For instance, some parents 'voice/s' become more or less powerful as they become entangled in the discursive framework of 'choice', in that ostensible relations of power are tied to the ideology of 'parentocracy' (Brown, 1990), in addition to having the requisite resources to 'choose' another school[36]. A similar argument could also be made in respect of differential levels of participatory power tied to the social status of particular 'subjects' of the community constituency. For instance, one could compare differences between the participatory powers of wealthy benefactors, or particularly esteemed religious leaders and unemployed members of a community in terms of whose interests are served and which contributions are deemed to be of most 'value' to the school. With this borne in mind, it is possible to (re)consider how the construction of a 'co-operative voice' is subject to and of a number of discursive regimes which shape the fields of possible action for different school members. In some cases this creates a direct challenge to co-operative values and principles of democracy and equality.

After reading this text 'what can be said, by whom, where and when?' appears to be dependent upon which constituency of membership is 'taken up' as a subject position and it follows that different rights and responsibilities and subjectivities are produced

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[35] See, http://ica.coop/en/what-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles

[36] However, it is important to note that this is not the case for all parents and carers as all families do not have access to the same levels of cultural and financial support in order to make this 'choice' as supporters of the Comprehensive School often point out. (See, Benn, 2011)

as a result. The categorisation (and separation) of school stakeholders, naming and performing particular rights and responsibilities from a particular vantage point, occurs without exception across a wide range of alternative co-operative governance models and reflects a similar pattern already present in the majority of traditional school governance models. It is not unusual to encounter student councils or parent teaching associations having some 'input' into the organization of daily school life, regardless of how limited or superficial some of these 'feedback' practices may actually be. However, in the case of the co-operative school, particular claims appear to be made about how the democratic composition of these governance structures can offer a measure of protection through 'having a say' and becoming a member of a collective body. And it is towards a deeper understanding of the tensions that are created between the partial separation of members and the claims made for possible protection through engendering democratic ownership and solidarity of membership as possible effects of these changes to a school's governance structure that I now move towards in the next section.

In *Another gate, another story,* I explore how one member invested with the power to make co-operative cultures 'more visible' within and outside of the school gate began a journey of understanding into how co-operative governance, pedagogy and curriculum 'happens'. I begin with a snapshot of some of the stories that she shared with me which offer another alternative lens with which to view the social relations and cultural practices of a co-operative school, post 'Trust'…

2.e.
Another Gate, Another Story…

A story from 'the field'…

7. Putting the co-operative 'to work': Hayley's story

By the time I finally met Hayley in the flesh we had corresponded via email for some time. After my initial meeting with the head teacher, Hayley had been nominated my chaperone and first point of contact for "anything co-operative". I had already 'officially' visited the school on a number of occasions and was keen to develop a more informal relationship that would enable me to finally spend some time with the students and gain a deeper insight into how 'stakeholder voice' was understood within the 'business as usual' of the school. Hayley was a whirlwind. Enthusiastic and keen to demonstrate that she always gave one hundred percent. Our first meeting began with a nervous laugh as Hayley confessed that she had been concerned that I would quiz her about her knowledge of the co-operative values and principles and worried that she might not be able answer all of my questions. Not for the only time that day, I tried to reassure her that I wasn't there to interrogate her or evaluate her performance but that I was simply interested in finding out more about how becoming a co-operative had affected daily life at her school, if at all. We began with a brief chat about other local schools in the area becoming Academies and Hayley recounted some of the 'troubles' her friend was having in adjusting to new terms and conditions of employment at a primary school down the road. Then we moved on to her story and she began to recount how she had ended up in the position of "anything co-operative" landing on her desk.

Un)comfortable options…

In the beginning, Hayley recounted her initial involvement as a personal assistant to the Assistant head teacher who was heavily involved in the consultation and eventual conversion to Co-operative Trust. She explained that the school had enjoyed a historical relationship with the Co-operative College which began with their Business and Enterprise specialism many years ago. She characterised their conversion to Co-operative Trust as a "natural transition", driven by the necessity of avoiding "being

forced to go down the academy route" and of "wanting to protect ourselves, the building, land, staff". After conversion to trust status, Hayley described how the school begun to make sense of the difference that 'being co-operative' made.

> 1. H: In 2011, we became a Co-operative Trust school. And I will be perfectly honest with you, nothing changed. Nothing changed at all. It was almost like as if after a year or so they had an epiphany or something and thought, 'God we need someone really. We don't have any members'.
>
> 2. G.D. So what happened during the consultation period?
>
> 3. H: Oh, well there were meetings and everything. We invited parents and the community too, staff and there were booklets produced for each part of the process- its quite rigid what you have to go through.
>
> 4. G.D. Was there any sort of feedback at that point from outside?
>
> 5. H: Well we got support from places like the local community college and other sorts of academic places in the area saying, 'yeah it's a good idea' and then the people from the town hall and stuff. Parents, well some parents filled in the questionnaire but we're very poor on getting parental responses for things…the staff seemed to be a little more critical for *obvious reasons* and some of the meetings we had with staff were quite lively… I think in the end a lot of the staff realized that in the end some things were going to have to change and it was going to change anyway, this way it was a bit more protected and you know, obviously we felt comfortable with the co-op link and everything.

Hayley sketches out the reasons for the staff's reticence to engage in terms of it being an 'obvious' response. That is, it is taken for granted that atmospheres of fear and mistrust have become a prevailing discourse within the field of education, following decades of educational 'reforms' that have steadily eroded relations of trust between teaching staff and the state. The point in history at which this consultation took place, is marked out as a period of significant upheaval and particularly poor relations between the DfE and teaching unions across England[37] and became a subject that dominated public debates within the national press and staffroom

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[37] For a selection of examples see, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-13181127
http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/apr/09/national-union-teachers-academy-strikes
http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6088578

conversations alike. Hayley draws upon the school's existing links with the co-operative as a source of comfort and protection as a deciding factor which staff eventually felt obliged to draw upon, given the apparent absence of any other source of resistance. The notion of a co-operative framework of governance being 'the least worst option' is a trope which frequently appeared to be a motivating factor for many school staff which participated anonymously in this research, but yet very few participants felt able to make this motivation explicit in a more formal capacity in view of the possible repercussions for their school's reputation. All of the schools that I visited and observed were part of a cohort of early converters. That is to say that each of these schools were among some of the first schools in the country to formally adopt a Co-operative Trust model of governance, curriculum and pedagogy which extended previous affiliations with the co-operative movement in terms of being sponsored or aligned to co-operative values and principles in some form or other (for example, Business and Enterprise Specialist Schools). A significant number of school representatives that I interviewed or engaged with at training seminars or conferences confirmed that the decision to adopt a co-operative Trust status was led by a fundamental desire to avoid academisation. With this borne in mind it is important to consider how far this motivating factor (of being the 'least worst' option) might be reflected in the absence of staff 'taking up' a more active subject position.

Starting from scratch

Hayley went on to describe how, after a year or so, a new role of Co-operative Trust Co-ordinator was advertised within the school and that she had applied and was subsequently appointed. Her remit began with the development of a 'membership benefits package'.

> 6. H: It was very specific about how many members I was expected to achieve in each category over twelve months. We started from scratch because obviously we hadn't been a trust school before and didn't really know where to start.

Despite the fact that Hayley's job description explicitly set out the successful performance of her role in quantifiable terms (to which she was held accountable), Hayley observed that the absence of competition between other schools in this

context, created alternative conditions for the conceptualization of her role and realistic expectations about the possible achievement of her targets. That is to say, by engaging with the help and support that others 'like her' offered, both new strategies and different articulations of success and failure became a possibility. Here, Hayley refers to her first few months in the role of co-operative coordinator, as she offers some insight about her encounters with other individuals performing a similar role and of the supportive relations that emerged out of sharing a common goal with this group of schools. In this instance, Hayley explains her experiences of working within a more supportive network of relations of power in terms of an *absence* of 'anyone outdoing anyone else' and of the *presence* of 'honesty' about success and failure. She contrasts this experience with the 'usual' competitive conditions that she had previously encountered when communicating with 'other' schools through the inference that: 'when you contact other schools…that openness just doesn't seem to be there'.

> 7. H: When I got the job … I contacted schools that I'd never spoken to that I found on the list [of co-operative schools in the area]. They'd all send me their leaflets, everyone was dead, dead helpful… others were all dead honest and they said stuff like "this or that wasn't great- don't worry it's dead slow to start with, don't think you're failing if you don't get loads of members at first cos it's really difficult". When you contact other schools [non- co-op] for other reasons, that openness just doesn't seem to be there… I've only been to a couple of co-operative school meetings but at every one there's never been any sense of anyone outdoing anyone else or that. It's all about sharing ideas - what's worked and what hasn't.

In taking up the position of 'co-operative co-ordinator', Hayley ultimately became entangled in a reading of 'membership' that became intelligible as a measurable 'output' of entrepreneurship and productivity. Successful performance of this role is understood here within the explicit terms of 'achieving targets'. In this instance Hayley was expected to 'recruit' a particular number of 'members' for each category within a limited time frame. In order to be able to offer sufficient 'evidence' of this, Hayley had little option but to put systems in place that accurately monitored and measured her own performance, thus, rendering 'membership' a tangible 'commodity' for which she became accountable for 'promoting' in terms that reflect the prevalent market discourse in education. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the pressure to offer a visible audit trail of her efforts was also permeated by

commercial discourse as she put the co-op 'to work' and promoted the benefits of co-operative membership as part of a 'package' that delivered economic advantages, in addition to offering the customary merits of 'voice'. Two things are brought to our attention here. Firstly, Hayley is positioned as a subject that is actively involved in developing a visible audit trail of 'membership' as part of the almost inescapable performativity discourse in public education (Apple, 2001; Ball, 2008; 2012a) and also that in pursuing this particular reading of 'membership', (as a quantifiable outcome) membership becomes part of a wider architecture of regulation which enables 'co-operative membership' to become intelligible as a commercial output or product rather than a social, collective practice. Furthermore, it is important in this instance to ask the question, in whose interests does a visible audit trail of membership recruitment serve? Moreover, why would one need to *know* if membership levels have increased or decreased? Indeed the answer to this might become clear if one considers how this information could be utilised as a valuable resource for the school in terms of offering a form of cultural currency as 'social entrepreneurs', meeting the needs of Ofsted inspection or measuring staff productivity. In point of fact, one Trustee did question the need to categorise and measure membership constituency levels (indicated within the minutes of an early Trust Board meeting) when she asked: 'why would a student or member of staff NOT be a member? Working or studying at a Co-operative Learning Trust school should surely go hand in hand with being a member.' However, it transpired that despite an acknowledgement that: 'this is a very strong and good argument', the board decided that 'there is no way we can enforce people to be a member' and the drive to develop a membership 'benefits package' continued. (See, appendix 9 for a copy of the school's membership application form)

> 8. H: It's quite difficult as cos obviously money is tight in schools, and obviously anything with money attached is good for students so we decided to offer £1 off school trips…priority seating at school events – which doesn't cost us anything.

> 9. G.D. So do you have to pay to become a member then?

> 10. H: No we agreed that wasn't really…well we thought that if it costs initially then people aren't going to want to do it. Erm so we just did a basic leaflet saying that membership is free. Basically we wanted to drum home that having a voice is the main part of it although there are extras like priority seating and

discounts for tickets on anything sold in school, like a concert or something…and you get a card. [Hayley retrieves a card from her desk drawer]

11. G.D. Oh who made these?

12. H: We did. Erm we didn't get one off the co-op because they were too expensive.

13. G.D. Don't worry I'm not here to monitor anybody or anything…

14. H: They [Co-op College] do offer a service where they will do the cards for you but when I saw it I thought they were a bit dear, these are from the Plastic cards people…I just 'googled' membership cards…

Hayley's obvious embarrassment about purchasing membership cards outside of the co-operative circle brings into view some difficult tensions that arise in terms of group relations, as following the best interests of her school (and the expectations of managing a very small budget effectively as part of her employment duties) does not correspond neatly with the interests of the wider co-operative movement. This may seem a trivial example, but nonetheless it is possible to imagine how Hayley is positioned as a subject with divergent demands and interests which are shaped by competing discourses of 'performing her role efficiently' and 'performing her role ethically' and in solidarity with the wider co-operative movement. This exemplifies Stephen Ball's point that:

> The new policy paradigm, and the market form in particular, constitutes a *new moral environment* for both consumers and producers, that is, a form of 'commercial civilisation'. Within this new moral environment schools, colleges and universities are being inducted into a *culture of self-interest*. Self-interest is manifest in terms of *survivalism* − an increased, often predominant, orientation towards the internal well-being of the institution and its members and a shift away from concern with more general social and educational issues within 'the community'. (Original emphasis, 2008, p.45)

In the end, Hayley resorts to purchasing supplies outside of the institution that supports the same ethical values and principles as her school and justifies her decision in terms of the demands made on her ability to manage a very limited budget for 'co-operation' to best effect. Furthermore, it is also useful to note that this was not the first occasion that participants felt the need to justify actions that might be seen as acting in self interest rather than in the interests of the wider co-operative movement.

Recognition of this tension is of great importance as it illustrates some of the significant challenges that community institutions face in taking responsibility for their own actions when placed in a context of co-operation *and* competition. Ulrich Beck (1992, p. 94) offers a poignant metaphor to describe this tension when he cautions: 'community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition'.

Consuming Co-operation

Earlier, Hayley referred to her experience of gaining support from other co-operative schools and of how she went on to develop ideas about how she could establish membership at her own school. She surmised that this was a positive experience in the main, but remained perplexed at one school's more unorthodox approach as she recalled:

> 15. H. When I asked about the memberships benefit package she said "it depends who walks through the door, if a family walks in, I offer them free swimming lessons" so I said, so you don't have one that's the same for everybody? But she seems to make it up as she goes along!

Hayley's incredulation at another school's attitude to membership offers a noteworthy example of both, how different schools might conceptualise membership and also of the tensions that arise in navigating notions of equality for different members. Further the use of the term 'benefits package' also highlights the points at which the discursive positioning of co-operative school membership draws upon discourses of collectivity *and* consumerism, which come together and produce surprising effects. The frequency and ease with which a large proportion of other participants articulated their understandings of co-operative education from within the discursive framework of 'the market' are also important to acknowledge. Moreover, at the beginning of my research journey I was surprised to note the frequent slippage between 'enterprise' and 'education' that regularly occurred within the course of my early 'field' observations of co-operative schooling. At a seminar hosted by the London Institute of Education in 2012, which invited contributors to

consider emerging understandings of co-operative school membership, I was struck by the routine recourse to 'the market' as a mode of promoting membership within each school's particular context and as a mode of speaking about 'the business' of education more generally. One head teacher explicitly underlined the need to articulate her school's identity by way of "branding" in terms of being able to convey: "this is who we are". The pervasive presence of 'enterprising' discourse in the field of education reflects the extent to which the provision of public education has increasingly become 'servant to the economy' (Ball, 2008). In spite of this continuing to be a hotly debated subject within and outside of academia, what is of particular importance here however, is exploring 'what happens?' when interpretations of co-operative values and principles are recontextualised within and *between* the precarious spaces of the economy and 'the school', especially in relation to the 'hail' of the 'enterprising' subject. (*cf.* Ball, 2012a; McCafferty, 2010).

"If you're trying to sell something to kids, other kids sell it better"

Both within and outside the school gate, disparities of childhood autonomy are contested and affirmed by diverse bodies of academic research and discursive practices that influence young people's ability to navigate and understand their tenuous position as 'not yet adult', influenced by the ideological dilemmas of contemporary childhood discourse (Billig et al., 1988). These ambiguities are also reproduced within some co-operative schools where young people's understanding of co-operation is framed in terms of their: 'increasingly extensive participation in commercial life as consumers and beyond' (Cook, 2004, p.151) which positions them as credible consumers and decision makers. Yet, in contrast to assumptions made about student's expertise as consumers, co-operative students are precluded from participating as full members of the trust board on account of their age and assumed lack of civic understanding and competence. At Hayley's school students were regarded as more capable than some adults in respect of being considered members that could 'sell it better' (the benefits of co-operation) yet their engagement in democratic processes remained limited, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Hayley decided that it was important to enlist the support of students as she reasoned "if you're trying to sell something to kids, other kids sell it better". Her next step towards developing the school's membership base involved enlisting some Trust Champions and she "got this really, really nice bunch of girls" to put on an assembly for each of the school's five houses and launch the 'membership benefits package'.

The hardest nut to crack

After seeking advice from other co-operative schools and devising some practical strategies for developing a membership 'package', Hayley went on to recount how she had managed to recruit some community members through coffee mornings, contacting local businesses and advertising the Trust launch within the local library. These activities proved worthwhile as a local co-operative producer, who made contact subsequently, went on to become a useful ally and active member of the stakeholder forum. Nevertheless, involving parents as constituent members proved to be a little more challenging:

> 16. H. I don't know whether it's because of the diversity of the group, the school, or if it's the same everywhere…getting them through the door is actually very difficult, very, very difficult indeed.

Hayley's school community comprises a higher than national average of people who do not speak English as a first language. On another occasion I attended a trust board meeting at which a member of the local Somali community had been specifically asked to attend in order to represent a group that faced particular challenges in communicating with the school. This representative offered some valuable insight about some of the cultural barriers that prevented a large proportion of women in her community from attending at particular times of the day. This new knowledge was incorporated into later planning arrangements for a trust coffee morning and resulted in an interpreter coming along with forty parents later in the year. Convincing staff proved to be even more difficult task however, and Hayley was emphatic:

17. H: They're the hardest nut to crack! I don't know why but they seemed to think that there was some sort of catch, maybe that's wrong, that's not the way to put it but they are…erm it's just very difficult. You know they say why do I need to be a member? That sort of thing.

At this point, I asked whether a co-operative staff forum had been formed and if not, who could staff turn to in the event that they felt concerned about something? Hayley responded by saying that other than 'the usual channels' (union representatives and line managers) staff 'voice' was relatively absent. She rationalized this in terms of adding to an already long list of 'pressures':

> 18. H. We did have a few staff at the AGM, which is quite good but I'm very aware that especially teaching staff, that there's so much pressure on them and they spend so much time here anyway after school that − you know academic tutorials and option evenings, open evenings and everything that they're very reluctant to take on anything that's likely to be time onerous, they really are.

After a brief discussion about the merits of creating a specific forum for staff to feed into the stakeholder forum, Hayley added that it was something that she needed to think about for the future. She went on to highlight that this was an unknown territory both for her as an employee and for the school more generally and was at pains to point out that she was very open to suggestions about how they might go about things and welcomed any input from other staff. These types of comments are representative of the typical issues that many staff iterated to me from different locations,[38] as the absence of any 'manual' or formalized process to follow left many staff uneasy about what course of action might be the best to take in respect of the infinite possibilities for 'becoming' co-operative[39]. Indeed, confusions about the formulation and constitution of co-operative schools are not restricted to deliberation within and between co-operative schools alone, but are also echoed within parliamentary discussion. In a recent debate about co-operative schools, a number of members acknowledged that there are widespread misunderstandings about the role

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[38] Here I refer to the numerous seminars, meetings and training sessions that I attended across the U.K as part of my ethnographic engagement with a variety of schools during the period September 2011/13 (see Appendix 1 for details).

[39] The Co-operative College is attempting address this problem by offering training seminars and producing literature such as the recent co-operative school handbook 'Your co-operative Trust: Making it work' (Gardner, et al., 2013).

of co-operatives and co-operative schools both within and outside of Whitehall. (House of Commons Hansard, Debate 23-10-13/569, 2013).

(Re)designing the 'brand': The co-operative, good with … ?

Bearing in mind that a large proportion of newly formed co-operative trust school members are placed in a pioneering role, of which they are only just beginning to explore the possibilities and challenges that this particular model of schooling faces within the contemporary context, it is important to consider how a multiplicity of discursive resources shape initial understandings and experimental practices. Furthermore, it is also useful to point out that in the absence of a prescriptive 'blueprint', members are likely to draw upon familiar 'truths' that circulate and contour relations between 'co-operation' and 'education' in wider society as members recontextualise this 'knowledge' at the site of 'the co-operative school'.

As Zygmunt Bauman (2011) pejoratively reminds us: 'we are all consumers now, consumers first and foremost, consumers by right and by duty'. Therefore, given the pervasive presence of 'the student as consumer' discourse which shapes the present educational landscape, it is reasonable to expect that a considerable number of co-operative school members might fail to differentiate between the commercial activities or 'brand' of The Co-operative Group and the values and principles of the co-operative movement more widely[40]. In fact, in the course of this research, a significant proportion of members often recited (usually with a Scottish accent!) the Co-operative Group's 2008 advertising strapline 'The Co-operative, good with food',[41] or recapitulated the more recent 'The Co-operative, good for everyone' advertisement as a way of understanding the 'meaning' of 'co-operation' in the 21st Century. Explicit 'brand' identification with the Co-operative Group understood as the 'co-op down the road', constituted a popular starting point for members

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[40] Although the extent to which this might be resisted was brought to my attention during fieldwork at one co-operative school when I interviewed a teacher who informed me that he often hears students saying 'you're such a *consumer*!' as a derogatory term.

[41] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHR3cnHRIZU&list=UUhikRm3iMa-JScHb9AoO7cQ or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_UFaKt5Yqo for example.

considering whether the co-operative might be 'good for education' too? Therefore, understanding the provision of education as another arm of the Co-operative Group's commercial activities in food, travel, farming, pharmacy, funeral care, insurance and banking. Indeed, even the subject leader for citizenship at one school interpreted his concerns through the prism of 'brand' identity and commercial credibility:

> Now the governance arrangement thing…well the co-op college needs to be really careful on this because there is no quality assurance. They should be saying for the status of being a co-operative trust or academy you need to meet the requirements - if you're not- well you can't use the name because it damages *the brand of co-operation*.

The above accusation might be considered to be a somewhat unfair appraisal but nonetheless represents a good example of one of the many misinterpretations that circulate within school environments. In particular, this comment underlines the extent to which confusion surrounds relations between co-operative schools, the British consumer Co-operative Group and The Co-operative College. Moreover, other than a small number of co-operative academies, which are sponsored directly by The Co-operative Group, the remainder of co-operative schools need to be understood as forming a co-operative 'in their own right'. Contrary to popular misconceptions, The Co-operative College merely offers a strategic and supportive role in assisting co-operative schools with their transition to co-operative trust or academy status. The Co-operative College does not retain the power to intervene with how schools choose to interpret and adopt co-operative values and principles. However, it could be argued that the worldwide co-operative movement's investments within this arena remain an ambiguous dynamic that escapes an easy mapping of power. Further, despite the rapid accumulation of alternative co-operative school governance models which have been made available in recent years, it is also useful to consider the extent to which this extensive 'choice' has emerged as a defensive reaction to widespread fragmentation following what many critics describe as education policy epidemics or hyperactivity in education. (*cf.* Ball, 2008; Levin, 1998) That is to say, a confusing assortment of co-operative models merely reflect the wider policy landscape rather than constitute a deliberate attempt to offer an extensive 'range' of school models. However, regardless of this intent, it remains

apparent that this all-encompassing defensive approach (in terms of the huge variety of co operative models on offer) has contributed to widespread bewilderment about the role and composition of co-operative schools, which undoubtedly frustrates emergent understandings.

Early Entrepreneurs

At this juncture it is useful to reconsider how the characterisation of co-operative school identity draws upon the ethical values and principles that drove the historical emergence of the co-operative movement in the first place, yet which are also recontextualised within educational discourses of 'choice' and 'marketisation'. The entrepreneurial activities of the original Rochdale Pioneers (1844) are often mobilized alongside the dominant presence of the Co-operative Group as a starting point for understanding the nature of co-operation in contemporary society. Moreover, it must also be acknowledged that the fundamental aim of the early pioneers was in fact premised upon participation in capital markets, albeit that rather than make a profit a 'surplus' was reinvested and divided amongst its members and owners. David Cameron's address to the Conservative Co-operative Movement in Manchester, employs the language of the market as resource with which to conceptualise notions of co-operative schooling in a similar vein, whereby the discourse of capital investment is slid effortlessly beside notions of collective ownership:

> What better way, then, to give parents direct involvement in their school than to give them ownership of it? To make them not just stakeholders, but *shareholders* – not of a profit-making company but of a co-operative built around the needs of local children? (My emphasis, BBC, 2007)

He goes on to add: 'That's why conservatives have always argued that free enterprise and the co-operative principle are partners, not adversaries.' In erasing partisan divides and foregrounding the centre right's allegiance to co-operative values and principles, this creates the conditions of possibility for presenting an unproblematic alliance between capitalism and co-operativism, thus veiling stark differences in ideological interests. In a recent House of Commons debate, Steve Baker (Conservative Member of Parliament for Wycombe) underscores the fact that with

regard to co-operative schooling at least, the chamber was: 'in danger of fierce agreement', although the foundations for this apparent harmonious state of affairs rested upon a questionable understanding of socialism:

> I hope that members on the left will forgive me if I say that I have always misunderstood socialism to mean compulsion, and I was amazed to discover that on the left, there is this great tradition of voluntarism. When I look down the values - "ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others" - who could possibly disagree with them? (House of Commons, Column 112WH, 2013)

In this case, the values and principles of co-operation become entangled in patent themes of morality, which are easily appropriated as 'indisputable' motifs of David Cameron's 'Big Society' agenda, thus positioning the presence of a co-operative model of schooling as an 'innate good' that:

> When separated from state power, actually just represents values and ideals that *any fully formed human being* should support… the Government ought not to fear co-operatives. Co-operatives are, above all people centred businesses, and it strikes me that co-operatives can resolve a number of conflicts of interest and ideology. (Column 112-114 WH, my emphasis).

To conclude then, the co-ordinates of co-operative schooling are spread far and wide. Both in relation to historical, geographical and cultural location and in terms of the socio-political context within which values and principles are interpreted. There is much confusion that surrounds the extent to which this model of schooling differs from the existing neo liberal model or indeed the extent with which co-operative values and principles are easily appropriated to support neo-liberal ends (Facer, et al., 2012). In addition to this, there are also tensions which are created by the extent to which schools are also influenced by competing discursive frameworks which offer diverse translations of co-operative governance, curriculum and pedagogy, when articulated and experienced from within and outside of the contemporary context of public education provision. This chapter has sketched out some of the tensions and challenges that come to the fore when putting co-operative values and principles 'to work' within the context of the school and highlights multiple points of collision between discourses of 'co-operation' and 'social enterprise'. Much confusion

continues to circulate on multiple levels which surround ambiguous relations between

a) The activities of the commercial 'Co-operative Group' and Co-operative schools
b) The Co-operative College and co-operative schools
c) The transcendence of Political party ideology in terms of the 'values' that drive Co-operative schools

The next chapter goes on to explore how co-operative values and principles can be interpreted at the site of 'the school' through exploring examples of 'co-operation' in action. It concludes with a critical consideration of the various positions that co-operative members can/not 'take up' and explores how equivocal understandings of democratic ownership and membership impact upon the notion of members *having* a 'voice' within the context of 'the 'co-operative' school.

2.f
(In)comparable Voice/s and Universal Values

Although upon first hearing about the 'co-operative' model of schooling I was keen to explore the possibilities for transforming the construction of childhood agency and 'development', first it became necessary to gain a sense of how a discourse of 'co-operative' schooling was beginning to emerge within the socio-political context of public education more widely. The thesis so far has attempted to map out such a space. As I almost reach the point whereby I can finally begin to trouble the location of 'student voice' within this research project, another minor detour is required along the way. For, I am momentarily compelled to bracket out (student) for the time being, in order to deconstruct how notions of (any) 'voice' might be articulated from within the discursive frame of the co-operative movement and beyond. I will then go on to argue that the classification of particular voice/s as 'student/s' both creates multiple tensions in terms of essentialising 'subject/s', and yet still the 'performance' of student voice also deserves special consideration in light of the particular positioning of children and young people as ambiguous subjects of developmental discourse which circulate within and outside of the arena of education. This creates further confusion with regard to the subject positions available for children and young people to take up as 'equal but different' members of co-operative groups. However, before I venture along this particularly complex contour of 'voice' it is first necessary to ascertain how understandings of 'voice' have emerged within the historical landscape of the co-operative movement. With the intention of exploring the statements that seek to establish a distinct 'co-operative' voice, I begin by considering how a universal set of values and principles have evolved in response to representing the needs of what is now, a one billion member strong community of diverse interests and contexts.

The co-operative movement comprises of a wide array of different co-operative groups (consumer, worker, agricultural, financial, housing and more recently, educational) located within a wide variety of socio-economic and political contexts. And whilst a number of different co-operative groups existed before the time of the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844, 'The Rochdale Principles' of 'open membership and

democratic control' have been regarded as the fundamental standards by which co-operative groups identify themselves, and thus constitute one of the first known attempts at a universal definition of co-operation (Webster, et al., p.7). The ideological origins of the movement continue to be entangled amid a long history of diverse approaches to co-operation but on the whole, co-operative membership remains guided by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) which positions itself as 'the guardian of the co-operative identity, values and principles'. Its statement on identity is defined by the core values and principles of co-operation. (For a full list of values and principles see appendix 10)

A difficult task lay before the co-operative convention in 1902 (and then later in 1995), whereby international delegates sought to develop a set of common guidelines that could encapsulate the activities and identities of a varied assortment of co-operative groups, whilst at the same time offering sufficient autonomy and flexibility for co-operative groups to operate successfully in any given socio-political context[42] (MacPherson, 2011). Webster et al. (2011,p. 7) expose some of these tensions and reflect upon the extent to which: '[t]he 1995 statement by its nature was the product of compromise between highly diverse traditions and forms of organization which make up the global co-operative movement'. By way of example one could compare the Rochdale Pioneer's aim of replacing, or at the very least, offering a substantial alternative to, capitalist business models alongside the activities of the contemporary Co-operative Group, which might be argued as pursuing a less ambitious task in terms of aiming to offer a 'more ethical?' alternative from *within* the context of a capitalist society. Elsewhere, different socio-political conditions demand yet another approach. Molina and Walton (2011) draw attention to the religious connections and political aspirations that prevented the Spanish co-operative Mondragón from offering a more explicit moral and political agenda and point to how these conditions had to be carefully navigated in order to avoid antagonising the Franco regime. In the same vein, criticisms have been directed towards the question of how far co-

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[42] Parallels might be drawn here between the difficulties experienced in trying to agree a set of common principles and guidelines in the establishment of that United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). This issue will be taken up in Part three when I consider the particular and general rights to 'voice' for children and young people within the context of the 'co-operative school and beyond.

operative principles should be compromised in the battle to survive and flourish? Indeed this question invites a critical examination of the movement's fundamental values of autonomy, equality and democracy and becomes central to unravelling the historical construction of marginal 'voice/s' set within this discursive frame. So then, in order to identify with a collective membership framework imbued by historical aspirations of autonomy equality and democracy, what are the possibilities for engendering an equality of 'voice' and democratic participation set within the context of 'co-operation' in school?

One pertinent question, to which the answer remains opaque, concerns how the co-operative model of governance can transcend a long history of discriminatory discourses and unequal opportunities for 'voice' and participation which marginalised actors on account of their perceived incapacity to act and participate as 'rational' members of society. The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) sets out 'voluntary and open membership' as its first underlying principle stating that: '[c]o-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination'. And from its early days, the co-operative movement claimed to *include* marginalised members of society in co-operative projects that considered all of its members to be equals. Yet, a cursory glance at the co-operative archive brings to light a range of exclusionary and dubious colonial projects that reflect the dominant social stratification of the time. (See Appendix 15 'Black Babies' as just one example among many)

An (Un)even Heritage?

From inception, The Rochdale Pioneers constituted women as full members able to vote as members of this worker's co-operative, which was a profound acknowledgement of women's rights for the time. Furthermore, female membership has been recorded earlier than this as, *The Ripponden Co-operative Society*, founded in Yorkshire in 1832, included seven women among its 45 members by 1834 (Priestly, 1932). Yet although this could be seen as a fairly radical position for the times, the

subjugation of women's rights to be included in the educational endeavours of the movement continued to reflect the dominant cultural assumptions of women's intellectual competence in a myriad of discursive frames. For Example, Tom Woodin (2011, p.88) highlights the work of W.R Rae, Chairman of the Co-operative Union Education Committee (1917) who campaigned to include women in Bookkeeping classes, yet the gendered hierarchy of co-operative pedagogy and curriculum was shaped by the need to 'keep it simple for women' as Rae explained that: '[t]he average woman is not quick in arithmetic, and cannot quickly add up long columns of big figures'. The co-operative's rich history of inclusion is well documented within The National Co-operative Archive which includes a wealth of 'propaganda' materials dating from the nineteenth century to the present day[43] but there continues to be significant discrepancies between discourses of inclusion appropriating claims to equality that continue to circulate within the movement's activities, both past and present. Moreover, women have conferred a significant role and historical voice within the co-operative movement worldwide and have had considerable influence on campaigns for women's rights to health and legal provision for example[44]. Notwithstanding this, women make up seventy percent of The Co-operative Group's workforce (the UK's Biggest Co-op) yet continue to be vastly under-represented in all management positions: 'women make up just five of the twenty seats on the non-executive board and only two out of the ten seats on the executive board' (Birch, 2012). Birch reports that one executive member, Chris Harries, commented that this was a 'depressing' state of affairs and confirmed the Co-operative Group remains committed to redressing this imbalance with a: 'diversity strategy committee which is demanding action on the issue of gender imbalance as well as that of black and ethnic minority diversity as both groups are under-represented in the Co-op's senior

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[43] See, www.archive.coop for details of this extensive collection

[44] The Women's Co-operative Guild also became heavily involved in issues of women's health. For example, in 1898 it took an interest in the Midwives' Registration Bill and their concern about the need for proper care of women before, during and after childbirth culminated in the publication of one of its best known and most controversial works *Maternity: letters from working women* (Women's Co-operative Guild, 1915). 'Maternity' exposed the appalling conditions that working class women encountered by publishing the letters of 160 women themselves, partly at the urging of Virginia Woolf.

management' (Birch, 2012). However, despite the presence of numerous worldwide campaigns and working groups that aspire to address social inequality and exclusion as part of the movement's commitment to equality, the extent to which The Co-operative Group has the sufficient will and resources to enable marginalised members to overcome centuries of disenfranchisement should not be over estimated and it remains vital that significant institutions such as The Co-operative Group continue to be held to account through a critical questioning of both its activities and ideological focus. Moreover, in spite of the presence of explicit campaigns which seek to redress the historical marginalisation of members across a number of axes of inequality and oppression, it is important to remember that although The Co-operative Group accounts for more than eighty per cent of the co-operative movement in the UK, other co-operatives demonstrate autonomy in interpreting the value of equality in different ways. For example, within the Mondragón co-operatives the issue of equal pay is navigated through a policy of compressed pay structuring between different groups of workers, in that a manager can only receive three times the pay of the lowest paid labourer (Molina & Walton, 2011). It is interesting to compare this to the recent controversy surrounding the ex Co-operative Group Chief Executive, Evan Sutherland who was reported to have received a £3.6 million in pay and bonuses for the year 2013 whilst a large number of other workers faced imminent redundancy (Treanor & Farrell, 2014). Therefore, it appears that although the diverse interests and contexts of *different* co-operatives aspire to engender the *same* social values and principles, there are vast differences in the ways in which these values are interpreted. This has an important bearing upon how a nascent group of co-operative schools might 'choose' to interpret the values of autonomy, equality and democracy and the effects of this on both the resultant culture of 'the school' and the subjectivities of its members. As an organisation that claims to aspire to values of autonomy, equality and democracy, the limited role of students as members (who are not entitled to vote as full members of the Trust board) calls into question the premise upon which these aspirations of based. Therefore, I now return to the question of how the co-operative model of schooling might offer possibilities for a reconceptualising 'voice' as a driver of equality and vehicle for democratic subjectivity and action for the largest proportion of historically disenfranchised members of the school, namely 'the students'.

A Thought from 'the field'…

8. Co-op Archive, Jan 2012

Even women were entitled to vote as full members in the days of the Rochdale Pioneers long before this was enshrined in UK law. So what kind of voice or power do children and young people have in this organisation? Everybody I have spoken to so far seems to by-pass this question and act as if it is self-evident that children and young people are not as competent as adults and are subject to a watered down value of equality on account of their age and immaturity... When I first heard about co-operative schools, I imagined them to be a kind of Summerhill for state schools. I couldn't help but be disappointed by the reality of students' position within the schools that I visited, although over time I gained a rich appreciation of why this might be so. What kind of voice is possible for children and young people positioned as members of the co-operative school?

'Childhood': collisions and complications…

Ambivalent understandings of moral and social 'development' which foreground the 'natural' rationale for of age-appropriate rights and responsibilities continue to collide and complicate childhood subjectivity, especially in terms of producing recognisable transitions from child to adult, and represents a tension that the co-operative movement cannot escape in terms of how children and young people are positioned as (un)equal members of society and within the context of everyday co-operative school lives.

Co-operative schools do not exist in a cultural vacuum and it is important to consider the conceptual landscape that constructs the position of 'child/ren' both within and outside of the school. For beyond the fabric of the school building, a dynamic interplay of knowledges, meanings, practices, subjectivities and feelings interact with the individual lives of co-operative actors (adults and children), which can both inhibit and enable different ways of interpreting the values of autonomy, democracy and equality. It can also be argued that in addition to the diversity of child/hoods (Burman, 2008b) that are drawn upon within educational discourse, student's

experiences and understandings of their own capacity to 'act' or 'decide' are also tempered by normative assessments of aptitude and maturity shaped by a long history of developmental scientific 'expertise' (Burman, 2008a; Rose, 1998). Indeed, huge disparities of childhood autonomy are contested and affirmed by bodies of academic research and discursive practices that influence young people's ability to navigate and understand their tenuous position as 'not yet adult', influenced by the ideological dilemmas of contemporary childhood discourse (Billig et al., 1988). The subject of age, competence and rights continues to be a controversial one and the extent to which legal responsibilities and rights offer contradictory or consistent understandings of competence or maturity across different countries and through different periods in history, underlines the culturally constructed nature of both childhood and its place within contemporary legal frameworks around the world. Additional tensions are created by multiple technologies that 'make up' the normative child/ren in order to satisfy the need to make comparative judgements and develop universal benchmarks against which the (universal) child can be considered. (Boyden, 1997; Burman, 2008b; James et al., 1998; Jenks, 2005) The latest debate to capture England's popular press headlines concerns whether 16 year olds are 'mature' enough to vote, following reactions to the publication of a recent Labour Party manifesto which pledges electoral reform for young people in the forthcoming general election[45]. This follows on the tails of earlier debates which discussed proposals for reducing voting age limits in Scotland and resulted in a decision whereby, for the first time ever in the UK, approximately 124,000 teenagers under 18 will now be eligible to exercise the political right to vote at a national level in the forthcoming Scottish referendum due to take place in September 2014[46]. This could have wide ranging effects for transforming the conditions of 'childhood' in

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[45] For an example of the debate see http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-party-adopts-votes-for-16yearolds-8773407.html

[46]Several countries now permit votes at 16 in national elections, including Brazil, Austria, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guernsey, Jersey, the Isle of Man, and parts of Norway; and other countries for local elections, including Germany and Israel. Approximately 30 nations have separate children's parliaments in which minors from 6 to 17 elect representatives, propose policy changes, and in some cases control parts of budgets. The widest-ranging proposal, considered but shelved by the German parliament in 2008, was for suffrage to be granted to all citizens at birth, but exercised by a parent or guardian until deciding when to pass it on to each child.
 http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jun/05/support-scottish-independence-grown-teenage-voters-study

terms of affirming young people's capacity to engage in moral, social and political debate in a wide range of other contexts, and indeed for the position of students as voting members of co-operative Trust Boards.

Continual changes in how children and young people are understood and interact with societal change between differing contexts, affirms the tenuous position within which childhood is situated (Jenks, 2005). Hultqvist & Dahlberg (2001, p.2) highlight the necessity to deconstruct the hegemonic 'natural' discourse of child development as a means to elucidate the inherent political investment of childhood within dominant discursive practice:

> …there is no natural or evolutionary child, only the historically produced discourses and power relations that constitute the child as an object and subject of knowledge, practice and political intervention.

Conflicting expectations of the 'natural', physical, emotional and moral development of children and young people are highlighted by the transformation of institutional practices that have assumed a variety of age graded, 'appropriate' behaviours throughout history (Ariés, 1962; Burman, 2008a). Notions of culpability are a case in point. Historical findings suggest that as early as the Anglo-Saxon period, children were deemed to have 'adult' status by the age of ten (Crawford, 1991), however, understandings of 'adult' responsibility appear to have gone full circle since the Middle Ages. Contemporary understandings of the point at which at which children and young people are deemed capable of moral agency have been reinstated to the age of 10 as a result of the inclusion of Section34 (*Crime and Disorder Act*, 1998) which abolished the defence of *Doli Incapax* (an inability to understand an action to be seriously wrong) in reaction to the murder of Jamie Bulger by two ten year olds in 1993. Furthermore, the stark contrast between the treatment of child murderer Mary Bell in 1968, compared to that of the response to Robert Thompson and Jon Venables twenty-five years later, is indicative of the double standards that belie the specific contextual construction of childhood criminality. (*Cf.* Cunningham, 1991, 2006; Buckingham, 2000; Jenks, 2005.) Cultural differences in the construction of childhood morality and accountability are aptly underlined by comparative analyses of differing cultural responses to analogous cases (see Burman, 2008a). Whilst it is

important to reflect upon the heterogeneity of childhood/s as a means to deconstruct the inherent ambiguous interpretation of childhood discourse, one must also consider the extent to which discourses that attempt to clarify the rights and responsibilities of contemporary democratic citizenship are inextricably bound into a polarized debate that positions children's agency and capacity to participate along a continuum of adult proportions. Further, it is useful to prize apart this polarity and to consider how democratic participation might be understood and reconfigured as an *inter*dependent activity (Lee, 2005). Questioning the equitable basis of co-operative school membership and the construction of 'equal' stakeholder participation may offer a productive route here for (re)considering whether a co-operative approach might create the potential to open up spaces for engaging *all* stakeholders as 'the public', regardless of age, in educational contexts as a means to recognize the democratic potential of interdependence as an integral facet of learning to live together equitably.

Summary of Part Two:

Some reference points for 'making sense' of the 'co-operative' school…

Part two has mapped out a series of co-ordinates that contour an emerging 'co-operative' school discourse within the English state sector. In addition, here I also considered the problematic 're-telling' of a series of accounts, my own and others, as I sought to plot a number of reference points for 'making sense' of the 'co-operative' school along the way. This section went on to explain the rationale behind the subsequent portrayal of others' experiences and subjectivities as they were variously 'played out' at the site of a composite 'co-operative' school, Blackbrook High. Following an introduction to the context of contemporary co-operative school 'life', Tom's account of his turn towards co-operation traces how co-operative ideas for a 'different' agenda progressed from idea to 'reality', following significant educational policy 'reforms'. This section then went on to examine how notions of co-operative ownership, membership and 'voice' are constructed within existing legal and organisational structures and 'texts'. This section then considered how the International Co-operative Alliance principles construct co-operative membership as a voluntary process and highlighted significant tensions that surround this definition. Particularly, as the largest proportion of school members are always already positioned as passive subjects, compelled to attend educational institutions until reaching the age of eighteen. Moreover, this section illustrated the fact that this has far reaching consequences for troubling, 'who is able to participate?' and 'at what level?' In the course of asking these questions, I began to examine the transition process of 'becoming' a co-operative Trust or Academy school. Subsequently the promise of voice and disappointment of membership was explored through an analysis of how co-operative governance is articulated by a newly formed Free School.

This analysis suggests that the conditions of 'voice' and 'democratic participation' are also shaped by the discursive formation of membership categories which 'make up' the stakeholder forum and also intersect with relations of power that circulate within

traditional school hierarchies. As the chapters within this section demonstrate: 'there is no blueprint for a co-operative school, there is [only] a framework' (The Co-operative College, 2013b). Furthermore, authority and accountability for the day-to-day management of the school remains within the remit of school leaders and Governing Body, and schools remain responsible for managing *themselves* and *their* communities. Therefore, the stakeholder forum was identified as the primary site within which a 'bottom up' transformation of power might intervene with conventional school governance practices. Within these chapters I illustrated that the fundamental point of transformation of these power relations is tested within the composition of the Trust Board who uphold the right to appoint the majority of school governors (or in case of academy models, 'directors') in the first instance. However as this section points out, there are usually only two members (drawn from across a range of stakeholder categories) of the stakeholder forum that are able to access the participatory space of the Trust Board. Moreover, I then went on to make the point that the stakeholder forum offers a limited form of intervention in this respect as students are considerably marginalised in terms of voting and participatory activities 'on account of their age'.

Following this analysis, one member of staff charged with the responsibility for making the 'benefits' of co-operation more visible in her school offers an account of putting the 'co-operative to work' as part of her professional role as 'co-operative co-ordinator'. Hayley's account sketches out a number of tensions that became apparent as a result of understandings of co-operative membership being viewed through the lens of commercial discourse and the performativity of the 'enterprising individual'. Part two draws to a close as I begin to trace an (un)even heritage and consider how co-operative schools might navigate equality and difference. This 'sketching out' serves the purpose of orienting the remainder of the thesis towards considering the possibilities for engaging *all* co-operative school stakeholders as 'the public', regardless of age, and therefore invites an examination of the potential of the co-operative model as a radical democratic project, rather than a more 'ethical' brand.

Part three offers an empirical context for the subsequent examination of the democratic potential of the co-operative school, by means of a collection of stories

which consider the failure of 'student voice' when the students of Blackbrook make a claim for equality. These stories and encounters with students and 'voice/s' offer a troubling reading of adult-child relations in education and educational research as I become entangled in the contradictions of 'child protection' and 'best interests'.

Here I draw together a series of (dis)located stories and (dis)located voices which also examine the discursive construction of childhood/s in wider society as I consider what the 'co-operative' model might mean in terms of educational projects which aspire to engender equality and greater social justice and disrupt dominant discourses of 'development'.

Part three: The (non)event

Insufficient voices: Productive ground

After reading Maggie MacLure's (2009) chapter *on the productive insufficiency of voice*, I began to ruminate the diverging forms that 'voice/s' might take and salvaged the discarded notes and observations which might present useful avenues to explore in their troubling and troublesome forms. What is more, in acknowledging 'the insufficiency of voice', I stumbled across strange voice/s lost and found again in the silences and splutters, sly looks and prods, laughter and animosity, kind gestures, false starts and good? intentions encountered both by chance and by design. Moreover, it wasn't until later on in my research-analysis-writing that I realised that, although I had been specifically trying to research, locate and understand something that is typically referred to as 'student voice', I had failed to problematize the taken for granted assumptions that this term ordinarily implies. That is to say, I assumed that I could 'track down' or 'capture' the presence of this thing called 'student voice' in the hope that I could further understand how '*it* spoke' (authentically?) within a defined space *inside* of the co-operative school. *I just didn't "get it".* I was looking so hard for this 'official' body, this organised group that went by the name of 'student voice' that I neglected to see how student's voice/s were everywhere and nowhere in particular, both at the same time. It seems that I had been looking in all of the wrong places, failing to consider the propensity of voice for amorphous travel and multiplicitous forms.

As I (re)considered my initial quest to gain 'direct access' to 'student voice', via a body of students chosen to represent others 'like them', I was forced to question both the efficacy of such a move and my motivation for doing so. At that point, I was disturbed by unsettling thoughts that (despite the best of intentions) I might be guilty of attempting to master student's 'voice/s' in my early endeavours to 'pin *it* down', locate *it* and follow *it,* in order that I could interpret, rescue, and speak of *it* in my research. Yet, as I began to consider this guilt and sense of failure in light of Maggie's chapter, I was reminded that these false starts and disordered notions of what 'voice' is or might be offered a provocative route to poke around the conceptual spaces that

appeared to legitimate, close off and confuse the location of 'voice' (my own and others) in this inquiry. My perseverance in trying to locate a space from which 'student voice' could enter into this research project produced peculiar fleeting moments that resembled something like 'voice' and 'participation', yet also escaped the distinct chimes of 'proper' research. More often than not, this 'noise' was erratic, drowned out by Others and activities that commanded attention away from political engagement and towards compliance with the 'natural' order of educational life. These traces of 'voice' warrant further examination in terms of offering an alternative understanding of how 'student voice' became entangled in my work and troubled understandings of what it might mean to 'speak', especially when 'voice' is considered in terms of young people's ambiguous positioning across a myriad of discursive frames, 'co-operative' and otherwise.

I begin by offering my own incomplete and messy account of *how* something that might be called 'student voice', found its way into my research project. And as I craft my subsequent reflection by trying to make (non)sense of the multiple, entangled voices; debates, practices and subjectivities which produced this cacophony of 'noise', I hope to disrupt the easy acceptance of claims to 'give voice' and lend a critical ear to the unconventional sounds, misfires, and silences that unsettle the recognition and construction of voice/s within a co-operative model of schooling.

3.a. (Dis)located stories: (Dis)located voices

A story from 'the field'…

8. Sanguine Intentions…

Time and time again I had asked Tom: 'what is going on with the student forum?' and had tried to engage his assistance in being able to observe how the student forum 'worked' or 'enabled voice' within the school. Yet I became unstuck with each and every attempt I made to try and understand how this body of students came together as a distinct 'voice' within the school. Indeed, it is only by engaging with a post structural theoretical framework and re-viewing this 'material' through retrospective aperture that I have begun to 'see' more clearly that Tom repeatedly tried to explain the (non)existence of the student forum to me on more than one occasion but *I just didn't "get it"*. Indeed it seems that these (mis)understandings continued to trouble my attempts to 'decipher' 'voice/s', and provoked alternative conceptualisations of 'voice/s' in education and educational research as I became entangled in 're-writing' this ethnographic account. The following exchange between the head teacher and member of staff was 're-written' and constructed utilising the *actual words* from two transcripts and sections of field notes written after *the event*.

This opening scene depicts an example of some of the strained relations I observed between leaders and 'co-operators' in a number of co-operative schools and highlights the tensions that are created when competing ideologies exist within an organisation that is shaped by historical hierarchy and utopian ideals. In the case of Blackbrook, the head teacher illustrates this with his reference to Tom's approach as 'utopian' and his own as, grounded in the 'reality' of everyday life. Here the head teacher illustrates how he conceives his position within dominant accountability regimes as being incompatible with Tom's democratic vision for the school and infers that his job is 'on the line' if he doesn't 'perform'. Thus, adding a final hierarchical sting in the tail with his recourse to pulling rank on the grounds of his own vulnerability if he fails to comply with the demands of 'the governors and Ofsted'. This opening episode of the (non) event sums up the potential threat that a 'co-

operative' approach might pose to the status quo and brings to the fore a key tension that is threaded throughout these stories whereby 'voice' is rendered a subject of provocation and domestication.

A Dark Day…

1. Another dark day in the office. Even Tom seems to be running on empty. His usual spark has been extinguished by another run in with the head. He was just mid rant when Alex (the head teacher) popped his head round the door and I was formally introduced:

2. "Alex, meet Gail she's a researcher doing a case study on our school."

3. I didn't remember ever saying it was a case study? I still hadn't quite decided on the best approach to take but chose to keep that to myself on account of at least wanting to 'appear' to know what I was doing… As Alex looked me up and down my feet stuck fast to the floor trapped in my adolescent self, momentarily hesitating to look up and face the visible wrath of my old head teacher. I quickly realised that the disapproving glance was in fact aimed at Tom and I swiftly rose to my feet, vaguely aware that I should at least get up and shake his hand.

4. "Pleased to meet you, Miss er Gail. I'll bet he's already told you we don't see eye to eye on everything. What d'ya call it Tom? Ideological something or other…"

5. "Differences. Alex. Ideological differences, that's what we have."

6. "Ah Yes, well what he's trying to say by dressing it all up with his fancy university speak is that he thinks you can have a democratic school, and I reckon it's damn near impossible – buck stops with me. And if you want this school to stay open and all have jobs to go to well… I mean I've the governors and Ofsted to think of! Then there's the kids, always in and out of my office – had a special door put on the corridor side, I did. So that we can be 'more

democratic' and what do they do? The buggers are constantly coming in saying they want to change this or they don't want to do that and then there's the others who don't get so much as a hot dinner at home an' we end up being surrogate parents – we can only do so much…"

7. "You just don't get it, that's the whole point. It's not all down to you, it's 'us'. All of us, as that lovely Cameron bloke keeps banging on, 'we're all in this together'. The sixth co-operative value? Solidarity! –Remember?"

8. "Solidarity my arse, if you pardon me miss –it's my neck on the line and it's him that doesn't get it. I keep on telling him that you can't have a truly democratic school and that's that. Although that's not to say that you can't approach things in a democratic way… That's the crux, that's what we'll never agree on in a nutshell isn't it Tom?"

9. "If you say so Alex, if you say so. As you keep on reminding me You're in charge and I'm not so we will just have to see how democratic we can be won't we? Was there something you wanted, only I was just in the middle of telling Gail here how 'co-operative' we are."

10. Riveted by the ping-pong debate I cast my eyes toward my notebook, just itching to pick up my pen. I was desperate to get all of this down verbatim but keeping my head down and scribbling away was hardly the best way to strike up a relationship with the head so I resigned myself to asking them both to do 'a proper interview' with me at a later date. As he left, Alex cast his weary eyes in my direction and offered to tell me how things 'really' were when I'd finished with Tom and his utopian wonderland. Perfect I thought, a chance to get some great data! Regrettably, I never actually managed to get the two of them together in the same room for a joint interview. Although, I did accomplish a lengthy 'official' interview with each of them individually a few months later.

11. Tom shook his head in frustration: "can you see what I'm up against? North Korea, that's where we're heading if we can't make this co-operative model

work. But they're not interested til I can give them some results. I just need them to trust me. It all hangs on trust."

12. "What do you mean?" I asked.

13. "Well right now, we've got just two co-operative members on the Trust Board and the Board is in his [head teacher] pocket. Basically if the Governing Body decided they didn't want to do anything that the Trust suggested - they don't have to. Yeah they'll all nod in the right places but when it comes to recognising how the co-op way of working is benefitting the school and asking for that leap of faith to extend the model further - it all goes quiet. Complete ice-over! We've had all sorts of people interested –even government ministers and the like visiting the school – it's a different story then. Then they're all over it! But when it's 'business as usual', it's hard going to get anything done at all. Basically, well how it stands at the moment is that the see saw is still heavily weighted towards the 'standards' approach. The co-op stuff, well they're happy for it all to go on – just not in curriculum time. Anyway, I've had a good response from my tweet and there are at least 10 learners who will help you out. I've told them to meet us in the canteen at break today alright?"

Following my interests in community psychology [47] and Participatory Action Research (See for example, Kagan et al., 2000; Prilleltensky, 2001), I hoped to incorporate a participatory approach to planning the final research agenda as part of the citizenship or the Personal Social Health and Economic curriculum which would enable students to become involved right from the very start. This strategy had the added advantage of enabling students to participate during school time [48] rather than

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[47] Whilst many academics of this relatively young field have endeavoured to define Community Psychology (C.P), 'no single definition can accurately capture the complexities inherent in its theory and praxis' (Seedat et al., 2001). C.P. may be better described as a paradigm that endeavours to 'integrate theory research and action' (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) rather than adopting one dominant unitary approach. Issac Prilleltensky, points to how C.P. has enabled a transformation in the field of psychology to shift focus from 'treatment to prevention' (2001, p.780), thus enabling pragmatic long-term solutions to community issues.

[48] Although this option is not without other ethical problems in terms of students' limited capacity to make autonomous decisions about 'participating' in classroom activities. Should this option have

encroach on *their free time*. I rapidly learnt that 'free time' was in scarce supply along the corridors and the classrooms, and even more so outside of the school perimeter. I later learnt that some pupils spent everyday of the October half-term holiday including Sunday (And except for a day off on Saturday) in school preparing for GCSE examinations, which at the time, were at least seven months away. My initial optimism about engaging students in the planning of this research design and curriculum time proved premature. As both the staff and students frequently reminded me, time was a treasured commodity and that precious time had to be directed towards getting the best results possible 'for everyone's sake'. The extent to which core subject time remained sacrosanct became glaringly obvious as a result of spending a day on the reception desk. Here, I was advised that reception staff were required to check the lesson 'status' before deciding whether a student may be disturbed. " We're not allowed to take students out of core lessons [those lessons measured in performance tables] unless it's something *really, really* serious".

A story from 'the field'…
9. A Lucky? Break…

For weeks I had been trying to come up with solutions to engaging as many students as possible in this research design. On numerous occasions I had tried to pinpoint *when* and *where* the student forum met, in order that I might introduce myself and generate some interest and ideas about researching and understanding the role of 'student voice' at this co-operative school. After drafting a short preview of my interests and possible forms that the project might take, I asked Tom if he could help me recruit some volunteers who might be interested in taking part. Tom was keen to assist and offered to put a notice on the school blog on my behalf. In the meantime I carefully scripted a range of information sheets and informed consent checklists (See Appendix 11) for prospective staff and student (and their parents) participants. Nonetheless, Tom still appeared elusive when the subject of the 'student forum' came up. I kept wondering how long ago the 'student council' page on the school website had been written and whether its *presence* only spoke to spectre of Ofsted, in fact I

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proved workable, in order to respect student's rights to non/participation I intended to provide a range of alternative activities that students could engage in if they wished. (See also, Davidge, 2011)

continually puzzled over the *reality* of this transient platform for student members, did it actually *exist?* And if so, why was it so elusive? In the event, these speculations led to further confusion as I later realised that my failure to separate the terms 'forum' and 'council' had led me down a number of blind alleys; apparently the student council had been around for ages, and the student democratic forum was something else all together, as appendix 21 demonstrates via my reflections of the *Fifteen Minute Mêlée* which took place in the school canteen.

Another thought from 'the field'…

9. Agitating 'the adult' relation

A few weeks later seven students agreed to meet up with me to have a 'research conversation' in order to organise the next steps for the research project. Tom sent out a reminder that morning – ending with the postscript: 'very nice biscuits provided!!!!!' I arrived at the reception desk that afternoon balancing a copious stack of information sheets, informed consent forms and a loose agenda in one hand and a huge box of chocolate biscuits in the other. I had a good feeling that today was going to be a real turning point and remained hopeful that this unnerving awkwardness that seemed to be forever in my wake would be banished by the promise of undertaking some 'proper' research. I was really starting to get somewhere. No more hanging around in the shadows, an 'official' research engagement at last!

My first 'official', unsupervised group discussion with a group of year 11 students began amongst the usual affray that envelops the main school corridor as the end of school siren signals escape for the majority of pupils. Tom had already booked the conference room earlier in the week but as soon as my foot crossed the threshold of the conference room, I realised I had just interrupted a very heated discussion (I later found out that this was a child protection case conference). After whispering my profuse apologies I quietly closed the door and surveyed the alternatives. At this point a couple of students had already arrived and so I decided to stay put lest the others repeat my mistake and interrupt the already fractious meeting even further. My painstaking plans began to steadily unravel and I was compelled to relocate our focus group to the margins of the corridor until everybody had arrived and we could move on somewhere else. As we waited I offered a quick summary of what the research project might entail for prospective participants whilst dodging bags swung over the shoulders of burly students, keen to get out as quickly as possible. I really struggled to be heard above the demob-happy escapees. In the midst of all this chaos, one student gently pushed me towards the wall

in order that I might escape another bag being hurled across a shoulder. I mouthed 'thank-you' to my saviour and waited for the din to subside... After a minute or two calm prevailed and although still noisy, I began to make my voice audible at the very least.

This was 'their' territory, running the gauntlet of the after school corridor was an everyday occurrence for 'them', but for me, an unforgettable moment of silence and sound as this encounter transformed weaving its way into this ethnographic account. Returning back to Lisa Mazzei's notion of performative silences (2007) which: 'contribute to a layered understanding of the characters that inhabit the performance sites of our research', I can see that my 'role' here as an 'actor' in this encounter was shaped not just by what was said, heard, left out and silenced but was also contoured by the material-discursive frame of the situation, the *where* and the *how* of 'speech' during this surprising moment. Probing Mazzei's (2007) conceptualisation of the performative 'text' of the research encounter further, the following observations spring to mind. Had I been a regular member of staff I may have had more success in commanding sanctioned authority to take up this space for a particular purpose (research). My ambiguous role as an adult -but not staff (although I did have the badge!) positioned within the everyday space of the school corridor had the effect of shaping my (in)capacity 'to speak' and (in)ability to secure a quiet space for prospective research participants to engage in collaborative work; although, later on it became clear that these students were more than capable of navigating their own forms of resistance to this. In addition, had I been a regular member of staff I might have felt more able to use 'my voice' (literally here) and demand that students left the building in a more orderly manner. My reticence to do so was informed by my position as an 'outsider' and relative newcomer, but more importantly by my desire to be seen as 'non staff', rather as someone that students could speak to openly without fear of reprimand and so on. Yet my failure to *do* something, *say* something, also became more noticeable in its absence. Thus causing a concerned student to step in and 'save me'. This unusual 'moment', this act of pushing me back to avoid possible injury is something that eludes measure, quantification or even linguistic interpretation. It was an instance that only becomes visible through reflexive acknowledgement of the affective dimensions of research relationships and encounters. Moreover, the subtext of combined fear, risk and gratitude only just

makes an appearance here into the text as an (almost forgotten) memory, an anecdotal silence, submerged in the midst of more tangible research 'outcomes'. Nonetheless, it is hoped that by drawing attention to this encounter, I can offer a glimpse of how complex power relations are constantly 'on the move' in research narratives, although more often than not, these observations remain buried in the landfill of insignificant 'data'. Does this offer a route towards exploring the surprising as well as the taken for granted construction of power relations in research encounters I wonder? Mazzei (2007, p.72) offers a possible answer with another question as she ponders the utility of previously disregarded data: '[i]s the Other perhaps the words between words- full of meaning but unpredictable? Do we shun this Other for more solid ground in our data?' I am inclined to agree.

During this brief ethnographic encounter, not only were the traditional adult-child power relations suspended but they were momentarily reversed as students also became entangled in 'teaching' me an unexpected (but valuable!) lesson in personal safety. Or as one student put it: 'when you come in year seven, you have to learn how to get out of school without having your head bashed in'. At this point, before I had even uttered a single word out loud and begun 'the business of research' I was already placed in the (subordinate?) position of being grateful, and the textuality of this ethnographic encounter offered an unexpected agitation of the 'usual' power relations between adults and young people situated within traditional research contexts. Moreover, perhaps it also offers a glimpse of something 'yet to come' as its effects transform the ontological status of 'the researched' as knowledgeable experts of their own contexts. As I (re)write the following story from 'the field' I am drawn to wonder how (or perhaps even, if?), this momentary transformation (or at least troubling of) power relations shaped a whole series of exchanges between my *researcher* self and the students at Blackbrook as disturbing and producing knowledge about adult and student 'voice', both at the same time?

A story from 'the field'…

10. Occupying the Conference Room: Tuning in - Tuning out

1. Within a few minutes the pace on the corridor transformed from a heavily congested motorway to meandering country path with only a few idle stragglers passing through. I began again and asked hopefully:

2. 'Is there anywhere else we can go?'

3. The students looked to one another and shrugged.

4. 'There's only the canteen Miss', Maddy suggested.

5. 'It's dead noisy in there', Jo exclaimed.

6. I held up my hands and shrugged, 'I'm really sorry folks, Tom did book the conference room but I'm afraid it looks like there's been some sort of emergency so we will have to make the best of it and head for the canteen – just for today'.

7. 'Emergency? Looks more like the Jeremy Kyle[49] show from here', Pete joked.

8. And as we all switched our gaze to the conference room a long procession of adults streamed out of the door closely followed by a skinny, red-faced young lad, mumbling angrily to his feet.

9. 'What ya done this time Jez? No more fireworks I hope? Pete joked winking at the distressed boy dragging his heels behind an entourage of social workers and staff.

10. 'Shhhh! He'll 'ave you for that, you're not the head's favourite person as it is!', Maddy warned.

11. Relieved that we didn't have to head to the canteen and conscious of the rapidly dwindling time frame, I ushered the group into the conference room and swiftly changed the subject. (Although I couldn't help but remain intrigued about what Jez had been up to, but that would have to wait, for now at least.)

12. 'O.K. right, sorry about all that, hopefully things will be a bit calmer from now

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[49] This is a popular British tabloid talk show which often includes a number of confrontations between guests. The host, Jeremy Kyle attempts to reconcile family feuds through offering DNA and lie detector tests.

on! And thank-you, er…?'

13. 'Adam'

14. 'Well thank-you Adam, I usually leave before the bell to pick my kids up, it's been a while since I was on the corridors at home time. I'm not as street-wise as I was once was I guess!'

15. The group sniggered, as Adam returned my smile. Jo was the first to introduce herself, followed by Maddy, Pete and Max.

16. Our initial group of eight had dwindled to five (due to a clash with an impromptu football practice).

17. 'It's a shame the others couldn't stay, at least they're interested though – it would be great if one of you could fill them in with the details about today's meeting? Half term break is coming up and I guess it will be a few more weeks before we meet up again…'

18. 'We could do a facebook group miss if ya like?', Maddy suggested

19. 'Great idea Maddy, but I'm not quite sure what the school policy is on Facebook etc so perhaps for the time being I could set up a group email list, if that's ok?'

20. 'Yeah but some people hardly ever check their school email accounts and they have loads of different addresses… everyone checks Facebook all the time'

21. Max interrupted Jo with another suggestion, 'what about our Tumbler site miss?'

22. I vaguely remembered Tom saying something about a blog and 'Tumbler' earlier but had no idea how it worked and was unsure about whether I would be allowed to access it or not.

23. 'Perhaps you could organise that then Max if that's ok? And if you wouldn't mind I think I could use a lesson on it too - I've only just got used to Facebook!'.

24. Max agreed and I glanced at my watch, only ten minutes left!

25. 'It seems that we're rapidly running out of time already and there was so much that I wanted to talk to you about too. Before we get started on anything too involved I really need to make sure that you know what you're getting yourselves into!'

26. I launched into a long spiel about ethics and consent but received a luke-warm response. They all looked at me blankly and I felt a complete hypocrite considering that the last time we met I had been banging on about how I thought that they were 'more than capable of devising their own research projects'. I decided to change tactics and spent the rest of our precious time trying to find out what it was that 'they' wanted to do. Once again, my enthusiasm wasn't reciprocated and my eager requests hung in the air like unwelcome guests at the table. As the room filled with puzzled faces and shrugging shoulders, I feared that this was going to be much more difficult than I had originally anticipated…

27. Pete looked at his watch and said, 'look I've got to go. I 'ave to pick my brother up from after-school club before 4.15 or else me mam gets charged another five quid and she'll bollock me if that 'appens – oh sorry Miss, I didn't mean to er…'

28. 'It's alright Pete, I appreciate you coming and I hope that next time our room is empty and we can get on with some more interesting stuff- now hurry up I don't want to have you being 'bollocked' on my conscience - get out of here, off you go!'

29. The other two boys grabbed their bags, anxious to escape too. I didn't blame them as it had been a pretty boring half an hour and I guess I would have done the same in their shoes.

30. 'Look lads, sorry it's all been a bit of a mess, it's a shame you couldn't do this in school time, but that's out of my control I'm afraid…'

31. 'Aww can't we do it instead of Geography or summit, I hate geography and Camel-Toe Kenno'

32. Jesus Alex! Don't mind him Miss he's only messing about aren't you?' Maddy glared at Max willing him to apologise.

33. My mock concerned face cracked into insuppressible laughter, I had met the teacher he was referring to and didn't realise that she had such an awful nickname to go along with her rather disciplinarian reputation. 'Right be off with you both, and don't let me hear you say that again or else you'll put me in a very awkward situation!', then I half-joked, 'just as long as you come back

next time eh?'

34. 'Don't worry Miss we will, it might be a laugh after all. See ya next time Miss.'

35. And with a cheery wave he bounced out of the door, Pete nudging his side and laughing with him as he went.

36. 'God! He means well Miss, just a bit of a joker but he's alright really. Always used to come to our co-op meetings and he's not afraid to stand up to them', she gestured a pointed finger at the door. ('Them', being the staff I presumed)

37. 'Look girls it's getting late I don't want you two to miss out on anything, shall we call it a day and maybe come together to chat about everyone's ideas after the holiday…'

38. 'Holiday? Not for us eh Maddy?' Jo turned towards her friend and raised her eyebrows.

39. 'Yeah, I could moan about this place for ages, we're not in any hurry if you're not?', Maddy replied.

40. 'O.k. then perhaps another ten minutes… tell me about half-term then, what have you got planned?'

41. 'Well we're back here for most of it. I'm really annoyed cos I've been to all these revision sessions yeah after school and they, they said if you go twice a week then you get to go to Alton Towers at the end. It's all a big con cos there was this one week when I could only go once but I went three times the next week to make up for it and now they're saying that I can't go!'

42. 'That doesn't seem right? Have you spoken to one of your teachers about it?'

43. 'Yeah. It's a waste of time. My form teacher tried to help me out but they weren't having any of it. I've given up now. I think some of the others complained too and now they can go but luckily for me I knew I was going to London with me sister in a few weeks anyway so I'm not all that bothered, I'm just annoyed - you know cos it's not on that's all.'

44. 'What about you Jo? Did you go?'

45. 'Nah, I'm not really into all that stuff. But I do go to the revision sessions in the holidays…not much else going on round here. I mean Blackbrook is dead. An if you wanna go into town or something by the time you've got the train and had some dinner there's no point, I mean you need plenty of cash don't ya?

Can't get a job cos I'm too young an I just end up looking after my brothers if I stay in with me mum so I kinda come to school cos at least I can see my friends and it doesn't cost nothing. I've been in for the summer too and I help out with all the 'problem' kids, just trying to get them used to being at senior school and all that…'

46. 'Yeah we're supposed to like help them with transition and stuff, sometimes it's a laugh but sometimes the kids…well they're just God, well they're really hard work!'

47. Maddy and Jo swapped a knowing glance and Maddy went on, 'And you don't get any recognition or anything- well except for Sir [Tom] so I kind of do it for him really – that and it's something to do I guess.'

48. 'I'm sure Mr Field [Tom] really appreciates the help girls. Is that why you got involved with the democratic forum and stuff then? Or was it something else?'

49. Maddy shook her head and struggled to articulate the current composition of the democratic forum, 'it's all a bit of a mess now really, it's back on, well I think it is but we don't really get involved with that bit anymore. It's all the seniors on there now… I'm not really sure what's going on to be honest, it's just back to the dictatorship now…'

50. Jo pointed to the room next door, 'that's where most of it comes from…'

51. 'Why? What's in there?', I interrupted.

52. 'That's the dictator's office, you know Mr Wall [Alex- head teacher]'

53. 'Crikey!', I gasped. 'I didn't realise…'

54. The room fell silent. And in the hush I could hear the feint rumble of somebody speaking next door. I strained to pick out specific words, it sounded like a man but I couldn't be entirely sure. I just heard the low rumble of a voice punctuated with gaps and 'ahems' and 'I see' to the person on the other end.

55. 'Oh no', I exclaimed panic sticking in my throat, 'I hope he can't hear us?'

56. The two girls appeared to be really opening up to me and the mention of a 'dictatorship' promised a very interesting avenue to follow. Yet my rising excitement was overshadowed by the very real worry that the head might not

approve of my project, or be entirely happy about the content of our conversation – especially being called a 'dictator'! I sincerely hoped that he could not hear every word as we strained to eavesdrop on his. The atmosphere in the room took an unexpected turn from the girls having a general moan about the school to the three of us being installed in a private detective tableau; now our conversation felt furtive leaving a bad taste in my mouth. I decided that enough had been said for one day as they all seemed really eager to talk to me again and there would be plenty of time to get to the bottom of their gripes and groans about the school and I drew our 'meeting' to a definitive close. I glanced at the clock and realised that we'd been in there for over an hour and it would be getting dark soon, I didn't even need to find an excuse to exit.

57. 'It's going to get dark soon, I think we really had better get going now girls. It looks like there are plenty of important issues to follow up in the project, I'm really glad you decided to get involved. Shall we fix up another date for after half term so we can go through it all?'

58. 'Yeah, there are quite a few of the lads that would talk to us but they were at football tonight, we need to do it on another day and then more will come I think…'

59. 'An we need a bigger space, there's not many spaces where there isn't a camera either, what do you think Mads?

60. 'Dunno, there's a few corners in the canteen or else we'd have to go outside somewhere…'

61. 'I tell you what girls, I'll have a word with Tom and see if we can find a better place that isn't next door to the head, and if you two can try your best to get a few of your friends to come along too then that would really good. Here's a few extra info sheets and consent forms. It's really important to have a read of them yourself and get them signed by someone at home if you can. I'll email you both with the arrangements for next time. Are you O.K. for getting home? Is there a bus or something you can catch? I can give you a lift if it's a problem, I don't want you to be put-out after staying here talking to me…'

62. 'It's fine I only live round the corner, but Jo's is further… what'ya gonna do Jo? You're not walking on your own through the park are you?'

63. 'Yeah, I always do. Don't be stupid I walk through there everyday and I'm still in one piece!'

64. 'Where do you live Jo, I might be passing nearby anyway…'

65. 'Er it's not that far away I'll be fine honest, no need to stress'

66. I regretted asking where Jo lived. There was something about Jo's tone that made me wish I hadn't asked. Had I crossed a boundary I shouldn't have? It was hard to do the right thing. I didn't want to pry; I just wanted to make sure that she got home safely. I had asked the students to get involved with the research project and although they both offered to stay longer and it was my decision to bring the conversation to a close, ultimately, they would probably have been home by now if it were a 'normal' school day. It was my responsibility to ensure that 'no harm' occurred as a result of our interaction but I couldn't help but feel that I had overstepped the mark in offering a lift and refrained from asking again. Maybe she thought I was a bit weird or perhaps she was ashamed of where she lived or even had something else planned? Whatever it was, it evaded my grasp and I guess it was not really any of my business. So I tried another tactic.

67. 'What about getting the bus, I'm happy to give you your bus fare, if you need some?'

68. 'Listen, I'm fine really, really I am. I do this everyday you know!'

69. 'You're an idiot Jo, just get the bus. My mum would kill me if she knew I was walking through there!'

70. 'Yeah you're mum would kill you if she knew half the things you get up to as well, so just leave it alright?'

71. Jo was determined. I had offered all of the possible alternatives I could think of and she remained adamant that she wished to walk home alone. Tom had mentioned on more than one occasion that Jo was exceptionally bright and that she found school incredibly dull. In the short time I had known Jo she appeared to be a very capable, intelligent young woman. She seemed much older than her fifteen years. I had never seen the park that the girls referred to

and only had Jo's word that she walked this route on a regular basis. Nevertheless, despite my uneasiness, Jo made it quite clear that it was her decision and I had to respect that – didn't I? I considered myself to be an advocate of children's rights to participate as actors 'in their own right' (*cf.* James et al.,1998; Prout, 2005) and I had actively sought to include them in as many decision making processes as possible in terms of setting and participating within this research agenda, but now my original conviction was beginning to waiver. As I became further entangled into the materiality of navigating the rights and responsibilities of both researcher and researched 'for real', the implications of this impossible dilemma continued to haunt my every thought and word. As a mother of two slightly younger teenage daughters I couldn't help but think about the scenario through a kaleidoscopic lens of mother, female researcher and 'ir/responsible?' adult. Regardless of the fact that all secondary school students are deemed capable of making their own arrangements for travelling to and from school, on this occasion I desperately wanted to intervene and still remain ambivalent about my actions; trapped in an ethical quagmire swamped by an overwhelming desire to protect and a contradictory desire to trust Jo's judgement as an expert of her own life and uphold respect for Jo's right to decide for herself. I made one last attempt that day to convince her to speak to one of her parents. Then I waved goodbye, urging her to at least send a text message to her mother and alert her that she was on her way home.

A clean sweep? Untidy ethical interludes …

No doubt, I have cleared the way for a swarm of criticism, that I should have done this or done that, but it remains *true* that, at the time I was, and still am, stumped. And as I refuse to put this untidy ethical interlude to one side, rather than veil my action in a narrative of redemption, or suggest methodological 'improvements' for next time, this moment continues to haunt; a proverbial thorn rupturing the side of 'proper' research that casts doubt upon our capacity 'to know' or to even decide upon the rights and responsibilities of ourselves and Others in advance, if ever at all.

What is more, as I cast a more critical eye over the preceding passage I can still spot my attempts to scrub away the insufficiencies, the traces of guilt and the grim voice of hopeful redemption. My earlier attempts to deflect blame by including observations about Jo's personality *(exceptionally bright, very capable, intelligent, determined, adamant)* alongside an acknowledgement of the boundaries between school and the Other *(it could only do so much)* in my efforts to make a clean sweep of possible interpretations and repercussions of blame and of guilt. This is not an innocent account. I remain guilty as charged for the crime of airing the dirty linen of research and this story remains here, an (un)apologetic 'stain' on the ethnographic account for a particular reason. This story lingers on in the shadows of the grand (research) narrative as a reminder of the heuristic value of uncertainty, offering the means to explore ambiguous relations of power, responsibility and agency that can catch us 'off guard'. Along with Patti Lather (2009, p. 18) I seek to resist: 'the tendency to avoid the difficult story' or Britzman's (2000) 'easy story' to tell and aspire to chase away the myth of the 'all knowing' competent researcher and instead foreground these moments of uncertainty and undecidability as a provocation of the possibility that a researcher's reflexive 'voice' can ever be *enough.*

There remains so much more that could be said here, but for now I resume this somewhat unconventional route and continue to trouble the position of 'student voice' in education and in research. In the next section I continue to work on St.Pierre's (2009) quest to decentre voice in qualitative inquiry and wander towards another question which deliberates how we might navigate the *failure* of 'student voice' toward more productive ends.

3.b. The rupture of student voice

> '…research must be understood as provoking, not representing knowledge' (Britzman & Pitt, , 2003, p. 769)

Foregrounding moments where 'voice/s' *fail* to live up to our expectations (MacLure, 2009) or take on spurious forms calls into question the epistemological limits and ontological status of 'voice' both 'in school' and in research contexts more generally. My failed attempts to map out the chronological development of 'student voice' as a constitutive element of co-operative school governance and pedagogy are instructive here as I reconsider how 'voice/s' evade capture and traverse conventional boundaries of space and time. Rather than seeking to ascertain *where* 'student voice/s' might reside, I pursue the possibilities for understanding voice as an effect of the material-discursive conditions of engagement. Moreover, in coming to 'student voice' via the ideas of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, it becomes possible to consider how tangled webs of power-knowledge work *through,* and indeed shape the performativity of 'voice' as it weaves in and out of the re-telling of these stories and exposes and troubles the discourses and power relations in which 'voice/s' become intelligible.

Linda Alcoff suggests that:

> …we should strive to create where possible the conditions for dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for others. Often the possibility of dialogue is left unexplored or inadequately pursued by more privileged persons. Spaces in which it may seem as if it is impossible to engage in dialogic encounters need to be transformed in order to do so, such as classrooms, hospitals, workplaces, welfare agencies, universities and institutions for international development and aid and governments. (Alcoff, 2009, p. 128)

As Alcoff argues that spaces must be reconstructed in order to seriously pursue 'dialogic encounters' which enable speaking *with* rather than *for* others, I draw attention to the possibility that, on occasion, 'others' might find their *own* way of transforming familiar spaces into unexpected platforms for engaging in conversation. Indeed, in the case of this research project, despite the fact that students could be said to have resisted my original 'invitation' to participate in my research project, (see

Appendix 23, Story 11). Following this 'no show', students demonstrated a measure of agency in (re)engaging with the project on their *own terms* (Story 14) . That is to say, students navigated a multiplicity of obstacles and transformed the conditions within which it was possible for them to 'speak'; thus 'recruiting' the sympathetic ear of the researcher in the process. Therefore, the account that is presented is not entirely mine, but written and orchestrated by me, not entirely theirs, but spoken and recounted by them in parts as their transcribed 'voice/s' and 'observations from the field (some of which were actually noted by one of the students involved) tangle with these messy texts, messy stories and contorted 'voice/s'. Here, I do not explicitly attempt to 'give voice', but strive to create a space within which it becomes possible to consider 'voice' in a range of surprising forms, whilst at the same time acknowledge my role in this act of ventriloquy and contortion.

The story of the (non) event emerged as a result of a surprising accumulation of student 'voice/s', which penetrated curious spaces, in strange and familiar forms, stubbornly refusing an easy transition into the 'customary' ethnographic account. In order to navigate this collection of difficult stories, I offer something else, an unexpected tale which foregrounds a (non)event as an illustration of competing voice/s, desires, and power relations which were played out at the intersections of methodological dilemma and pedagogical drama. Alternative versions of events were recalled by different members of the school and it took me some time to realise that my place was not to 'tidy them up' and get at 'the one true story' but to question how each member/participant came to 'speak' their version. In this instance, the opportunity to engage with a more unconventional 'student voice' arose as a surprising result of immense frustration, duplicity and clandestine activity on both the part of the researcher and 'researched'. As I reflect back on this encounter I wonder if it offers an example of what Maggie MacLure (cited in Frankham & Smears, 2012, p.369) defines as 'defamiliarising energy'.

> Our ways of seeing education are so deeply ingrained with discursive familiarity and 'mythic immediacy' (Buck-Morss, 1991) that we are more-or-less insulated from surprise and wonder. What is needed is the kind of transgressive jolt that comes from encountering a 'demented form of the familiar' (Fer, 1993); or suddenly glimpsing the demented in the all-too-familiar.

The narrative that follows sketches out such a 'transgressive jolt' as a sequence of encounters that illustrate some of the tensions that shape and deform voice/s 'in school'. And as this story unfolds, I explore how dissonant snatches of sound and silence frame the acoustic backdrop for the performativity of 'student voice' within this particular 'research' context. Thus, the contrary construction of 'voice/s', both mute and powerful, come into view as endeavours to 'get at the truth' become entangled within a range of contradictory subject positions, as research participants and I (re)present the 'realities' of co-operative school life with every telling and at every turn. My attempts to (re)present this 'difficult [research] knowledge' (Britzman & Pitt, 2003) invite a reading of 'student voice/s' as provocation, a provocation that troubles assumptions about *how* and *where* students can/not speak, and with what effects.

Later, I searched through my field notes with this in mind, and stumbled across an entry that referred to another earlier conversation with Tom who had been at pains to illustrate the abeyant status of the democratic forum. That is to say he described it as, subject to the effective merger with 'the old student council' and: 'part of the custodial democracy of the school now'. At the time his comment failed to catch my attention, I just didn't *"get it"*. Moreover, the magnitude of Tom's comment only became apparent in light of piecing together *other versions* of the (non) event and disturbing taken for granted assumptions about what can be said about 'student voice' by *whom, where* and *when.*

A story from 'the field'…
11. A short Interlude with Tom

A few days after the 'no show' in the canteen, Tom reappeared in the back row of the hall where I was busy observing an anti-bullying intervention in full swing. I'd never seen him look quite so despondent, although it was reassuring to find that he was 'back in the building' at least, albeit minus his usual zeal. As the students dispersed into small groups, Tom offered his apologies for not getting back to me earlier and elaborated on the reasons for his absence. He explained that he had taken a few days

off to re-think his options and confessed that he'd, 'had enough of banging his head against a brick wall'.

I agreed that he was in a difficult position. 'It's as if nothing "co-operative" happens when you're not here' I speculated, 'I mean, who else "gets it" apart from you, a few members of staff and the kids?'

I recounted my frustration at trying to engage with students 'in their *own* time' and expressed my gratitude for all of his help so far and relief that at least he was back in school. Down but not out, a spark of his former enthusiasm returned as he winked and whispered:

'Don't give up yet, I'll see what I can do. Meet me in the office at break, there's someone I think you should meet…

The following story marks the beginning of a turning point in my research commitments to participants and the inception of a different agenda for my research on student voice in the 'co-operative' school. At this juncture I start to become aware of an event that turned out to be something of a (non)event. This revelation caused a significant amount of conceptual and methodological trouble in terms of "getting it" on my part and that of students, who became increasingly disenchanted with the unfulfilled promise of voice as their version of events unfolded…

A story from 'the field'…

12. Todd's Tale

1. The office was empty when I arrived so I retraced my steps back onto the corridors where I found Tom deep in conversation with Neil. Not wanting to interrupt I hovered a few steps behind until Tom noticed me and thrust the office keys into my hand.

2. 'Quick, back to the office, Todd has something he wants to share with you. 'Who's Todd?' I enquired.

3. 'Someone, who 'gets it' and wants to speak to you', He replied mischievously.

4. Aware that I might have ten minutes at best, I rushed back to the office hoping that 'Todd' hadn't disappeared. My heart sank when I reached the office and was greeted once again with nothing but my own shadow. As I sighed and put the key in the door, a voice from behind faltered, 'are you er Gail, Miss?'

5. 'Yes that's me, I assume you must be Todd? Very pleased to meet you. Tom said you had something to share with me and I must say I'm very intrigued!'

6. 'Err well, I'm not sure if I can be much use but I guess I was one of the ones that instigated it all really but some of the others might be able to tell you more.'

7. 'More about what? The student forum?

8. 'Err not exactly, but kind of I suppose. It's about the phone policy palaver about when we tried to do something about it.'

9. 'Why what happened? Can you tell me more? I'm keen to hear anything you have to say about the student forum, it's proving quite difficult to speak to *any* students to be honest!

10. Todd began to replay a series of events that began almost a year before I came to the school and recalled how, in the first instance, a small group of students tried to update the school's mobile phone policy in light of recent technological advance. Todd explained their rationale in terms of there being:

11. '…a lot more that you can do on a mobile phone now - a lot more... whatever we needed help with, we could find it on the internet somewhere - cause the majority of people have smartphones now.'

12. He described how students had encountered a range of inconsistencies when attempting to use their phones in the classroom and of wanting to, 'try and formalise it – you know put it in writing'. When I asked about different teacher's responses to student's requests to use their phones as a learning tool in class, Todd articulated his understanding of the importance of making an explicit request:

13. 'I would say, 'may I look at this on the internet?' or 'may I research this?' ... 'Something like that. They'll let you do that, rather than if you say 'can I go on my phone?' they will probably want a reason [why *what* would they assume you

were doing on the internet otherwise?] erm… so we decided to get a band of people who agreed and sit them in the theatre and get our head teacher to talk to us directly about it.'

14. It took me a while to comprehend Todd's tale as he retold *his version* of events. His story moved back and forth, recalling bits and pieces in no particular order. Nonetheless, it became obvious that his story was dynamite, fraught with dangerous voices and ambivalent stakes in the capacity of 'voice' to deliver social justice 'in school'. This was/not exactly what I had been looking for (only in all of the wrong places!); an example of students coming together to initiate change on a subject that was pertinent to them, rather than being 'consulted' on an issue of peripheral importance raised by others. In spite of my growing optimism, a comprehensible sequence of events continued to avoid my grasp and as our conversation progressed, I grew increasingly confused. Eventually it transpired that as a result of the students' endeavours to bring the mobile phone policy 'up to date', the head teacher had agreed to consider possible reform and had met with students in the theatre to discuss the matter further. What remained vague however, was the part that the co-operative governance structure had to play in this issue being 'voiced'.

15. G.D: So what was the role of the democratic forum at this point? Were the proposed changes initiated by the forum or was it something that just kind of ran alongside it?

16. Todd: It [the forum] had just kind of started then… the meeting [in the theatre] had been arranged by Mr. Field [Tom]. But we got members of the forum and other students who agreed and wanted their opinions heard… an we sat them in the audience, so to speak.

17. G.D: So had these other students who were interested and wanted to speak, er had they ever come across the democratic forum before?

18. Todd: I think, I think they'd certainly heard of it. They were people who were… more took a back seat and let other people do it rather than speak up for themselves.

19. G.D: Do you think that this was an issue that probably…erm drew people in that didn't usually get involved in co-operative forum discussions?

20. Todd: Because obviously mobile phones are an important part of a lot of people's lives, so…all the students were thinking like if we can get a policy that says that we can use our phones then erm why not?… So like I said we held a meeting and myself and two friends of mine were going to sort of stand and speak for everyone, or more or less lead it, but those two friends were taken out [of the meeting] by their teachers so I was more or less speaking on my own.

21. It later transpired that in addition to a number of student forum representatives, the two friends that were supposed to be leading the meeting with Todd failed to show up. Todd recollected that Amy had been 'pulled out' of the meeting half way through, on the premise of practising for a French controlled assessment that was due to take place a few months later. Later on in the day Amy also recalled her frustration at being, 'pulled out half way through for a controlled assessment but we weren't even doing anything, like it was just a practice. I mean this assessment was ages away and it's about the two hundredth one! It was a practice that's all. I mean I like my teacher and everything but well, I felt that this was more important. I was on the front row and I knew I would be talking quite a bit, even though I wouldn't have been able to make a difference, cause he [head teacher] does NOT listen, but I felt like it was something I needed to be there for.

22. Back to Todd: 'Truth be told it wasn't the most successful of erm, of confrontations. The head ended up being quite annoyed. But I think it was because we was highlighting all these things that we didn't like but not really suggesting ways to improve them. So it wasn't like erm… here's the negative and here's how we can make it positive. It was like here's a negative and here's another negative. So I think that kind of got him annoyed. We brought up what could be improved without suggesting improvements as I said, erm we did give him a chance to explain and he said why things were the way they were. With the mobile phone policy, I thought he was more like, smart with his approach and he said, 'I think this, but I'm willing to do this' and we ended up

with a sort of trial period. So then we took it to the governors of the school…
but there's people on the forum that will be able to give you more information
about that cause I myself didn't go - but with that meeting I put the ball in
place, I'm not sure about rolling it though!

23. My mind was awash with all sorts of possible scenarios, yet I remained puzzled
about the 'whole story'. There were so many gaps and aspects that I could not
'make sense' of. 'The story', just hung in the air with its tongue stuck out -
provoking more questions than answers. Those prized ten minutes had raced
by with undeterminable urgency. And now it was over. Tom reappeared at the
door and asked Todd which lesson he should be in next. The two exchanged a
knowing glance at the mention of Todd's teachers name[50] and Tom urged
Todd to get to his lesson without delay, ' go boy go' he shouted in mock
authoritarian tone, goading Todd to get to his next class. The two accomplices
laughed like naughty school boys and Todd left the room in haste.

Thoughts from the field…

10. Galvanising 'voice': Filling in gaps

During the next hour Tom filled in a few gaps but I remained confused about the
chronological sequence of events that led to 'the phone policy palaver', as Todd
referred to it. The words fiasco, debacle, debate, sham were also used by other staff
and students as the 'story' began to unfold over my last few weeks at Blackbrook. It
appeared that almost everyone seemed to have something to say on the subject, but
accounts rarely tallied. As I struggled 'to make easy sense' and articulate a clear chain
of events in linear format, Tom offered another conceptualisation. He explained that
a few months prior to interest in changing the school's mobile phone policy, a core
group of students were involved in the creation of the student democratic forum
which began with a series of assemblies on the Arab Spring, looking at the use of

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[50] It later transpired that this teacher had previously complained to Tom about Todd's absence from
earlier lessons whilst undertaking co-op activities.

social networking for instigating change, anti-bullying workshops and the creation of an online space which was led by young people campaigning for social change. Running alongside this, other students had tended to talk amongst themselves or occasionally share ideas or gripes using other social media and soon simultaneous interest in changing the phone policy had galvanised approximately sixty or so students into action, both within and outside of the 'usual' boundaries of the democratic student forum. The democratic forum took on the project after a less than successful meeting with the head in order to respond to the demands of the governing body to do some 'proper' research. On the promise of a possible trial period, a group of students on the democratic forum set about surveying the 'attitudes' of staff, parents and students through online surveys, tutor group discussions and parent questionnaires. After weighing up various alternatives the forum, 'fine lined it down to things that were actually plausible - cause they [the other students] gave us a list of some things that we *really* couldn't do.' Once again, I was bound to the regime of the school timetable as the lunchtime siren marked the premature end of another *promising* conversation. Sensing my *disappointment* and growing impatience to 'get at the 'truth', Tom offered to get the chief 'instigators' together for *their version* of events…

3.c. Games of 'truth' on the sidelines…

A story from 'the field'…

13. Mustering 'voice/s': Listening again

Ten minutes after Tom left the office on the promise of 'finding' some more students that could help me to unravel the series of events that led to the 'phone policy palaver', I heard a hesitant knock at the door. As I answered the door I was pleased to see Jo's familiar face as she stood there waiting with two unfamiliar students, who as yet remained unnamed. As I ushered them all in, Jo explained that she had brought along a couple of friends who had missed our earlier meeting after school and apologised for not being in touch earlier as she'd been trying to finish some coursework off and hadn't had 'any free time at all'. I was relieved that she was still interested and told her not to worry then went on to explain my research project to the newcomers. Meanwhile, Max and Pete appeared still chewing the remains of their lunch. Eager to get started as soon as possible, I quickly checked that they were happy to spend the remains of their lunch hour chatting to me and launched into what turned out to be a very interesting research conversation indeed.

1. G.D. What did Tom say before he sent you over then?
2. Jo: Please come, come to my office for erm … that was basically it. And I just grabbed Grace and Will cos they missed our other meeting that day after school.
3. G.D. Okay, was that it? Oh well! What we're trying to do is to follow or sort of map out what happened last year with the phone policy. So, were all of you involved?
4. *Tom Enters*: Hello.
5. G.D. Hi Tom, are you alright? Do you want your desk back?
6. *Tom Nods and smiles*: No. Just wanted to make sure everyone was here, that's fine.
7. *[Everyone laughs]*
8. *G.D. Jokes*: lock the door now!
9. *Everyone laughs again and Tom makes a sharp exit.*

10. G.D. Erm, were all of you involved at some point?

11. Max: I wasn't.

12. Grace: No.

13. Adam: I wasn't involved particularly.

14. G.D. Do you remember?

15. Maddy: I know what happened.

16. Will: I remember what happened.

17. Jo: I can rant on for about an hour about it!

18. All: *More laughter*

19. G.D. Fantastic! I just, I kind of just want to hear the story from your point of view. I've already heard from Todd who went to go and see the head…

20. Jo Interrupts: Todd Wright?

21. G.D. Yeah. So I'm trying to pick up where he left off really and just get everyone's take on what happened and to just gain a sense of how it all evolved over a certain amount of time… so erm how did it come up as an issue in the first place?

22. Maddy: Well it made me laugh right. Cause when Kindles first came out and they were like the best thing, they were giving em out to everyone and we were allowed to have em out and everything and now that they've found out that you can like go on Google and stuff its all changed– I mean you can't properly *do anything* – an I had to explain to Mr. Frost that I can't go on Google on mine and he was like 'oh alright then'…

23. Jo: Anyways. It was basically because quite a lot of people were complaining that their phones were getting taken off them and they couldn't really do anything with them. And because people were actually already using them [voice trails into an almost inaudible whisper] *without teachers actually knowing*. So we just wanted to make it so that people could actually use them and also to cut down on the complaints in lesson time cause it was distracting - people were complaining about that too.

24. G.D. Who was complaining? The teachers or the pupils?

25. Grace: Quite a lot of the students were actually complaining.

26. G.D. To who? The democratic forum or was this just general chat?

27. Jo: There was some in the democratic forum and some was from a rag tag group of year elevens.

28. G.D. Right.

29. Maddy: Well, who were then, year tens…

30. G.D. Okay, so what time of year was that?

31. Grace: That was spring.

32. G.D. Spring last year?

33. Grace: Yeah.

34. Max: Yeah it was.

35. G.D. So that would be spring 2011, right okay from that point, the point of people getting annoyed about it and fed up about it, what happened?

36. It took some time to ascertain how this impromptu focus group's account corresponded to Todd's earlier conversation. At the time I still couldn't quite marry together how the large meeting in the hall with the head teacher coincided with the activities of the democratic forum and it was only after several re-readings and further conversations with other staff and students that some fragments began to 'make sense'. As Tom explained earlier, this incident brought together both formal and more informal bodies of 'student voice'. Following the larger meeting (at which a number of student forum members were excluded on account of practicing for 'controlled assessments') Jo explained how the democratic student forum 'formalised' a 'rag tag' collection of disparate voices united by a common aim, in order to 'pitch' a number of 'appropriate' proposals to the governing body. Running alongside this, others in the group offered snippets of their reflections about why 'the meeting went wrong'…

37. Grace: The head wanted to find out what people didn't like about the school to see if he could change it…so everyone started saying things they didn't like.

38. Adam: Even after us telling them [other students] to drop it in slowly and try and persuade him they…

39. Max: Yeah, it was like Boom! And he got proper offended and walked out…

40. Maddy: Yeah he did proper! He just doesn't listen to anybody at all. He goes on about how the school is so 'democratic' but then doesn't really care. It's just a dictatorship!

41. Will: Well I think He's all right really…

42. Max: You don't have to stick up for him. All he does is orders people around!

43. Will: I'm not! It's just like…well it's not his fault I would've walked out if I was him too!

44. Jo: Do you remember there was this sort of like uproar?

45. Maddy: Yeah, everything that happens here ends up in an uproar doesn't it?

46. Pete: That's exaggerating it a bit but yeah a lot of people didn't like the phone policy and er it was just people shouting things out and it all overloaded him at once…

47. G.D. So reflecting back to how those students reacted, what do you think could have been done differently perhaps?

48. Jo: Like drop it in slowly, not like go BAM!

49. With so many versions of events all spoken at the same time amidst laughter, corroboration, disputes and breaking off, I continually struggled to comprehend *exactly* what was being said. However, one aspect remained crystal clear. The student's deep sense of injustice was palpable and pervaded every word as they jostled to 'speak' and give their own account. Discontent saturated every word, every sound, every interruption until I reached the point that it was all I could hear; a cacophony of rowdy voices making degrees of '(non)sense'. Aware that lunchtime would soon be over and anxious that this might be my last chance to 'listen', I fished for examples of how they had first become aware of the democratic forum. For some members of the group it was clear their participation was borne out of a deep affection for Tom. For others, their first encounter with co-operative culture appeared via a year eight cross-curricular day in which they met *real* fair trade coffee co-operative producers in addition to participating in after school clubs with *real* professionals, and things 'kind of evolved from there'. Various members of the group were emphatic about 'not having a say in anything' prior to this, although their reasons intersected the discursive boundaries of age alongside the 'usual' power

relations that work through traditional school structures: 'in year seven we didn't really have a say, we were too busy hiding from everyone else!' and: 'because in year seven we weren't really interested in doing anything…well we were but we couldn't do it straight away'. Therefore, as it became clear that 'the rules' of opening one's mouth were subject to informal hierarchies of 'age', I asked the group more directly whether they surmised that their lack of 'voice' was due to their age *or* the organisation of the school at the time?[51]

50. Grace: In the first few years we didn't really have a say, I don't think even the year ten and elevens had a say.

51. Pete: It was a bit of both [age & more formal school hierarchies] I think.

52. The others mumbled in agreement.

53. Maddy: The only thing we've ever had a say on is the blazers and we *used* to have a say on the head boy and girl but we don't even decide on that anymore…

54. The piercing school siren interrupted their voices *once again*. So much had already been inferred but much still remained unsaid. I really wanted to find out more and became increasingly frustrated with myself for not asking more direct questions, yet I didn't want to risk scaring them off or pushing too hard. It was a tricky position. On this occasion however, there was a tiny chink of hope as Jo looked me directly in the eye and raised her eyebrows as she said: 'we've got P.E. next and *unfortunately* we've all forgotten our kits!' The others laughed nervously, except for Mike who said he was keen to talk to me again, 'if I was *allowed*?'

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[51] At this point in the school's history, transformation to co-operative Trust was in its early stages.

I remained intrigued about what else might emerge from further conversations with this particular group of students and increasingly resentful that our exchange had been cut short (yet again!) by the piercing siren that seemed to thwart my attempts to observe 'student voice' at every turn. Desperate to 'find out more' about the phone policy palaver, but uncertain about how far I could push the limits of 'research time' and anxious about the extent to which I would be 'allowed' to interrupt the regime of the school timetable, I sought out Tom who came up with a somewhat unorthodox suggestion. For the second time that day he offered a timely intervention to get me out of this 'fix' which bound me to a conventional research protocol and an omnipresent school timetable. I felt like an investigative journalist hot on the trail of a breaking story, unsure of the boundaries and hungry for a scoop. Tom 'had a word' with the P.E. instructor and I received the green light to sit on the sidelines of an afternoon basketball game. In my eagerness to 'follow the story' I lost sight of the added auditory complications that a focus group 'on the sidelines' of a basketball court might present as I quickly realised that the acoustics of 'the game' drowned out the possibility of a fluid discussion. Fading fluorescent strip lights mirrored my uncertain presence and ambiguous status as an 'observer' of 'the match' and this time we all struggled to be heard amidst the deafening rhythm of 'the game' as I became entangled in a commitment to research participants who recruited me as a 'pen for hire'. The following story brings together some snippets of conversations and observations that took place over the course of an (extra)ordinary week as I pull together the threads of various co-operative member's accounts of the (non) event and 'contain' these reflections within a story of a real research encounter that took place on the sidelines of a remarkable day 'in the field'.

'A Story from the field…'

14. A pen for hire?

1. Adam wandered over, with a couple of other students following his tail. Jo looked up and caught my eye. Moments later she reappeared at my side with some familiar faces; Maddy and Grace. I hastily drew out my Dictaphone and

reiterated my previous patter and attempted to explain my research aims and the need to use 'the tape' to help me remember our conversations, not forgetting of course to underline anonymity and right to withdraw. It was a futile endeavour. I could barely hear myself speak, let alone record their 'voice'. Falling back on my trusty notepad and pen, I began to summarise our previous conversations to eager new faces whilst the others talked amongst themselves. Sensing my struggle, Jo turned to me and offered to scribe as I strained to get down the constant stream of 'voices' suffocated by the endless background patter of the match in play. I was delighted by Jo's offer of help and smiled inwardly to myself, wondering whether this might quell my anxieties about the complexities that surround young people's rights to independently consent to research participation, in addition to the obvious pragmatic benefits of an extra pair of hands.

2. The scene took on a dream-nightmare like quality with random shouts from players and the boom of the teacher-come-umpire interrupting every remark. As we began the student's comments roamed from complaints about school uniform, to banned hairstyles, cockroaches in the pool and visits to Summerhill; weaving a story most strange. I listened intently, vaguely aware that with so many voices talking over the other, this was going to be an impossible story to tell, never mind transcribe. The mention of Summerhill reverberated around the hall and caught my attention as I strained to pick out where this 'voice' had emerged from between the whistles and ear-piercing screech of trainers making contact with the polished floor. An animated new face joined 'the conversation', as he enjoyed a moment of limelight sketching out his tale with discernable pride: 'There was six of us that went. You have to be invited - don't let just anyone in you know. An basically, yeah they invited us. They did that for us! It was really unreal and there was like this genius five year old actually *teaching the teacher* ICT or something and you could do what subjects you liked, even Japanese and other really cool stuff…

3. Adam: Yeah but we never got a chance to ever do it properly here in the end…

4. Jo: It was weird there though. Not at all how I imagined, it was actually quite scruffy! In my head I'd expected it to be all 'perfect'. They even ran a 'mock' meeting for us…

5. Will: Yeah, that was when we started the forum wasn't it? We got loads of ideas from there. It was good like cause we knew the… like, how to run a meeting and what we could do and stuff.

6. G.D. That's great, so once you'd been there, how did you feel about starting something here?

7. Jo: Well when we first started basically we had a Chair and a Vice Chair and erm a secretary etc but like after two weeks they dropped out of their role and it was basically just me and Maddy, Grace, Adam, Max, Will and a few others running the meetings…

8. Grace: Yeah the Chair and Vice weren't even there anymore so *we* just basically ran it after that. The phone policy thing just started out as a general thing that anyone can do and then it was *us* that went on to try and formalise things. Will was doing the communication with quite a lot of other people and then the forum picked it up from there…

9. G.D. So what did you do? How did you go about 'formalising it then?'

10. Jo: Basically we got all the notes together and wrote it all up. Then we went to see the head and senior members of staff. We had already worked out all of the pro's and con's and what was plausible and what wasn't so we just pitched our proposal to them. We had mobile phone signs for each classroom teacher to put up and basically if the sign was up you could use it and if it wasn't you couldn't. Simple! Plus we put together a pack for all the teachers that they could read out if they liked and it set out 'the rules'.

11. Jo had kept a copy of their notes and even gave me an example of one of the sign's that she had made a few days later. (See Appendix 13 Phone policy sign, formal proposal & student's notes)

12. Jo: So yeah, after we pitched it to them they said: 'go ahead, do what you want. Blah, blah, blah' and when it came to actually implementing it, well basically we went round all the classes in the week before half term and told everyone about it and that they were going to be able to use their phones at break and

then people started getting their phones taken off them when we got back! [after half term]They basically did a U-turn on us – without even telling us! After all that work, in the end, they only just decided on the first day we were implementing it that, 'no we don't want it anymore!'

13. G.D. Really! How was this communicated to you at the time?

14. Grace: It wasn't.

15. G.D. So you just found out if you had your phone taken off you?

16. Max: Yeah! That was it…

17. Pete: As an outsider, I did notice that nobody was really mentioning anything about the trial NOT being on…

18. Maddy: Yeah, the tutors said something about it starting so we just assumed you could use it at break and not worry…

19. Jo: That's what everyone thought, because *we* had gone round telling all the classes that they could.

20. Will: The teachers thought we could too!

21. Grace: Mr Adams told me I could

22. Max: And Mr Sykes!

23. Maddy: So Basically everyone thought we could use our phones except the senior staff who changed it at the very last minute without bothering to tell *us*…

24. Jo: Everyone thought it had been agreed and we could start using our phones after the half term break and then when we came back - we couldn't ... *We really couldn't do anything.* And students were getting annoyed basically with the forum because it looked like it was our fault - when it wasn't!

25. G.D. That must have been very disappointing for you all…

26. Maddy: Yeah VERY!

27. Jo swallows hard and her voice breaks a little as she still seems to struggle to comprehend the injustice of it all: Well this is probably not as related as it should be but after the head went and finally announced "the forum has decided blah, blah, blah" well it was basically HIM deciding and there was no change apart from you get your phone back the next day… It pissed me off sooooo much!

28. Adam: Yeah now you can pick it up yourself instead of your Mum or Dad. But there's harsher rules during the day!

29. Will: Yeah it's gone stricter if anything…

30. At the same time Maddy murmured: I don't even feel like there is a proper forum any more…

31. But nobody appeared to notice as the others carried on ranting about the fact that the forum's efforts and involvement in the whole process appeared to have been both misconstrued and unappreciated.

32. G.D. Is there anything that you think you might be able to do now, as young people in the school, you know to sort of challenge their decision?

33. Will: No

34. Jo: Nothing…I'm not even gonna try after that. The head has got in for me enough as it is…

35. Will: We don't even know what's going on with the forum anymore. It started out really good but after the phone policy failing and the seniors taking over it was pointless and we could see it wasn't working.

36. Max: I mean why even bother asking for an opinion if you're not even gonna take any notice of it?

37. G.D. So what's happening with the student forum now then, what do you mean seniors taking over?

38. As the subject turned to 'the seniors' I explicitly asked if Jo could 'write this down'. A few faces nodded, others so engrossed in their angry tirade barely noticed my plea. I nodded to Jo and she scribbled furiously noting down as many words as she could muster from my tired and worn out pen. It appeared that a number of the group had 'ditched' the seniors remarking that it was all 'a sham', full of the robotic students with no opinions of their own. Others had stayed on as seniors but questioned their position, acknowledging the futility of anything they had to say but keen to embellish to an otherwise empty C.V. My knowledge of the student democratic forum remained sparse and confused. Was it still up and running? What did they do? Nobody ever answered my questions directly and I was beginning to realise that all of this talk about

'seniors' appeared to have a role to play in this sequence of events, yet I still failed to quite understand what.

39. Jo: Well we had another meeting with Miss Wood and apparently it was 'decided' that the seniors would run the forum, so I quit an..

40. Maddy interrupts: I never even got asked! I was proper upset at first but I've actually got chance to do more interesting stuff than what some of the seniors are allowed to do in the end, does that make sense?

41. Adam: Yeah, cause I quit too. It's better that way an it's too like robotic in the seniors. I'm sooo glad I'm not in them anymore.

42. G.D. Why is that do you think?

43. Jo: Cause if you say something they'll go "right yes we'll consider it" and then [waves arms to the floor] it's whoosh shutdown!

44. Grace: I don't think the deputies are too bad it's just the head boy and head girl. They always pick the most robotic people…

45. Will: You mean Ellis Brook?

46. Grace: No I don't want to insult individual people…

47. Max: You would if *she* wasn't here [Max points to me and laughs].

48. Grace: Well, Yeah but that's not the point. The point is that now that we don't even get to pick the seniors or head boy or head girl and it's down to teacher nominations it's all the handpicked *nice* kids on there now.

49. Pete: The only people that get a say now are the people like that are *supposed* to be in power- like head boys n' girls. People like that don't have opinions- or like ones that are identical to the teachers and senior managers- you know what I mean?

50. G.D. So what would you do now if something happened that you thought was wrong or you wanted to try and make a change, where will you go? Who will you turn to? I mean would you ever speak to your form teacher?

51. Will: Hell No!

52. Max: I would, I've got Miss Adams she's sound.

53. Maddy: I would've but she just disappeared. She was off sick for ages and there's no one else like her … Now I just stomp around the school getting dead mad!

54. Jo: I would run, run to Mr Field (Tom)

55. Grace: Yeah me too, like he's like the only one that even listens.

56. Pete: Yeah he's always there for you no matter what.

57. Jo: I mean like you can go to the pastoral managers, but I wouldn't personally…

58. Max: They're really just there to deal with all the kids with bad behaviour and stuff.

59. Maddy: Well they're dead nice people an all but they're always so stressed out so basically they're never, they're never…

60. Adam finishes her sentence: Never there for us.

61. Maddy: Yep that's it. Not cause they're crap at their job or anything there's just so much other stuff for them to deal with. They're always sooo busy!

62. G.D. Okay, so would you maybe consider approaching the governors?

63. Jo: We don't even know who they are! We got invited to *one* meeting but that was it. *We just got shafted really*.

64. G.D. Would you consider approaching The Co-operative College at all?

65. Adam: Nope. The only person who can really help is Mr. Field. That's who I go to.

66. G.D. So if somebody asked you about what the student forum does, what would you say to them now? - That is after the whole phone policy thing?

67. Jo: I'd just tell them how it used to be. Not how it is now. As far as it goes now… well! There isn't really a *proper* Forum

68. Pete: Yeah it's pretty dead now.

69. As the game drew to a close and the majority of the students disappeared to get changed, the hall became eerily quiet except for the measured bounce of a solitary basketball pounding on the floor. The young lad who had remained silent throughout (except for his lively account of Summerhill) drew a long deliberate breath then stammered… iiit's like we've all kinda lost hope now we're all so so so er dis … he paused for a moment searching intently for the right word, cogs whirring round and round until eventually he added: 'dis-disillusioned. Yes that's the word!' he nodded and smiled contentedly, visibly pleased that he had finally expressed *his own version of events*.

Before moving on to *versions of events* conveyed by members of staff, it is important to highlight a number of significant issues and tensions that have arisen in the preceding stories. These dilemmas have an important bearing upon understanding the value that is accorded to 'student voice' in education and educational research. Within the stories presented so far, the notion of *student's own time* and *time running out* for this research project continue to compress the material-discursive spaces within which 'student voice' presents a 'risk', as a subject of provocation and action, or presents itself as a 'valuable' subject of domestication and compliance. As the stories that constitute the (non) event unfold, it is important to notice how research allies played a significant part in navigating risk and enabling access to the spaces in which students were able to 'speak' and transcend the usual demands upon their time (in terms of the 'standards agenda'). Therefore, deconstructing what is of 'value' and to 'whom' in these research encounters offers some productive terrain to consider how 'student voice' and 'student voice research' might be considered a worthwhile subject to be supported or a risky subject to be 'managed'. Moreover, as is starting to become evident through these fragmented accounts, what appears to be deemed of most value to the institution of the school, is the compliant student who produces the required level of progress in order to meet the 'standards agenda'. And as Tom pointed out earlier: 'the co-op stuff, well they're happy for it all to go on – just not in curriculum time. (Story 8, para13). Further, it could also be argued that as a consequence of this, students' *own time* therefore becomes an even more valuable resource in its scarcity, and consequently this has 'effects' for how, when, which and even *if* students became involved in the project. Therefore, as I became more aware of the extent to which the negotiation of these demands on students' time had a bearing upon both my research subject (student voice) and researcher subjectivities (an adult trying to 'speak' *with* students), significant renegotiation of this research design was required in order that I did not place unreasonable demands on students' always already 'valuable' time. For example, stories (13 & 14) illustrate the extent to which students' voices were heard on the margins of 'business as usual' lesson times or the tail end of lunch breaks.

In addition to this, despite planning well in advance and inviting students to participate earlier in the fifteen minute Mêlée (appendix 21), as students and I (eventually!) occupied the conference room (Story 10), it became apparent that 'voice/s' are constrained by much more than other background noises and lack of 'free time', as the realisation that the head teacher might be able to overhear our conversation added further complications to what can be said? By whom? Where and when? In this instance, the panoptic realm of school surveillance became ever more noticeable as students were at a loss to think of somewhere they could speak 'where there isn't a camera' (Story 10, para 59). As these stories 'play out', the absence of an authorised space in which to 'speak' freely and to 'speak of' student voice critically is noticeable in its *absence*. Therefore, these stories were crafted as an analytical response to keeping the *absent presence* of *managing* 'student voice' in 'view' and acknowledging some of the tensions that constrained the 'telling' of these tales. The following stories offer another lens with which to understand the complexities of 'speaking' and 'listening' as a professional, pedagogical and political endeavour when a teacher and head teacher offer their accounts of some of the key organisational dilemmas that surround aspirations for 'voice' in the context of co-operative schooling.

3.d. Ambivalence, ambiguity and resignations…

A story from the field…

15. Co-operation in the Classroom? A Teacher's Tale

1. Miles is going places. Young, confident and passionate about improving social justice in education he decided to leave Blackbrook's citizenship department at the end of term. After only being in his role for a year or so, Miles took up a position outside of the traditional boundaries of the teaching profession, where he hoped his 'voice' might be put to more productive use. Miles was keen to participate in my research project and offered up his classroom as a prospective 'fish bowl' in which to observe how he endeavoured to build political literacy into the curriculum and enable learners to engage in local, national and global political life. As Miles neared his last few weeks in the department he offered a frank reflection of the tensions and challenges that 'becoming co-operative' brought to the fore and reasoned that 'building trust' continued to be the greatest challenge:

2. There is this real, this real erm, inner sanctum of power in Alex and Rob [head & deputy head teachers] that says "we're a co-operative school but we don't fundamentally believe in democracy" - which is an *irreconcilable* difference'.

3. Miles was aware that the composition of the Student Democratic Forum had latterly become 'undone' (perhaps as a consequence of these differences) and offered the instance of being asked to draw up a learner forum development plan (See Appendix 16) shortly after arriving at the school as an example of some of the challenges faced. He recounted how he had often been asked in earnest to consider how the school might approach being 'more democratic' only to find that: 'it falls on deaf ears, people say, "oh well, we'll see" or "we'll do bits of this" and it doesn't, it doesn't come to anything really'. After Miles suggested a complete restructuring of the existing forum he recalled the tepid response from the Senior Leadership Team: 'too many excuses about why it

wouldn't work. Typical of the various levels of small 'c' conservatism that exist here. God! I'm making it sound awful aren't I - you know? I reassured Miles that this wasn't the first time I had encountered such views from members of staff as he continued to try and disentangle himself from appearing to be overly critical. He acknowledged that Alex and Rob cared deeply about the school:

4. 'It's very visible and they've got real strengths in many ways but they are just NOT, they are not interested and engaged in finding ways to take teaching and learning forward. It should be about the democratization of young people in schools so that they are owning part of their learning. NOT making decisions about what goes into vending machines or tinkering with uniforms but actually being involved in the bread and butter of schools - which is teaching and learning. If you are a really successful teacher you locate very quickly your locus of control and you exploit that to the maximum. So for me, I could go and hammer my head against the wall and erm say Alex and Rob, 'lets be more democratic, lets be more democratic and it would just go… *well its like pissing up against a wall frankly*. Tom hasn't got that luxury, you know because it's his job to actually try and do this stuff, erm so yeah I don't envy him in that regard.

5. Still keen to ascertain the present state of play with the Student Forum, I asked Miles for an update and his response echoed that of the student's I had spoken to earlier, but to varying degrees:

6. 'Now there is a democratic forum at the moment but it's a bit kind of 'Castro-esque' in its democracy as it's all the seniors on there- the kids have no choice whatsoever in who the seniors are. It's basically all the hand picked, 'nice' kids. It literally is! Which is fine for seniors but it's not you know – well we've not got difficult challenging kids on there and I would really – you know if we were looking at who's on the forum now there's no one from [nearby deprived area], free school meal kids or you know… It's not representing the actual school'.

7. According to Miles' original proposal (see appendix 16), the school needed to develop a 'formalised and purposeful learner forum', which would replace the original 'student council'. The new forum would be comprised of twenty to twenty-five learners who, once elected by the whole school, could be organised as a single tutor group, of which Miles would become their tutor in much the same manner as other tutor groups; that is with the exception that during morning tutorials, once the tutor group had been checked for 'standards' (uniform, homework, planners etc)[52], then the remaining time would be spent undertaking activities and training that enabled the forum to work as a team and 'provide regular, quality representation'. However, despite these proposals being offered *it appears* that the original 'student council' reverted to form and as my prior encounter with students informed, 'the seniors took over'.

I remained puzzled and bewildered about the current 'status' of the student democratic forum. According to the students, 'there was nothing going on'; Miles had reframed it as 'a bit kind of castroesque' and Tom had explained only a few days earlier that it was 'subject to the effective merger with 'the old student council' and 'part of the custodial democracy of the school now'. As my last week approached, I still didn't 'get it' and was beginning to fear that I never would.

The proposed system that the Forum had devised appeared to be very simple, with clear sanctions in place in the event of people 'breaking the rules'. As a result of later discussions with Jo and other students, and after reading the original documentation that the forum shared with me, it appears that the Forum had sought out as many views as possible and had considered an extensive range of possible alternatives (in addition to potential consequences) before 'pitching' their final proposal to senior staff. I was quite taken aback by their investment in this project, in particular the extent to which students (Jo in particular) had devoted a large amount of their *own free time* in order to 'formalise things'. This was *their* account and one which Tom corroborated. I found myself in sympathy with the students on this occasion, and *according to their version of events* I failed to understand why the policy had been 'killed' in the first place.

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[52] It is interesting to note that, even on this occasion, 'standards' take precedence.

A Thought from the field…

11.What had gone awry?

1. To my mind, the student's actions epitomised the democratic potential of the co-operative model of schooling. This was exactly what I had been 'searching' for all along, an example of 'co-operation in action' which offered the promise for engendering greater equality of 'voice'; proof that co-operative schooling 'works!' Students had instigated a change on a subject that was pertinent to them and had clearly gone to great lengths to present their 'case' to Others. Alongside this, they had navigated adultcentric (Petr, 1992) structures and discourses of negotiation and competency in order to undertake *their own* 'proper' research. So what had gone awry?

2. Tom later explained the sudden 'U-turn' as the result of a collision between respecting the rights of the students' to participate in decision making activities and the ultimate responsibility of the school for ensuring that student's welfare remained protected in an email he sent:

3. 'Alex's view was that in the end *it exposed him to too much risk* given the issues highlighted in the press around child abuse etc. In general the young people involved feel very much let down by this democratic process and have lost confidence in the possibility of any *real* change… Sadly the result of this and other actions, seems to have killed the idea and any collective will for a co-operative school approach and democratic accountability beyond that of a head teacher…In both my line management meetings and school improvement discussions with Alex I believe we have come to an impasse where he wishes to maintain the focus and resources of the school on a pure standards improvement approach and I…want to see the co-operative approach become the main drive for school improvement. (My emphasis)

'Killing the policy…'

(Re)reading these thoughts from 'the field' alongside Tom's email, it becomes apparent that there are some very powerful discourses at play here, especially in terms of the head's rationale for 'killing the policy' premised upon managing risk and responsibility for child protection. Moreover, 'risk' can be interpreted in two ways here. On the one hand as a potential threat to students' safety in terms of being placed at increased risk of presumed exposure to unsuitable or abusive images/correspondence, and on the other, if the phone policy reforms went ahead as planned, the school [head teacher and Governing Body] would be held responsible for any issues arising from students being able to access material that might not be filtered through the school's 'usual' channels. Nick Lee (1999) highlights the particular tensions that surround institutions charged with responsibility for children's protection whilst observing the UN convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as he argues that: 'article 12[53] 'manages' [childhood's] ambiguity by deferral and distribution'. As Lee points out, there is a necessity for the Convention to incorporate ambiguity in order to ensure that it remains applicable (and enforceable) to all children, yet as he illustrates in a number of examples, this ambiguity merely defers the burden of decision making towards individuals and institutions who are managing these dilemmas in 'real life' situations. Lee, surmises that the major challenge therefore, becomes apparent when: ' institutions make their decisions about particular children with one eye on the qualities of these children and the other on their own legitimacy.' (p.465). Thus in the case of Blackbrook High, the head teacher manages the potential challenge of ascertaining whether *all* of the school's students are *capable* of navigating access to the internet on their phones as too great a risk to shoulder which results in students' rights to 'to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child' (UNCRC, 1989) being eclipsed by the danger of the school's exposure to risk and the students' need for 'protection'.

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[53] Article 12 states: 'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)

According to Walkerdine and Lucey (1989, p.103): 'power and conflict are *not* dispersed or eliminated in the democratic kitchen, they are supressed' (Original emphasis). Parallels can be drawn here between the position of the mother in the democratic kitchen and those members of the co-operative school who are positioned as responsible for the 'development' of the school and the safety of its members, especially given the fact that Blackbrook positions itself as a 'surrogate parent' (Staff handbook, 2012/13, p.2). Moreover, as Walkerdine & Lucey go on to point out: '[t]he democratic rule decrees that all citizens shall have a voice, they all shall have equal access to power. *Only bad mothers* deny their children the right to their voice, their power, by being authoritarian, saying no all the time' (my emphasis, p.103/4). In the same vein, teachers and head teachers are placed in the precarious position of being doubly accountable for maintaining 'standards' and creating the illusion of 'the good school' *and* ensuring everyone's 'voice/s' are listened to and needs are met – that is, *not* being 'bad' teachers/head teachers in an 'authoritarian' manner. Walkerdine and Lucey argue: '…the regulation of women as mothers and their regulation of their children is central to the production of the modern dream of bourgeois democracy'. I would like to draw out the central tenets of their argument further here in these concluding remarks and posit that one of the effects of developing a 'co-operative' model of schooling within the spaces of public education works to regulate teachers and head teachers in a similar vein.

Hidden agendas, uncertain relations…

Further conceptual challenges and ideological collisions were highlighted in my final interview with the school's head teacher, Alex where I explored the tensions that might arise for schools and their members in terms of reconciling the diametric demands of co-operation and competition within this particular educational milieu. We both had our own hidden agendas in this conversation. I had my list of painfully considered questions, designed to reassure the head that I sympathized with the challenges that he faced in the current neo-liberal context, (in addition to being wary, if not intimidated by his demeanour and reputation of being a 'dictator'). He had his. Indeed, the latest Ofsted inspection (laid out in anticipation of my interests?) was spread out on his desk. In spite of this, our conversation followed another agenda.

That of the unspoken, but palpable uncertain relations of power that played out and loaded our exchanges as we took turns in responding as the Other. As I listened back to the tape, I noticed the absence of spontaneous banter, jokes and chaotic background noises that interrupted my other interviews and focus groups. Other than the deafening drill of the caretaker putting up a noticeboard next door, our conversation was stilted and intense, fraught with the dangers of 'truth' on both sides. I came to occupy this space with a number of preconceptions and a degree of political game play in mind and this coloured my lens and capacity to dig as deeply as I might, had my intentions been to solely to 'get the truth'. (The inclusion of my 'thoughts' and reactions weave in-between our exchange in brackets, in order to illustrate the extent to which I felt unable to literally 'speak my mind' in this situation.)

I had agonised for many days about whether to bring up the question of the head teacher's authority to intervene in the phone policy proposals and remained undecided in how best to approach this. Given the stakes for other participants who had disclosed what might be considered 'dangerous knowledge', I had to consider what might be at stake if I exposed the versions of events that other teachers and students had shared, especially in light of Tom's already fractured relations and Jo's comment that the head teacher 'had it in for her already' (Story 14, Para 34). Yet amongst all of this deliberation and desire to 'do no harm', surely the head teacher had the right of reply? This uncomfortable conundrum haunts. It makes this story almost *untellable* as I have relentlessly agonised over how best to interpret 'what happened?' and represent the effects of deciding what 'gets written in and written out' in the re-telling of this (non) event as a troubling psycho-social encounter with 'the truth'. This story can be read as an interruption of truth, a provocation of voice and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of arriving at a 'just' decision. In spite of this, the story resists being 'thrown out' despite the risks to researcher and researched.

The betrayal of voice and impossibility of truth…

For Ian Parker, Lacanian discourse analysis offers an alternative analytic frame for traversing such points of contradiction in that: '[t]he real is not a realm 'outside'

discourse that can be identified and described, but it is something that operates at a point of breakdown of representation, at a point of trauma or shock that is then rapidly covered over in order that it can be spoken of. Those points in a text that indicate something unspeakable, something 'unrepresentable', can be interpreted as points of encounter with the Real, and this is the closest we can speak of something 'outside discourse' (Frosh, 2002:133)' (Parker, 2014, p. 47). Parker goes on to explain that in order to work against the superior positioning of the analyst, the analyst: 'would bring knowledge to bear as an agent that worries away at something inexplicable' thus acknowledging along with Lacan that: 'when we carry out any form of psychoanalytic discourse analysis we are indeed reproducing and transforming what we name rather than 'discovering' things' (pp.48-49)

As I revisit this exchange between my researcher self and head teacher Other, I bring into focus the instances where a provocation or interruption of 'voice' occurs as instructive 'material' that might open up the possibilities for transgressing personal responsibility for the 'failure of the phone policy', (perhaps also to evade blame for failing to directly challenge the head on this matter?). Instead, I draw attention to points of collision where our conversation skirted around the *dangerous* subject of 'student voice' as it became 'a point of breakdown of representation' in order to consider what this might tell us about the circulation of power and performance of 'voice' in educational contexts contoured by high stakes accountability and competition.

A story from 'the field'

16. (Dis)engagement at the top: On not finding 'truth'

1. Alex: The bit that Tom and I argue about the most is erm, I say you can't have a truly democratic school for exactly the reasons that you've just talked about [high stakes testing and accountability agenda].
2. G.D. Yes? [*Why did you decide to become a co-operative school then?*]

3. Alex: Accountability. Well the buck stops here. You know for me with the governors and the school is judged on where it is in the league tables. You know if Summerhill after how many years can't get it right with democracy then no... no we can't but so I don't feel you'll ever have a truly democratic school but that's not to say that you can't approach things in a democratic way...

4. G.D. [*why do you think that Summerhill can't get it right? What's wrong with it? Are you referring to the Ofsted challenge?* (Stronach, 2002a)]

5. ... So you are in a leadership position leading the school and there are all these other pressures from outside ... I'm interested in how these pressures might become more powerful ... you know you've talked about that there's the Ofsted inspection and where you are in the league tables and it's that sort of tension really - of having to perform within that context rather than being able to follow the ethos of the co-operative governance framework...

6. Alex: Well, we can follow the co-operative values in what we do within the school as far as it goes ...but at the end of the day you know we're not going to chuck the curriculum out and all do playstation3 or something all day which is what some of them would like ...

7. G.D. Right. [*Really? I didn't get that impression. What makes you so sure that all students just want to play video games?*]

8. Alex: Or else there'd be no school to go to would there? [Laughs] You know?

9. G.D. [laughs] O.k...[*why not?*]

10. JC: But you can approach things in a democratic and responsible way, you will see that they do a lot of raising money for charity. I tried to limit it to just three events a year because it's such a needy community but you know they will, they will start doing things for themselves. You've only got to see what's up around the school I mean there's all the stuff about boy soldiers at the moment isn't there?

11. For Alex, dialogue with students was framed in terms of consultation and negotiation:

12. Alex: …so you know you can't just say to these children you know well we are not not doing so and so, you've got to [pauses] got to be able to discuss it with them.

13. G.D. Right. *[Why have you 'got' to discuss it? How would you define discuss?]*

14. *I found it difficult to mask my surprise when Alex went straight on to give the mobile phone policy as an example of this and couldn't bear to make eye contact when he stated:*

15. Alex: *we've* just re-written the mobile phone policy and they were very much part of what erm, of what we did with that and we consulted, yes we consulted with them and erm… well to me it's only good leadership, good management isn't it when we talk about erm [pause] things? (See Appendix 12 for a copy of the school's phone policy sign, post (non)event.)

16. G.D. Yeah. *[Did he really just say that? How should I respond? That's a real contradiction to other people's version of events…I really don't know what to say!]*

17. Fortunately the head seemed eager to fill the silence and added:

18. Alex: And like I've had that door put in, I mean if they're not happy they will walk through that door and tell me things like 'there's a cockroach in the swimming pool'.

19. G.D. oh right [*I laugh nervously, grateful for the distraction*]

20. Alex: Yeah, well there's the mobile phone policy. All this changing the uniform, they did that [pauses] the school council did that.

21. Alex then reels off a list of other examples whereby the student council [note not the forum] were 'consulted' and participated in decisions regarding uniform and lunchtime menus and the design of school premises. Although it is important to note that these examples were all given as instances in which the school sought the views of students rather than students setting the agenda for change.

22. Alex: So those are all [pauses] they're all good examples of [pauses again] if they feel hard done to they come and tell me.

23. We both laugh [*Why did I laugh? I was actually still shocked and distracted about the contradictory comments about the phone policy but found myself laughing along in spite of that. I hadn't explicitly asked for any examples of the student council, yet here he is reeling them all off.*]

24. Alex: Sometimes I find myself renegotiating things for them so erm yeah to me it's a way of working. I don't see myself as some dictator. If I think [pauses to think] if we're discussing changing something we will talk to them, we will have assemblies and we will talk to them. They know all about the fact that we're getting new windows, all that was discussed back in the summer when we got the funding.

25. *G.D.* [*Why would students be interested in windows? There's that word again, dictator! That's not what the students were saying to me, I wonder if he knows about his reputation?*]

26. So how do you discuss things like that with them? How do you sort of create a dialogue? *[Finally! Something I actually wanted to ask.]*

27. Alex: I do that through assemblies.

28. Our conversation turned to remarks about the state of school meal provision as Alex was keen to point out that all pupils had the opportunity to receive three meals a day at school in spite of rising food poverty in nearby catchment areas. On 'safer' ground I relaxed a little and asked whether the school enabled other members of the community to benefit from the school's facilities.

29. The mobile phone policy wasn't mentioned again.

In the end, I resolved that what was of most importance was not to present these versions of events as alternative truths but to explore how these tales came to be told in the first place; thus generating productive knowledge that might tell us something about how fields of possible action and 'speech' are constructed both 'in school' and in educational research contexts. In this instance it appears that the precarity of

'voice', (on the part of both researcher and researched) ruptured and distorted the emergence of a *tellable* tale.

What is important to make clear is that, in the end I cannot claim to offer the 'whole truth and nothing but the truth', only a glimpse of the possibilities and challenges that envelop claims of 'giving voice' or 'having a say'. As Foucault reminds us power works through discourse and in opening up the conversation to the many and not only the few, 'voice/s' and 'stories' become confused and infused by something Other, and that something Other is the questionable rationality of speaking and listening subjects.

At the end of the day, this version of events is a story. A tale 'made up' from other people's fragments of 'voice'. Real conversations, real words, real people and real events re-told and interpreted by me, a researcher trying to 'make sense' of what happens when claims are made that 'everyone has a say'. Yet as Ellsworth notes: 'pluralizing the concept as "voices" implies correction through addition. This loses sight of the contradictory and partial nature of all voices' (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 312) Therefore, regardless of age or perceptions of 'competence', what structures the 're-telling' of these 'truths' about the co-operative school is the circulation of power as it moves and (re)forms *what* is told and *who* does the telling. So ultimately here, rather than getting any closer to 'the truth' this story represents the distortion, dislocation and dispersal of 'voice/s'; and serves as a provocation and an allegorical reminder that as Maggie MacLure (2009) points out: 'voice always evades capture'.

3.e.
The struggle for recognition

Situating 'student voice'

In 1916 John Dewey wrote extensively about the necessity of engaging student experience and perspectives in the curriculum of schools as a democratic project. Long before I encountered any 'real' students in this research project I became increasingly inquisitive and skeptical about the construction of 'student voice' within a contemporary co-operative school context as I turned towards literature which considered a wide range of democratic models of education in the hope of finding evidence of the possibilities for social justice in education and more importantly, confirmation that these schools might offer a more radical reading of 'student voice' embedded within democratic participatory relationships. (*Cf.*Fielding & Moss, 2011; Mills & McGregor, 2014; Neill, 1990; Wrigley et.al. 2012) It appears that, in just over a decade (Following the Education Act, 2002) student councils have transformed from being considered a radical project of progressive education, to a normalised conduit of 'development' for both the pupil and the school. Moreover, since Ofsted incorporated a requirement for schools to consult pupils, student councils have become a permanent fixture in the majority of schools across the U.K (and further afield) thus becoming a normalised part of everyday school life. In spite of this however, 'student voice' discourse appears to have become increasingly detached from its radical roots and thus oriented towards neo-liberal technologies of 'the conduct of conduct', both as a reflexive project on the part of the student (Bragg, 2007a) and increasingly as a vehicle for teachers performativity and surveillance and raising 'standards' (Bragg, 2007b), in addition to providing a convenient distraction from underlying social inequality (Arnot & Reay, 2007).

Given the growing accumulation of literature on student voice which both delights in its transformatory potential and warns of the danger of perpetuating relations of domination in the name of liberation (Cook-Sather, 2007), the potential dividend for engendering equality for all members therefore, has become infused by contradictory demands and desires. (*cf.* Ball, 2008; Fielding, 2004; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006)

Critique that considers student councils as pursuing tokenistic, futile or even paradoxical agendas abound. For some, student voice occupies precarious ground which at times borders on becoming a prime site for governmentality (Bragg, 2007a) or as a key resource for exploiting the positioning of students as 'consumer'. Fielding & Moss (2011, p.151) make an important point on this as they warn: [t]he current co-option of 'student voice' by the energetic activities of government and the ambitions of schools conscious of their league table positions … alerts us to the dangers of hegemonic incorporation.'[54]Indeed the extent to which contemporary student voice sites offer the obligatory disclaimer of 'real voice' rather than the more skeptical taken for granted 'tokenistic' experience are never far away. Moreover, the co-operative college even appears to be at pains to mark out their approach to student voice as '*real*' (See, Shaw, 2011).

Whilst I continued to wrestle with 'mapping' the student forum/council's historical trajectory, desperately trying to understand and 'make sense' of how 'it' was constructed, the futility of trying to squeeze the development of this disparate collection of (in)audible 'voices' into a singular *intelligible* chronological frame became even more apparent. At this point, I began to consider how the reconstitution of a *containable* body of 'student voice' at Blackbrook (in terms of only allowing seniors on the council) troubled the spaces in which particular 'kinds' of 'student' ["all the hand picked, 'nice' kids"] were 'hailed' (Althusser, 1971) and acknowledged by others. Following the 'failure' of the phone policy at the hands of the student democratic forum it is possible to argue that in this context, the 'nice' kids surfaced as 'recognisable' subjects (the whom) and the student council meeting thus (re)emerged as the 'legitimate' visible space (the where, and when) which contained the activities of 'student voice' as it became intelligible as a 'sanctioned' conduit for consensus building, offering a safe return to the status quo of ordinary school life.

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[54] For example, consider this exerpt from the Ofsted website: 'Student voice' is used to a great extent to develop the quality of teaching through an ever-expanding team of students, currently over 40, who observe lessons. The academy finds that the traditional model of training days and staff attending one-day INSET courses is simply not fit for purpose. These innovative approaches have led to rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and in turn to the achievement of students, which is outstanding.' (Ofsted, 2013)

Yet, my encounters with (extra)ordinary instances of 'student voice' in the impromptu focus groups, on the margins of field notes and in re-reading conflicting accounts, offer an alternative reading of 'voice' as provocation and an example of 'the rupture of the ordinary' (Fielding, 2004, p. 296), a rupture which Michael Fielding argues might engender a much needed egalitarian transformation of 'student voice'. That is to say that, in attending to the peculiar places and curious forms that illustrated student's attempts to navigate a range of troubling and troublesome power relations which filtered how and when their 'voices' were heard, we can begin to reconceptualise student voice in the co-operative school as illustrative of such struggles and begin to (re)consider the apparent 'failure' of the phone policy as a site of political action. This struggle also informs us of the particular and the general challenges that children and young people face as they 'take up' a variety of (il)legitimate rights to 'speak' across multiple, intersecting and contradictory subject positions as co-operative school members and Others. In-between this polar divide of the 'particular and the general' reside complex discursive positionings which construct a range of differential experiences and subjectivities which shape 'legitimate' *rights to* and *protection of* childhood subjectivities which unsettle taken for granted understandings of equality and difference in educational discourse and beyond. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989, p. 312) was keen to point out the precarious nature of 'student voice' discourses as a result of exploring her own university's anti-racist interventions almost twenty-five years ago. Moreover, her argument that: 'strategies such as such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact' continue to remain relevant today, and perhaps of interest here, in the context of co-operative schools too.

Many different accounts reflected upon the contrary status of 'voice' projects which variously positioned students as (un)equal members of the 'co-operative school'. In addition to this, accounts often oscillated between naming this conduit of voice/s' as 'council', 'forum' or 'stakeholder group'[55], both within Blackbrook school and

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[55] It is also interesting to note that according to the Oxford English dictionary a council is defined as:
A body of people elected to *manage* the affairs of a city, county, or other municipal district or a meeting for *consultation or advice*, yet a forum is defined as: 'a meeting or medium where ideas and views on a particular issue can be *exchanged*'. (My emphasis)

throughout other co-operative contexts. This confusion is instructive here as it reflects the precarious de-*sign* of projects that are eclipsed by the blanket umbrella of 'student voice'; thus invoking essentialised assumptions about the capacity of such projects to empower, 'give voice' or identify a '*real* stake' which lack critical interrogation and also veil the dilemmas that surround child/ren's positionings within social and educational contexts of 'developmentality' (Fendler, 2001). This is particularly relevant if we take into account substantial interest in respecting children's rights to participate following the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child convention (UNCRC)[56]. For, there remain stark contrasts in interpreting the point at which 'the views of the child [should be].. given due weight [in terms of] the age and maturity of the child' (S12) (Alderson, 2000). Yet as Percy-Smith (2010, p. 110) points out: '…unless children have access to the 'process of giving due weight', power remains absolute with adults. Indeed it is the notion of 'in/dependent relations' that causes specific problems for understanding potential conflicts between respecting generational love and rights as Nick Lee (2005) reminds us in his exploration of 'separability' and its relation to *Childhood and Human Value.* Here, he argues that ideas about children's capacity to comprehend rights and responsibilities are often understood through the aperture of modern, western ideals which attribute high social status and moral competence with achieving visible levels of independence usually accorded to adults. This adds a further layer of complexity for creating the conditions within which students are given the opportunity to articulate political rights and responsibilities *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982) to the modern ideal.

The apparent 'failure' of the phone policy reform (FPPR) could be read as an empirical moment in which the 'legitimate' categories of *different* inter-dependent stakeholder voice/s and sanctioned spaces for co-operative school participation are challenged and 'worked out', according to a range of material-discursive conditions and power relations which shape the construction of democratic subjectivity within the context of everyday co-operative school life. In addition, a critical examination of

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[56] In particular S12 which states: Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)

the FPPR also offers further insight into the particular challenges that are faced in the ongoing struggle for engendering greater equality in education and society as children and young people are variously positioned as (un)recognisable subjects of 'voice' discourse and in light of arguments that 'the emancipatory potential of young people's participation has been hijacked by corporate agenda as participation has become mainstreamed' (Percy-Smith, 2010, p. 114).

Student Councils, Student Voice: Participation or consultation?

It seems I am not alone in my failure to differentiate between 'student councils' and 'student voice' as a constituent part of the co-operative 'stakeholder voice' formula. Indeed, it seems that the discursive terrain of the traditional 'student council' is another slippery signifier which is easily transformed or subsumed into that of 'student voice/consumer' as the agentic child-consumer-citizen-service-user's 'voice' is increasingly sought out in a multitude of contexts that stretch out far beyond the school gate (See also, Ball, 2008; Bragg, 2010). In crafting the grand narrative of 'voice as choice', it seems that the promise of capturing children and young people's voice/s offers valuable kudos for embedding this illusion. And so it seems that the stage is set for creating and maintaining the mirage of young people's participation as a 'regime of truth', or more specifically a regime of 'freedom' signified by the presence of student's *real* 'voice/s' in school decision making processes where they are ambivalently situated as not-quite citizen *and* capable consumer.

As Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) so aptly put it: '[t]he illusion of harmony depends upon the regulation of conflict in a particular way. That is, a way that appears above all else to be non-conflictual and reasonable.' In Walkerdine and Lucey's case, this 'illusion of harmony' might explain the 'fictions and fantasies' that surround the education of girls in middle and working class families, but here their insightful observations can also be 'put to work' in the case of unraveling the allure of student voice work too. For as they debunk the myth that in middle class families:

> all opinions are given equal status, everyone has a voice and everyone will listen…there is no way that, for instance, power conflicts will not arise, that they will be absent. The secret of their apparent disappearance, however, lies in the way that conflict is dealt with; how particular strategies for dealing with power and conflict make it seem as if they had simply gone away.' (1989, p.104)

Taking this into account I would argue therefore, that we have much to learn about the (dis)appearance of conflict at Blackbrook High if we consider 'democracy in the classroom' in terms of regulating teachers and socializing students in parallel with Walkerdine and Lucey's deliberation of *Democracy in the Kitchen*.

As I read Walkerdine and Lucey's account, I consider the risk that I too might have been guilty of presenting the same illusion. For in highlighting and actively recruiting students to have 'a *real* say' in this research project, and offering myself up as 'a pen for hire' (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005) I also veiled the *presence* of a multitude of discursive positionings which work to constrain absolute freedom for 'participants' to 'voice' their opinions. I had worked hard to make sure that I at least acknowledged these factors in the planning stages and was at pains to express the fact I *really* wanted to hear their views, and this was 'not some tokenistic gesture' but with all of the distractions of the usual fifteen-minute mêlée in the canteen, added to my uncertain presence at the sidelines of a basketball game, I doubt that my words were received as intended. I could not legislate for other's reactions, neither could I erase the socio-political context in which we were all positioned. I was playing with fire. Moreover, I continue to be troubled by the thought that despite the best of intentions, perhaps my actions were counter-productive as in the end I became entangled within the performativity of 'voice' and a promise that ultimately I couldn't deliver.

A story from 'the field'…

17. My final encounter: The pantomime of student voice, all together now!

The subtitle above reflects my final interview with one co-operative school 'co-ordinator'. After repeated requests to speak to members of the school's student forum, one late spring afternoon in 2013, six students were paraded in front of me whilst I sat in the corner of a staff room and attempted to find out how co-operative values and principles were interpreted by students. The spatial organization of the room mirrored the relational dynamics of this research encounter as we all squashed together in a tiny room in the corner of the school. There was not any room for

students to sit down or engage as 'equals' and I sat like a queen calling forth the jester, waiting for the students to 'perform'. As I brought my short encounter with them to a close, their chaperone took on the role of pantomime straight-man as Jake (the form teacher) quite literally prompted a response when my question, 'what makes a co-operative school different?' hung ominously in the air:

1. Jake: What makes us different?

2. Alice: Aren't we like connected with erm three…?

3. G.D: Don't worry its not a test! [all laugh]

4. Jake: Yeah, they're our partners… and what do the partners do for us?

5. Alice: Yeah, they fund us don't they?

6. Jake: They support us in lots of different ways and give us work experience come and give talks, but if become a member of the trust what does that *give you*?

7. Daniel: You can put it on your CV?

8. Jake: A C.V. yes, and?

9. Rose: Little perks too

10. Jake: Little perks, but what's the biggest thing, the thing we all say… we all say that you have a [pauses] what in school?

11. Rachel: 'A say' in school

12. Jake: Yeah, a say in your school, yes!

13. Rachel: I remember reading that, [she laughs and others laugh too]

The short exchange set out (which draws upon the final few minutes of a ninety minute interview with a 'co-operative' co-ordinator and teacher) above creates a useful counterpoint to consider my research question, 'what does co-operative schooling do?' As Jake, the teacher- pantomime straight-man, (re)framed my research question slightly differently and asked: 'if you become a member of the trust, what does that *give* you?' The slight twist here performs a useful analytic function as it enables me to consider how others might conceive the benefits of the co-operative model in terms of a promise that is 'read', or according to Jake 'voice' takes on a

takes on a possessive, rather than an active function; that is in terms of 'giving'. Thus, inferring 'voice' is subject to 'reason' and therefore also, it can also be taken away, which perhaps also opens up the possibilities of performing 'voice' in a variety of ways (Ashby, 2011)[57]. Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to foreground a troubling of this very notion, 'giving voice' as following Jackson & Mazzei, (2009, p. 5) I examined how 'voice' was 'mediated, constrained, determined and even commodified'. And as I struggled to understand what it is possible to *know* about 'voice' within the contexts of co-operative schooling, I (re)considered how the promise and disappointments of 'voice' which reverberate around and beyond the acoustics of the 'co-operative' school gate present a form of rupture, that is to say, perhaps at best they offer a provocation of what 'voice' *is* or can *do*.

Recognising Students: Performing 'Voice'

As Youdell (2011, pp. 22-3) points out, liberal-reform based identity politics identify inequalities by calling up a range of categorisations of identity along axis of gender, class, age, sexuality, disability, religion and so on without critically deconstructing how these categories are constituted in the first place, rendering the existence of such categories as 'self-evident'. Drawing upon the work of Judith Butler she goes on to point out:

> Promoting equalities for subjects constituted under a particular identity category is to assert and bolster this category. Such an assertion of the proper place of the category inevitably draws the boundary of a new outside, those subjects who have not quite made the entry criteria, and cites once again the prevailing sense of the unitary, enduring, self-knowing subject. In having these effects the call for equality under a given sign further cements that sign, and the bodies marked by it.

Yet Youdell (2011, p.23) also acknowledges that despite endeavours to shift conceptualisations of identity towards 'identification', via a post-structural, deconstructive or queer reading, identity categories cannot be so easily discounted: ' -they are pressed upon us, are the condition of our recognition and are necessary signs under which to act (Rasmussen 2009).' Moreover, this also causes problems in

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[57] This notion is discussed by Christine Ashby who explores what 'voice' means in disability studies when individuals type to communicate (Ashby, 2011).

terms of understanding how members of the co-operative school are recognised, situated and constituted as subjects who are endowed with a number of particular *and* universal rights and responsibilities 'to act' and 'speak' as members of the 'co-operative' school. It could be argued that in making claims that 'everyone has a say'[58] through the membership of particular constituency 'voice' forums (staff, parents, students, community members that 'make up' the 'co-operative' governance framework) as part of the school's decision making processes, this creates similar effects; whereby given 'signs' for equal status rely upon the predictable positioning of each stakeholder within a designated boundary of other knowable, stable, and unitary subjects, meeting 'particular entry criteria' regardless of the material and discursive conditions in which membership is granted and 'voice/s' are conceptualised, performed and 'heard'. Moreover, if we consider these claims toward equality in light of conflicting constructions of childhood in/dependence and in/competence (the risky subject, or subject at risk?), which offer contradictory positions for children and young people to 'take up' (for example the autonomous, agentic 'being' child or the dependent, not-quite adult 'becoming' child), it becomes increasingly clear that reading 'student voice' as a conduit for engendering greater educational equality becomes subject to the successful navigation of a number of significant obstacles.

So rather than consider the claims for equality made by the co-operative governance framework in terms of the sign, (which in this case is described as the 'student voice/forum') and risk excluding those who fail to navigate the obstacles of being recognised as 'the good/rational/sufficiently 'developed' student, in terms of 'legitimate' entry criteria, it might be more productive to consider these obstacles as conditions of student's performativity. That is to say that, rather than describe what 'co-operative student (voice)' *is* in terms of a space that is inhabited by normative identity categories, one can develop an appreciation of what it *does*. Further developing Althusser's (1971) notion of interpellation, where recognition is understood through 'the hail' of normative identity categories (See also, Jackson &

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58 For Percy-Smith (2010): 'we need to be asking different questions: not whether young people have a say – as a proxy for democratic participation – but whether they are able to fulfill their rights as equal and active citizens by articulating their agency through different forms of participation within the context of their lived realities.'

Mazzei, 2012). Judith Butler 'undoes' normative categories that foreground conforming and regulatory practices. She argues that these categories should be understood as 'performatives', therefore as: 'that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (1993, p. 13). Alicia Jackson (2009) points towards the utility of Butler's further development of this notion whereby she reasons: 'desire for recognition is in actuality a site of *power* where who gets to be recognized, and by whom, is governed by social norms.' (Original emphasis, p. 171) In the case of the FPPR, perhaps we can trace a de-centering of the normative 'conforming' 'student voice' which destabilises and reconfigures which categories of student and which 'kinds' (Hacking, 2007) of 'voice/s' are recognised, as power works *through* the discursive space of the co-operative student forum and its multi-stakeholder governance structures.

In theory, following the school's adoption of Co-operative Trust status, the constitution of the former student council might be transformed into that of a recognisable, active stakeholder group with a discernable stake that endows a more active role in the decision-making activities of the school. The Co-operative School handbook acknowledges that: 'most schools already have a school's council' and foregrounds the opportunity to develop this space through the forum and trust board in order to offer: 'the opportunity for *some* young people…to work as *equals* alongside adults' (Gardner et al., 2013, p. 56, my emphasis).

In the case of Blackbrook, it appears that contradictory and competing transformations of the material-discursive frameworks of 'student voice' occur almost simultaneously. Moreover, in view of the lack of obligatory requirements for schools to adopt a (more?) 'democratic' approach, there appear to be many different interpretations and expectations of 'what voice can *do*' at play. That is to say that, whilst Tom, Miles and other members of staff were at pains to secure (and later reinstate) a 'democratic' forum, the head teacher and other senior management staff appear to conceptualise the role of the school council in more reductive terms. What is of interest here though, is not to generate a more explicit definition of the role and remit of the student forum (although this might be of some use!), or to decide which interpretation is 'better'; here I argue, following Butler, that it would be more

productive to consider and question *how* contradictory notions of student-forum-voice: 'enact or produce that which it names'. I then go on to explore how these discursive practices might get caught up and cause trouble for a 'co-operative' discourse, which seeks to engender equality of 'voice' as a fundamental aim.

(Re)reading student participation

In my interview with the head teacher, he situates his interaction with students in relation to his role as a leader of the school and in respect of a requirement to 'consult', thereby invoking reference to particular sites of power; namely that of historical teacher-student relations and that of communicating with students as subjects-with rights (although notably in this exchange, the source of student's rights to be consulted are not *explicitly* located within a human rights discourse neither are revealed as an effect of 'student-as consumer' discourse, but inferred). However, Alex also demonstrates a degree of uncertainty about 'consulting' on the matter of the mobile phone policy (in Story 16) as he appears to remind himself when he repeats: 'we consulted, yes we consulted' and then attempts to recruit my agreement on the relationship between 'consultation and 'good management' when he qualifies the need to 'talk' or 'consult' as an example of: '…good leadership, good management, *isn't it*? when we *talk* about…things'.

He also goes on to explain that he initiated a transformation to the material conditions of 'student voice' by reconfiguring his office and enabling another doorway to be installed on the corridor side so that: 'if they [students] feel hard done to they come and tell me'. There might be parallels drawn here in the increasing use of 'open door' policy for parents in many UK Schools. And following Brown's (1990) notion of 'parentocracy', this could perhaps be deemed as an instance of 'studentocracy'. However, students' agency in this case is merely framed in terms of a public relations exercise (Bernays, 1947). In addition, he sees his role as sometimes having to 'renegotiate things for them' and explains that for him, 'talking' to pupils is part of his job, 'just a way of working' and perhaps by way of reference to implicit assumptions about historical relations of power between head teachers and pupils, he

reiterates that he doesn't see himself as 'some dictator'. (Although interestingly, some staff and many students described the head teacher in these very terms.)

For the head teacher at least, medium of communication therefore appears to be shaped by the imperative to 'consult' and 'talk' with students either through the school's council or by way of formal assembly as both a commercial and pedagogical endeavour. Therefore following Youdell's interpretation of Judith Butler's notion of performativity and Foucault's (1990b) notions of productive power and subjectivation,[59] I wonder what possible fields of action are possible in the discursive spaces of 'consultation' and 'assembly' for 'the bodies' that are 'marked by the sign' [co-operative student voice]?

As Grace recounted, the purpose of the head's assembly in terms of: 'the head wanted to find out what people didn't like about the school to see if he could change it', one might conclude that on this occasion students were positioned as subjects of consumer discourse, thus possessing a measure of power in 'having a say', and disturbing the traditional hierarchical power relation between students and staff in the space of the school assembly. Yet this is also contradicted by the 'usual' discursive space of school assemblies where absolute authority is given to the speaker positioned at the front of his/her audience. In spite of the head teachers agenda, as the assembly progressed, exchanges between the head teacher and student members of the audience progressed into 'uproar'; that is according to the various and (variable!) accounts of staff and students who recalled this event. (See Story 13, para 39 & 46)

As students recounted their experiences they also demonstrated their knowledge of what Paul du Gay (1996) characterises as "enterprise discourse", the permeation of market cultures into everyday life. Students from the forum appeared well versed in the art of persuasion and admonished the Other student's failure to recognise the 'rules' of engagement: 'even after us telling them [other students] to drop it in slowly and try and persuade him…' Some students also empathised with the head teacher's

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[59] Deborah Youdell offers a succinct and useful definition of subjectivation as she explains it as: 'the process of being named and made a subject- and therefore an effect of productive power. As productive power circulates in discourse the person is subjected to relations of power and rendered a subject, or *subjectivated* (2011, p.27 original emphasis).

response: 'it's not his fault, I would've walked out if I was him too!' and disavowed other student's behavior: 'shouting things out and …overloaded him at once', thus illustrating their knowledge of 'permissable' student-teacher interaction as they later went on to offer strategies for (re)negotiating this discursive terrain in the interests of bringing about a 'successful' negotiation for change.

As Todd referred to this assembly he recalled that: 'it wasn't the most successful of erm, of confrontations', highlighting the destabilization of 'usual' power relations and surmising that the actions of the students: 'highlighting all these things that we didn't like but not really suggesting ways to improve them', the cause of the head teacher's annoyance and subsequent exit. 'It was like here's a negative and here's another negative. So I think that kind of got him annoyed.'

Following this assembly, members of the student forum took up the issue of reforming the school's mobile phone policy and attempted to renegotiate 'student voice' with a different [more acceptable/recognisable?] approach. Members of the forum appeared to be complicit in responding to the persuasive power of 'proper' research and 'rational' negotiation practices as they carried out a series of questionnaires and surveys on the issue, albeit at the bidding of the Governing Body. Requests from a 'rag-tag' group of year elevens', 'things we *really* couldn't do' were filtered out and plausible proposals were 'fine-lined' until the forum were in a position to 'pitch' [drawing upon their experience of market research cultures perhaps?] their final proposal to the governing body in a manner that might perhaps be received as more *reason*able than the 'uproar' witnessed in the assembly.

Yet, after seemingly being acknowledged as capable actors and having been granted approval to undertake a 'trial', on the day that the new policy was due to be implemented: 'the senior staff basically changed it at the last minute without even bothering to tell *us*'. According to the student's accounts it appears that although senior staff appeared to engage with student's as capable-rational subjects in terms of negotiating proposals for changing the conditions of their teaching and learning, ultimate veto remained the jurisdiction of adult, senior staff and in this case, an explanation for the sudden retraction appeared unnecessary- both to the students

and less senior staff members. As Maddy expressed her outrage (along with many others) that this occurred: 'without even *bothering* to tell *us*' it could be argued that this response rendered 'student voice' impotent, and situated students as subjects which were unworthy of explanation and incapable of offering a constructive response. Although also perhaps one might infer that the rationale behind the withdrawal could also be linked to Tom's explanation which drew upon discourses of risk and childhood protection which dominated popular press headlines at the time. Regardless of rationale or intent, it appears that students and less senior staff were not made aware of the head teacher's motivations in this instance and the 'return' to traditional relations of power was marked by the students withdrawal from the 'proper' forum as they came to the realisation that their efforts had been in vain. When I asked this particular group of students whether they had considered challenging the senior staff's response, they resigned themselves to the fact that 'we really couldn't *do* anything'. Further, Max summed up the redundant status of student 'opinion' as a seemingly unrecognisable, (perhaps invisible) site of power: 'I mean why even bother asking for an opinion if you're not even gonna take any notice of it'. Maddy also remarked that: *'she did not feel* like there was a '*proper*' forum anymore', many other students and a small number of staff also concurred with this view and explained that after 'the seniors took over', 'it was pointless…we could see that it wasn't working'. Faced with the dilemma of colluding with 'the hand-picked nice kids' in their compliance with a return to 'business a usual' or withdrawing their presence from this space all together in view of the *lack* of 'proper forum any more',[60] the majority of these students 'chose' the latter option on account of it being: 'too like robotic' according to Todd who resigned himself to the fact that 'we never got to do it [student forum] *properly* here in the end.

Miles' appraisal of the student council becoming 'Castroesque', and being 'all the hand-picked *nice* kids now' also mirrored the view of the students who instigated the phone policy reform. Bearing these responses in mind therefore, is it possible to

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[60] One could speculate that perhaps the students recognised 'a proper' forum as a space which reflected their earlier visit to Summerhill where students from Blackbrook observed one of its infamous 'meetings' as a template for instigating a forum *of their own* upon the school's transformation to co-operative trust.

surmise that after the phone policy 'failure' it is only those 'hand-picked nice kids'[61] that become recognisable subjects of student voice discourse in school, and that the Other students by omission are rendered invisible, excluded, or bereft of 'voice'? Pete has his own views on this as he sums up his perception of the new role of the forum/council quite nicely:

> The only people that get a say now are the people like that are *supposed* to be in power- like head boys n' girls. People like that don't have opinions- or like ones that are identical to the teachers and senior managers- you know what I mean? (Story 14, Para 49)

Here, Pete seems to be suggesting that the rights to participate in the *legitimate* space of 'student voice' are granted as a historical recognition of adult-child compliance, and whereby those who: 'are *supposed* to be in power…[and] don't have opinions' seem to be offered a positive reception (on a superficial level at least). Moreover, on the face of it this allows 'student voice' to remain intact and visible. Yet, following the 'failure' of the phone policy reform it appears that the (new) council *contains* particular 'kinds' of subject, endorsing those 'kinds' who maintain traditional adult-child subjectivities and boundaries. By default this renders Others as those who have no 'voice' or place within the social order of the school; this begs a question that Rancière might ask, are these students therefore constituted as: 'a part with out a part'? (1999, p. 9)

Re-reading the (Non) Event as interruption and provocation of student voice

In considering the instance of the (non)event it is possible to imagine that not only are the students who challenge the social order rendered 'a part without a part' but this also raises the possibility that the co-operative framework of governance also discounts or misrecognises students when it makes claims that, *'everyone* has a voice' through multiple stakeholder governance frameworks? In order to pursue Rancière's notion of 'the part without a part' in relation to the (non) event at Blackbrook and (re)consider its relation to equality and co-operative schooling, I must first clear the

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[61] It is also interesting to note that this exact phrase was repeated by some of the students in my earlier meetings with them about 'the seniors'.

way for considering the (non)event as a 'political' act, rather than a mere conflict of interests between the head teacher and students. Rancière (2001) offers a helpful distinction here which appears as one of the first of *Ten Theses on Politics*.

> Politics is not the exercise of power. Politics ought to be defined on its own terms, as a mode of acting put into practice by a specific kind of subject and deriving from a particular form of reason. *It is the political relationship that allows one to think the possibility of a political subject(ivity)*[le sujet politique] and not the other way round. (My emphasis, Rancière, 2001:1)

Contrary to what is often assumed as 'political' activity (lobbying, voting, petitioning, enaging in political debate), Rancière argues that the aforementioned actions merely bring together the consent of collectivities or legitimate the distribution of resources. For Rancière (1999, p.32) a political momement is only brought about when the '*fundamental questions of equalty emerge'*. Baiocchi and Connor's reading of Rancière (2013, p.90) offers a definition of the political as: 'those acts that challenge dominant relationships by presenting the possibility of their undoing'. Returning to the (non)event, is it possible to conceive therefore, that the students' actions of initiating a subject for reform (phone policy) brought about a challenge to dominant relationships as previously the remit and domain of the space of 'student voice' had been resricted to 'consultation' on issues *raised by adults* in the school? *Fundamental questions of equality* therefore are raised in this instance as students trouble understandings of their democratic subjectivity in a number of ways. Moreover, students brought into question not only their *equality* of rights to 'have a say' but also more importantly here they provoked a destabilisation of their discursive agency as their actions brought into view queries over *what* they were allowed to 'have a say' about. In this instance the students *instigated* a proposal to change the existing phone policy as a discursive object of 'voice'. The chain of events that ensued as a result of this issue being brought to the fore provide an empirical example of those who are identifed (and included) as having a 'part' to play by calling into question not only *who* 'has a say' but *who retains the power* to decide *what* is talked about and *how* this is articulated.

In addition to this, students presented the possibility of 'undoing' *how* 'student voice' happens and *where* student voice 'is done' via engaging outside of easily recognisable

spaces that 'usually' contain the performativity of student voice; namely the visible, formalised processes offered via the discursive space of the student council/forum (within which they had previously been sanctioned 'to speak'). This more organic 'coming together' of views and opinions via blogging, twitter, informal conversations and other social media therefore disturbed *how* and *where* political subjectivity could be recognised, as an effect of these particular spaces offering ambiguous level of visiblity which rendered the *presence* of student voice outside of the normative gaze and also enabled students to communicate on terms and mediums *of their own choosing*. As the story of the (non) event illustrates, this destabilisation of traditional power relations and discursive space was not an entirely productive encounter. As a result of 'shouting out' and 'overloading' the head teacher, the phone policy proposal became subject to a range of 'renegotiations' via students from the original forum 're-working' their request into a more palatable form. Moreover, it was only after the students responded to senior staff and Governing Body requests to do some 'proper research'[62] that student voice became recognisable as a productive force for bringing about change.

Therfore, in Rancière's (2001) terms the story of the (non) event provokes a reading of political subjectivity in terms of how the relational structures of 'part-taking' [avoir-part] create the conditions of possiblity for political action and subjectivity and in this case might point towards an interuption of the 'business as usual' or social order of the school through the rupture, or: 'deviation from the normal order of things' (Baiocchi & Connor, 2013, p.91) which rendered 'student voice' *(un)recognisable* as 'a part without a part'. According to Baiocchi & Connor 'the part without a part' make up the constitutive other:

> against which the ideal of the community is constructed, those whose qualities make them unfit for participation in the demos… and it precisely because their status is so radically denied, and this denial is central to the self-understanding of the community, that claims by those without a part to equality have the potential to interrupt processes of domination *because it exposes the arbitrariness of the social order and the way that it is founded on miscount*. (My emphasis, 2013, p. 92)

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[62] Here, the discourse of 'proper research' acts as a 'regime of truth' which invokes conditions of possibility for action and change in terms of setting out the rules and procedures that govern the production of knowledge about 'public opinion' or in this case, school members' opinion.

To conclude, I argue that claims that 'everyone has a say' via the presence of 'student voice' *appear* to constitute students as subjects with an equal part to play in the co-operative multi-stakeholder governance framework. Yet as the story of the (non) event illustrates, these claims are deeply problematic in terms of students contradictory subject positioning both within and outside of the discursive space of the co-operative school. Not all hope is lost however, as: 'when those without a part make a claim for equality, they emerge as a subject, and challenge the natural order, creating the politics of equals' (Baiocchi & Connor, 2013, p. 92). Therfore, in the very least, this apparent 'failure' of student voice has nonetheless brought the problematic positioning of students as 'equal' members of the co-operative school into view. And by considering this (non) event as a problematic materialisation of 'equal' power relations and as a struggle for visible political subjectivity this emphasises Rancière's point that: 'political struggle' is not a conflict between well defined interest groups; it is an opposition of logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways' (cited in Baiocchi & Connor, 2013, p.93). Taking this into account it becomes possible to recognise how the 'business as usual' of contemporary schooling and the ideological aspirations of the co-operative movement collide in the face of students' political subjectivities; the effects bring about both danger and hope for egalitarian pedagogy. Therefore, although on this occasion 'the deviation from the normal order of things' was only momentarily visible as a brief encounter of co-operative student subjectivation, a recognition of this struggle opens up a space to consider both the emancipatory possibilities and particular challenges that need to be faced if the co-operative model takes it claims for equality seriously. For although Jo may be right in assuming '*we just got shafted really*', the very fact that some students recognised their own misrecognition offers a tiny glimmer of hope that through an acknowledgement of their oppression, co-operative students are beginning to develop a level of political literacy and perhaps following Paulo Friere, (2004) conscientização.

4a.
The end of the beginning?

As I began this interdisciplinary examination of 'the co-operative school', on the advice of Barthes (1989, p.71), I set out to create: 'an object that belongs to no-one', pledging to explore: 'all tissues of meaning as texts' (Parker, 1992, p. 7). Yet it appears that I have created a monster, an unruly object that refuses to comply with my desire to end this exhausting journey and offer closure by way of something that might be considered a conclusion. These bewildering comings and goings, impromptu detours and hestitations have led me along a precarious path, scattering the seeds of co-operative 'schooling' way beyond the margins of scholarly comprehension and recognisable 'truths'. In fact, I feel a little like Alice in Wonderland as I think: '…it would be so nice if something made sense for a change'. Yet perhaps, that is the point. In gravitating towards 'difficult knowledge', it is hardly surprising that I find myself struggling to offer a conclusive answer or fail to produce a list of lessons 'learnt'. Returning to Pitt and Britzman (2003), I am reminded that this anguish merely reflects 'a kernel of trauma' as I've continued to question my 'capacity to *know'* throughout.

As I grapple with these traumas, the inadequacy of language, the insufficiencies of experience, and the 'disappointment of voice' (MacLure, 2009) everything makes *less* sense and provokes more questions than answers regarding what a co-operative *is* or can *do*? Therefore, as I bring this anthology of (dis)located stories to the end of another beginning, I make no apology for my tentative reflections and instead openly admit to the crime of resisting 'clarity' and 'mastery'. Therefore, in this final section, I merely offer the beginnings of some fruitful conversations which might help us to explore the dilemmas and paradoxes that illustrate the difficulties of getting to *know* the co-operative school and its members as I am drawn to question one last time:

- *So what* do these research encounters, texts and stories about the 'co-operative' school tell us? And,

- What might be possible in the 'co-operative' school *to come?*

How does the contingency of radical research methodology develop the notion of 'choice' and 'voice' within this research de-sign?

This thesis has considered the contested spaces that 'voice/s' inhabit in education and educational research in terms of whether the co-operative model might offer a possible alternative to the rhetoric of equality through individual, market-led 'choice' which dominates contemporary social policy discourse. Moreover, the potential 'value' or 'impact' of a co-operative model of schooling has been explored in relation to how the notion of 'voice' or of everyone 'having a say' becomes entangled within the dynamics of power and discursive struggles that pervade the everyday acts of speaking and listening 'in school' and linguistic portrayals of 'voice' in educational research. In this respect, I have argued that articulating the 'value' of a 'co-operative' model of schooling defies easy translation or insertion into a 'what works - is what can be measured framework of analysis', and that a research de-sign that homes in on a critical analysis and narrative portrayal of how particular 'voice/s' are managed, challenge and/or become the source of disagreement, offers a more faithful reflection of the promise and dangers of educational projects that claim to 'give voice'. The multiple failures of both 'the straight version of ethnography 101' (Britzman, 2000, p.28) and conventional research design are also exemplified by the extent to which initial aspirations for creating a participatory research project were rendered suspect and subject to a number of technologies of surveillance and containment throughout. That is to say that, as the boundaries placed upon the recognition and value of 'voice' and participatory research projects were dictated by the metronomic constitution of students' voices as valuable contributors in 'lesson time', this pushed the limits of 'what could be said by whom, where and when' underground and towards the fringes and in some cases, literally the sidelines (see story 14) of everyday school life.

As the prospect of enabling students to engage on equal terms diminished in light of the school's investment in the 'value' of student voice in terms of a 'knowable body with fixed membership' and a means to 'manufacture consent' (Lippmann, 1927, p.110), the heterogeneity and performativity of 'student voice' began to emerge as a methodological and conceptual challenge. Moreover, developing the means with which to include 'voice/s' which were previously rendered unknowable demanded an

articulation of the a/effects of schooling which spoke against the grain of 'validity' and transparency and foregrounded an articulation of the potential 'value' of educational models in terms that remained sensitive to the complexities and nuances of multiple structures of inequality – thus reflecting 'impact' of an entirely different kind. As I became increasingly aware of the limited extent to which I was able to manipulate the conditions required for participation on *equal* terms, my methodological focus became (re)framed by a reading of voice as a motif of provocation and uncertainty. Further, in re-reading 'voice' as a troubling site of power, this research de-sign became skewed by my attempts to (dis)locate different versions of events against contradictory accounts which offered difficult knowledge, that is knowledge which questioned and contorted the taken for granted emancipatory qualities of 'voice'. This drew attention towards the dangers of not only listening to the voice/s that become intelligible in neoliberal terms but also, of the taken for granted value placed upon 'evidence' which appears to offer an easy calibration of 'data' into the machinery of marketable research lexicon.

Therefore, in (de)constructing the meaning and value of 'voice' as contested and performed, this created a methodological framework which troubled the recognition and inclusion of all voices as a fundamental aim and de-sign of radical research (Schostak & Schostak, 2008). As a consequence of reorienting the methodological focus towards an examination of the relations between 'voice' and power which threatened the social order of the 'business as usual' of school life, this created a new lens with which to view the democratic potential of the 'co-operative' model and to articulate the complexities, nuances and tensions which surround the social and psychological effects of understanding and performing 'voice' within contexts of 'co-operation' and competition.

Moreover, in spite of these attempts to explicitly cause 'trouble' and include marginalised, often unintelligible 'voice/s', it could be argued that these stories merely recapitulated the asymmetries of power between researcher and researched that I aimed to expose, thus making 'the workings of power even harder to see' (MacLure, 2003, p.104). Therefore, although I acknowledge that I cannot completely blot out my complicity in this erasure, as an analytic response to these precarious

crises of (re)presentation, I attempted to foreground the ontological insecurities and ethical uncertainties which framed the (re)writing of 'data' as a set of always already mediated and textualised practices and employed narrative as a tool of deconstruction (Goodley, 2011), explicitly seeking to unsettle rather than 'capture'. Thereby, in explicitly working against the grain 'valid' research practices, I hoped to place the impossibilities of hearing 'intact' voices, observing authentic 'realities' and writing 'valid' responses in productive tension throughout. This offered an alternative reading of 'impact' that resides in the spaces between methodological *de-sign* and the disruption of the coherent narrative account. Ultimately, I refused to settle upon generalisable representations of the subjects of the 'co-operative' school as their words and worlds became inextricably entangled between a range of 'layered texts' which oscillated amidst, reflections, stories, transcripts and recollections of 'voice' as 'cultural artefacts' thus blurring the boundaries between research and writing as a political and ethical method of resistance. However, I anticipate that this might not offer an 'easy' story to read and that my efforts to resist the dangers of clarity and generalisability obscure as much as they attempt to confront the hegemony of metrics in education and educational research. Therefore, I hope to further develop a number of themes that have thus far remained implict, (such as the tensions and contradictory nature of regulatory technologies of surveillance within an educational institution that aspires to offer openness and honesty as a fundamental principle), as relevant topics for future research writings. In addition, I anticipate that I will also be able to offer other narrative framings that address the specificities of class, race and gender in future publications in order to address the subjects that were precluded, in part, within this study on account of the need to ensure anonymity given the identifiable relations of structural inequalities between ethnographic sites.

What is more, as this research project constitutes the first sustained analysis of the emergence of a 'co-operative' school discourse of its kind, I recognise the limitations that the necessity of offering a wide ranging examination of experiences of 'co-operative' schooling has brought to bear upon equally important obligations to offer a more in depth analysis of individual experiences of 'co-operative' schooling. Therefore, there remains an imperative to build upon the foundational co-ordinates of co-operative discourse that have been mapped out within this research project by

way of undertaking a more thorough examination of the relation between particular perspectives of social inequality and the 'co-operative' model of schooling as a productive route for subsequent critical inquiry that questions the extent to which the co-operative model offers a more inclusive approach.

What do these stories tell us about ethical and political contexts of educational research?

As I have considered the ethical and political contours of education, in the air, in-between 'fields' and back onto the page, a collection of contradictory narratives emerged from my attempts to 'represent the unrepresentable' (MacLure, 2006). This produced a reconceptualization of 'voice' as provocation and an interruption of 'the business as usual' of contemporary 'schooling' and generalisable research 'output'. Moreover, this methodological approach offers a contribution to knowledge of the 'co-operative' school which can never be replicated through any other 'coding' apparatus. For, as I (re)viewed these diverse experiences and accounts in their complexity and interrelatedness, I became entangled and recruited into the projects of critical ethnography through the processes of narrating Other lives and agendas. Consequently, as I engaged with 'writing as a method of enquiry' (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005), I wrestled with a number of theoretical, methodological and practice-based dilemmas which directed my analytic lens towards the development of an ethical self, engaged in research struggling against the (im)possibilities of interpretation. My reflections of these struggles weave in and out of this thesis and stories, and offer further support to the argument that 'ethnographic life is not separable from the self' (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 965).

Given that there are an infinitesimal number of possible approaches to coming and going and 'getting' 'data' in 'the field' of 'co-operative' schooling, it is important to underline that this research project offers the reflections of only one such journey, which was also obscured in part by my efforts to ensure anonymity and create the foundations for further critical debate about this new and emerging sector of schools. Moreover, this thesis sought out examples which push the limits of 'knowing' and the limits of what 'co-operative' schooling can *do* beyond the co-ordinates of convention.

In explicitly orienting towards a post structural approach of 'getting to know' the 'co-operative' school, I have deliberately lingered in the contradictory spaces where the 'meaning' and 'voice/s' of the 'co-operative' school have struggled under the weight of contrary demands and desires. Moreover, in actively seeking out 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman & Pitt, 2003) I became ensnared in a number of ethical 'fixes' that exemplify the impossibility of ever being ethical *enough* and underline the need to remain sensitive to the unforeseen consequences of 'the ultimate ethical acts' (House, in Piper & Simons, 2011, p. 25). As a consequence of this, many other stories and experiences of 'co-operative' schooling remain in the shadows (but not forgotten), as a particular relation to one individual extended well beyond the boundaries of research relations when I returned to her school as a mentor, after the 'events' of research. Therefore, these research stories are performative in that they seek to 'show rather than tell' (Denzin, 2003, p. 203) the merits of developing long-term relations as the processes of research encounters develop in their full complexity and interrelatedness, offering a means to conceptualise what is irreducible to language: 'this "more" that we must reveal and describe' (Foucault, 1989a, p.54).

What do these stories tell us about the promise and perils of the 'co-operative' school?

Over the past few decades discourses of participation, consultation and co-operation have been presented as drivers of 'freedom' and 'choice' in a variety of legal, political, cultural and commercial arenas (Bragg, 2010). Indeed, from the days of Edward Bernays (1947), successive governments have increasingly adopted the use of public relations models and metaphors as a means to consult with children and families in public services decision-making processes, normalising the power of 'the individual' and the place of 'the market' in public space. Critics argue that, this has led to a conflation of consumer 'choice' with 'equality of opportunity' which relies on market-led reforms to drive up equality via the 'invisible hand', consequently positioning 'users' of public services as autonomous consumers rather than citizens. This thesis has considered whether the co-operative model of schooling might offer some form of resistance to this, in terms of engaging students and their families as a collective 'public' in education rather than individual 'consumers' of it. This research project

has illustrated that schools retain a very small measure of autonomy in interpreting the co-operative movement's values and principles according to a school's own particular context and need. Moreover, whilst this collective approach to 'schooling' might offer fresh promise for maintaining the contingency needed for democracy and equality to flourish as a potential vehicle for democratic renewal (Mouffe, 2005), this 'freedom' also comes at a price; whereby renewed claims of increased autonomy for co-operative members and their schools become complicit with the projects of neoliberalism through supporting the illusion of democratic relations which rest upon 'choice' and the entirely 'rational', autonomous chooser (Gill, 2007). This offers a reading of 'freedom' without equality, thus leaving a multitude of intersecting oppressive power relations and unequal conditions intact and according to Walkerdine and Lucey (1989, p.104) leads us to believe that power and conflict have 'simply gone away'.

As a result of critically considering the socio-political context in which these schools and their members are situated and through examining the various accounts of those who are positioned as *uncertain* members of this discourse, it becomes possible to sketch out how understandings of the co-operative school and its membership base were and are discursively produced. This anthology of 'stories' about the co-operative school reflects ambivalent aspirations, motivations and interpretations which produce a set of substantial tensions that disorientate incipient understandings of the 'co-operative' school as the movement's historical relation to 'ethical' enterprise and fundamental objective of 'everyone having a say' interpolates members as both consumers and democratic owners. This contradictory positioning creates a number of dilemmas for schools and their members in terms of interpreting the values and principles of the co-operative movement towards democratic means and ends whilst continuing to 'compete' in the education market place.

(For)"getting it": The co-op brand or democratic project?

The aforementioned stories and encounters with the texts of the co-operative school oscillate between conceiving the co-operative school as both an ethical 'brand' of

schooling and as a more radical democratic project. If we 'read' the recent emergence of a 'co-operative' school model as an 'intervention' in the educational market place, ostensibly offering a more ethical 'choice', then it becomes possible to conceptualise the co-operative model as a '*brand*' of schooling that *promotes* ethical values and principles, yet continues to maintain the traditional 'social order' of public education. However, if we 'read' the co-operative school as first and foremost an interruption of the social order of conventional public schools, interpreting the democratic aims of the co-operative movement becomes a proposition which thus engenders a conceptualisation of co-operative schooling as a more radical democratic *project* which opens up the possibility for realigning the purpose and practice of education towards a more socially just society.

The Co-operative, Good with…Schools?

> 'They buried my mum and I sometimes shop at them but I don't see why they should be running our schools' (Christine Blower, National Union of Teachers General Secretary, Education for Tomorrow, 2012)

The co-operative school positions itself as a more 'ethical' choice amid a complex array of 'pick and mix' governance options which have become available as a result of wide ranging educational policy reform in recent years. The historical co-operative values and principles of: self help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity have formed the bedrock of the movement's ideological focus since the days of the Rochdale Pioneers and easily align with contemporary ideas about the slippery subjects of a 'good society'[63] (Carnegie Trust UK, 2010). In keeping with this tradition, emerging co-operative 'school' discourse repeatedly mobilises these values as essential ingredients for developing a 'co-operative' school culture, which according to the co-operative college, can help to establish the foundations for creating 'a fairer society'. (See, Appendix 7, p.3).

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[63] See for example, *Making Good Society*, (Carnegie Trust UK, 2010, p.16) where a 'good society' is described as: 'commitment to social justice (fairness, equality of treatment, opportunities and outcomes); mutuality, and a belief in the interdependence of lives ('I thrive if you thrive') and the golden rule that can be found in all traditions (behave towards others as you would have them behave towards you); the related sense of solidarity that comes from people acting together; a strong commitment to freedom, particularly freedom from oppressive power in all its forms; and, in recent years, a growing engagement with the ecological values of harmony and balance with nature.

However I would contend that, in light of the nascent position of this sector of schools (not to mention the complexities that surround generating substantial 'evidence' to support this claim) this statement is perhaps premature at best, highly optimistic at worst and moreover makes a claim that is impossible to achieve or prove, given the slippery and contested nature of this subject. And whilst it might seem churlish to highlight aims that appear to invoke the central foundations of a 'fairer' or 'good' society as problematic, I would argue that it is the transcendental nature or inherent moral superiority of such claims that render the co-operative solution vulnerable to neoliberal appropriation, especially in terms of the extent to which these values and principles slide so easily into the rhetoric of the current Coalition Government's 'Big Society' agenda. Further, the extent to which support for this model of schooling transcends political party divides indicates the ease with which co-operative values and principles can be appropriated at will, thus alerting us to the risk that rather than instigating a radical change to the current conditions of 'schooling', the unquestioned emergence of a 'co-operative' *brand* might only add ethical credence to the eventual privatization of the state education sector and do little to actively challenge social inequalities. The observations of a number of Members of Parliament, who recently undertook an all-party debate on an amendment to Co-operative legislation raised by Meg Munn,[64] stand as a stark reminder that any political debate, which appears to garner unreserved all-party support, warrants caution and further critical scrutiny. Steve Baker's[65] comments below provide a case in point as he reveals the extent to which co-operative values and principles offer an uncommon source of 'fierce agreement in the chamber' as he commented:

> When I look down through the values - ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others" - *who could possibly disagree with them*? (My emphasis, House of Commons, Column 112WH, 2013)

> The Government ought just to *do the right thing*. Principles of co-operation entrench liberty and civil society. They produce self-esteem, confidence and resilience. They are evidently popular with the public. The Government should

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[64] Meg Munn is the current Labour/Co-op Member of Parliament for Sheffield Heeley at time of writing.

[65] Steve Baker is the current Conservative Member of Parliament for Wycombe at time of writing.

now move heaven and earth to liberate the co-operative spirit in education. (My, emphasis, House of Commons, Column 115WH, 2013)

Later in the 2013, the same Member of Parliament remarked that he considered co-operative organisations to be 'fiercely moral' and claimed that he did not see anything wrong with making a profit from providing a public service. Later in an interview for The Telegraph he commented:

> One of the questions we have to answer is how do you incentivise people to set up and run excellent schools for disadvantaged children? *If you can find a way to make sure that profits are justified and moral* then profit is a legitimate way to create that incentive…I'm greatly attracted to the idea of parents forming co-operatives and controlling free schools and budgets, why shouldn't parents form co-operatives to run schools, make a profit and then pay out some of that money in dividends and invest the rest in the school? (My emphasis, Kirkup, 2013)

In this instance, the 'co-operative' *brand* is appropriated and legitimated as a 'fiercely moral' neo liberal model of market oriented transformation (Peck, 2013) that could provide a convenient gateway for the eventual privatisation of the public health and education sectors. Moreover, regardless of whether other Members of Parliament are in agreement on this issue, Steve Baker's comments above underline the transcendental 'currency' of co-operative discourse in terms of the ease with which it slides under the mantle of 'liberty' and 'civil society' and veils a wide range of political motivations and aspirations that seek to 'reform' the public sector through the notion that: 'enterprise can succeed where the state has failed' (Ball, 2012b, p. 24).

So what do these stories tell us about the kidnap of 'voice/s' and 'values'?

Collisions between 'co-operation' and 'competition' are writ large across the narratives of 'co-operative schooling' presented within this thesis as schools and their members attempt to navigate a 'co-operative' ethos alongside the demands of the

knowledge economy and *the global education race,*[66] whereby the purpose of state education continues to be read in economic terms (Ball, 2008; Fielding, 2015, forthcoming). This dilemma is further complicated by questionable claims that co-operative schools can offer commercial credibility and democratic accountability both at the same time, thus causing significant *trouble* for creating the conditions within which, democratic subjectivites might be understood and performed. As a result, member's experiences and accounts often draw upon competing subject positionings as they endeavour to 'make sense' of the 'co-operative' model within their own school contexts and subjectivities. Indeed, constant slippage between discourses of the 'enterprising' and 'co-operative' subjects were exemplified in Hayley's narrative (Story 7). Her account oscillates between being 'efficient' and 'ethical' as her efforts to promote co-operative membership are viewed through the bifocal lenses of consumer culture and technologies of performance management; to which she remained accountable for achieving target levels of membership as a measurable 'output' of her role as 'co-operative co-ordinator'.

Further, the pervasive presence of consumer discourse often became apparent when school members and leaders endeavoured to explain the 'benefits' of co-operation in interviews and informal exchanges as part of this ethnographic study. A number of early convertors spoke of a need to develop their own approach to 'co-operative schooling' in terms of developing a brand identity, 'this is who we are', yet paradoxically were also at pains to point out that without a prescriptive roadmap to follow they were at a loss as to 'where to start'[67] interpreting a co-operative culture

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[66] This is the title of the current Minister for Education, Elizabeth Truss' speech addressed to the delegates of The Oxford University Conference in Education, 3rd January, 2014 whereby she set out the current Coalition government's aspirations for education policy in terms of: 'Our ambition must be to out-educate the rest of the world'.

[67] This uncertainty constitutes a significant challenge for developing a 'co-operative' culture within schools and is something that the co-operative college is beginning to recognise and attempt to address despite substantial financial hurdles. Over the last five years The Co-operative College has developed a variety of training and curriculum resources which are aimed to support schools in developing a co-operative approach to governance, curriculum and pedagogy with limited funding provided by the Co-operative Group (see appendix 14 for a full description). The lack of central funding also limits the extent to which schools are able to engage with these resources which either attract a fee and/or require schools to make allowances for staff to attend meetings and events during the school day. This matter was highlighted as a problem by a number of participants in this project and The Co-operative College has endeavoured to address elements of this challenge and re-working the format of some training resources by offering webinars and on-line access. However, it remains the case that many school members reported in the course of informal conversations that they tend not to fully engage with these resources due to financial constraints.

alongside the demands of performativity, of which maintaining public relations has become integral to sustaining a position within the educational market place (see for example, Clarke et al., in Ball, 2008). Therefore it is no surprise that early attempts to interpret the values and principles of co-operation are often framed within the more familiar discursive repertoire of 'the market' (*cf.* du Gay, 1996) in the form of an ethical marketing strategy or USP (unique selling point) rather than developing an understanding of the values and principles as *the* starting point for reimagining co-operative schooling as a more radical democratic project.

So what do these stories tell us about the circulation of power?

Bottom up aspirations: Top down demands

There appears to be no easy resolution to this dilemma as the overriding ethos of the co-operative movement seeks to resist authoritarian power relations and insists that co-operatives are 'free' to manage their respective projects and organisations *themselves,* 'from the bottom up'. Yet, in maintaining that schools have complete autonomy in interpreting the values and principles of 'co-operation', one has to anticipate that not all schools will interpret the ideological focus of the movement in the same manner, and moreover, remain constrained by dominant discursive regimes - leaving them anything but 'free' to interpret the model as they see fit. As decades of NPM (New Public Management) policies take effect[68] (See for example Olssen et al., 2004; Ball, 2008), one could argue that, in the case of Blackbrook school at least, the demands of neo-liberal performativity far outweigh any school's capacity to manage collective interests from 'the bottom up' as aspirations towards social justice are overwhelmed by 'survivalism' or market induced 'self-interest' (Ball, 2008).

In asserting that the worldwide co-operative movement do not retain any right (legal or otherwise) to dictate or intervene in the 'running' of different schools, the movement's primary focus of engendering the conditions for a more equal society are

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[68] NPM can be broadly conceived as a collection of government policies which have been introduced since the 1980s with the aim of making the public sector more 'efficient'. For an early description see Hood (1991). In Ferlie et al (1996) *New Public Management in Action*, NPM is described as the introduction into public services of the 'three Ms': Markets, managers and measurement.

reduced to a more ambiguous, strategic role which aims to establish relations of solidarity and collegiality between schools and other co-operative organisations which share the same values. This thesis has demonstrated that establishing democratic accountability remains at the mercy of *trust* in co-operative governance structures to hold leaders to account yet, paradoxically, full responsibility for the 'success' or 'failure' of the school lies firmly at the feet of school leaders and Governing Bodies who are positioned as responsible subjects within the technologies of high stakes accountability regimes which shape the presiding 'standards agenda'. Therefore, although a measure of solidarity and protection from competition can be garnered through working together with other co-operative schools, *different* stakeholders are attributed with *different* levels of accountability for the 'running' of the school and therefore co-operative governance structures led by values of democracy, equality and equity could be said to offer little protection for those individual members regulated by the high stakes demands of competition; in the words of Blackbrook's head teacher, ultimately if school leaders or Governing Bodies 'fail' to navigate the demands of competition:

'…there'd be no school to go to would there?...You know?' (Story16, para 8)

Solidarity – we're all in this together?

In the absence of the co-op 'running' schools, one must ask the question: who leads the co-operative school? And importantly here, who remains accountable and responsible for the school's successes and failures? How are equality and responsibility for others regulated and managed? As I have begun to unpick whose interests are served in the co-operative school, it becomes apparent that a range of competing interests, desires and regulatory practices are at play within this educational milieu.

In point of fact, co-operative values were considered by the head teacher at Blackbrook as enabling a democratic ethos 'as far as it goes', but as he was quick to remind '…the buck stops here' (Story 8, para 6). The stories from different members of staff at Blackbrook High offer numerous examples of a co-operative school which

is struggling to navigate a democratic approach to 'co-operative' schooling alongside the demands of the 'business as usual' model. For example, as Tom observed, 'the co-op stuff' was conceived as an extracurricular activity (Story 8, para 13). Efforts to embrace the co-operative model are also undermined by the limited extent to which Other members are able to challenge or transform traditional power relations. As the stories (re)presented within this thesis illustrate, a sustainable reformation of power relations requires much more than inserting a stakeholder forum to the governance framework before the co-operative ideal of 'bottom up' relations of power can ever be realised as a viable site of political action which can attempt to destabilise normative hierarchies and engender an 'all school' inclusive, co-operative approach. The most striking examples of this run throughout the threads of the stories that emerge in part three as the students' attempts to reform the school's mobile phone policy turn out to be something of a (non) event. There is a fundamental tension which is highlighted within these accounts that troubles the taken for granted assumption that solidarity necessarily leads to protection via strength in numbers. Moreover, as differences *within* and *between* categories of stakeholder groups collide and contradict Other's rights, needs and desires, there appears to be a pressing need to develop the space, the means and in some cases the will (Jo, Story 14, para, 34) to challenge and 'work out' how the 'voice/s' of different stakeholder groups gain legitimacy and recognisable rights to respond to decisions that affect their daily lives within the school. Especially in the case of students who constitute the largest proportion of school stakeholder groups, yet appear to have little 'voice'. Therefore, there remains much work to do in this respect, if the co-operative stakeholder model is to address this significant challenge in order to avoid disparate voices feeling as if they are simply 'pissing up against the wall'. (Story 15, para 4)

This is especially pertinent to generating an understanding of the future challenges that lie ahead for developing a culture of co-operation within these schools, given the high stakes involved for members of staff positioned as responsibilised subjects of contemporary educational discourse. Furthermore, unless some measure of protection of staff's interests also becomes woven into the fabric of the co-operative governance framework, staff could remain: 'the hardest nut to crack' (Story 7, para 17) and highly skeptical of the 'promise' that 'everyone has a voice' under the co-

operative model. Therefore, the risk that staff might revert to 'business as usual' schooling, merely 'consulting' with students as consumers (with rights) continues to pose a significant challenge for understanding the potential of this model as a radical democratic project, rather than a more 'ethical' brand.

In addition to this, when one takes into account the unequal dispersal of responsiblity across a variety of stakeholder groups, engendering 'equal' voice becomes an almost impossible task as power circulates in an unequal manner through the variable stakes, interests and subjectivities of each particular group[69]. Therefore, if we are to assert that a co-operative school is a democratic *brand* of public education where all stakeholders are 'consulted' and 'have a say' through democratic governance frameworks, this pushes power and conflict out of sight. Moreover, this becomes ever more patent in view of the fact that schools have a vested interest in maintaining a favourable reputation as 'providers' within public 'markets' of education thus establishing an even stronger incentive to create the illusion of harmony and push political struggle underground.

> We consulted with them and erm... well to me it's only good leadership, good management isn't it when we talk about erm [pause] things? (Alex, Story 16, para 15)

Therefore, the extent to which historically disenfranchised members are able to fully engage and participate as *reason*able citizens of the school community (not simply, ethical consumers), remains uncertain and is also dependent upon their constitution within the wider socio-political discursive framework. Therefore, the will and commitment of *all* members, especially those afforded a historical position of power and control within the school, are essential tenets for sustaining the equality of interaction necessary for enabling members to experience authentic democratic subjectivity.

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[69] This continues to be an intractable dilemma that Feminist projects wrestle with too. See, for example Jo Freeman's (2013) paper on The Tyranny of Structurelessness which explores power relations within radical feminist collectives during the 1960's and 70's.

To sum up, the co-operative governance structures offer a degree of flexibility in terms of constructing a more socially just approach to public education that is contingent upon particular contexts, needs and desires as schools retain autonomy for interpreting the model as they see fit. This benefit also constitutes a significant risk for more marginalized members in that the absence of formal frameworks and explicit 'rules' and responsibilities create the illusion of dismantling existing hierarchies and discursive positionings amid claims that all members are enabled parity of 'voice'. Not only does this create a reputational risk for the co-operative model in that schools may merely exploit the co-operative ethos in terms of market induced self-interest (Ball, 2008) and ethical credence, but also more importantly, traditionally disenfranchised members do not appear to have the means to significantly challenge historical asymmetries of power or appear to inhabit a space in which they are able to negotiate disagreement *in a different voice* (Gilligan, 1982).

What about the co-operative school to come…?

Although Foucault concedes that it is only very occasionally that resistance takes the form of 'great radical ruptures, [or] massive binary divisions' (1990a, p. 96) I doubt that the co-operative model can offer such rupture. Yet as I pulled at the threads of Foucault's notion: 'where there is power there is resistance', and traced a multiplicity of points of resistance which 'play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations' (1990a, p.95) that circulated within this anthology of co-operative schooling, I found a tiny chink of something that resembled a political act and masqueraded as 'student voice'. Therefore, I began to wonder that perhaps all hope was not lost after all…

As I reconsidered the range of 'stories' and disparate 'voice/s' that were (re)presented in this thesis and following Britzman and Pitt's (2003) understanding of research provoking rather than presenting 'knowledge', I draw this research journey to a close with some thoughts about how a different narrative of 'the school' and 'voice' might emerge if we consider the *brand* of co-operative schooling in a different light and as an instance of a momentary rupture of the social order of the conventional power

relations of schooling which offers a glimpse of a promise of 'equality' of 'voice/s' to come?

What if we had more 'uproar'?

The 'uproar' that ensued in Blackbrook's assembly hall when 'the head wanted to find out what people didn't like about the school to see if he could change it … (Grace Story 13, para 37) illustrates the extent to which students were constituted as 'consumers-with rights' and not as full members of the stakeholder body. Furthermore, the more 'organic' instigation of a subject for school policy reform rather than 'robotic' response of the seniors who are 'consulted' (Story 14) highlights how desires for change are variously deemed (un)recognisable objects of co-operative stakeholder discourse. In this case at least, the extent to which students were positioned as subjects (un)able to resist 'the business as usual' of student consultation highlights an urgent need to reconceptualise the organisation of stakeholder forums so that the co-operative model can begin to create a space within which historically disenfranchised members are able to set their own agendas and act, rather than *re*act to less risky proposals engineered by adults or senior staff members. Miles' proposal for the reconstitution of the student forum (Story 15, para 7) goes some way toward addressing key tensions that arose in the stories of Blackbrook's (non)event. In particular, in terms of creating the conditions for a measure of advocacy work to take place via vertical form groups and citizenship lessons which enable a critical pedagogical focus to help develop a sense of political subjectivities in dialogic encounters with each other and the form tutor. This further underscores the need to develop channels for much needed advocacy work which might enable members who are further marginalised by discourses of uncertain 'rationality' or competence to participate and engage as equal members, in addition to highlighting the uncertain conditions and positioning of child/ren and childhood/s.

Given the particularly ambiguous position of students within the co-operative framework I would argue that there also needs to be a more formal arrangement between the co-operative college and schools which insists that schools create the

conditions for *all* students to participate within stakeholder governance activities and includes developing the means to engage in significant dialogue with the governing body as a fundamental objective. What is more, whilst it is important to acknowledge that stories about the (re)constitution of the student forum at Blackbrook are not presented here as a wholly representative account of other co-operative schools, and indeed there are examples of other co-operative schools that are actively engaged in trying to address some of the tensions highlighted here (See, Gardner et al., 2013, pp. 38-45 for a range of examples), it is important to recognise that examples of 'good practice' continue to situate the merits of student stakeholder voice from the intersections of the 'standards agenda' that points towards the merits of 'voice' in terms of raising attainment or enabling 'development', which all work to further entrench taken for granted assumptions about what is deemed of value in school and also what children and young people can/not do. If the co-operative movement is serious about social justice, in order to avoid becoming a more 'ethical' brand of 'schooling', then 'voice' forums need to transform this space from one of consensus to that of a space which can manage disagreement (Rancière, 1999). In order for the co-operative school to be conceived of as a site of political action where conflicts and power relations can become much more visible and a subject that is debated and 'worked out' as a contingent process of agonistic debate (*cf.* Biesta, 2011; Mouffe, 2005), a first step towards this would be to openly acknowledge the difficulties in 'everyone having a say'. Moreover, I would suggest that a more productive route would foreground an agenda which asks a set of different questions such as: 'who is not included in this conversation?', 'How can we create the conditions for more people to participate?' and 'What gets in the way of everyone having 'a voice' in our co-operative school?

What if co-operative schools can create the conditions for a politics of equals to emerge?

The co-operative School as a site of deconstruction:

> The paradox in the instituting moment of an institution is that, at the same time that it starts something new, it also continues something, it is true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from the culture…That is what deconstruction is made of: not a mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of

something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break.
(Derrida & Caputo, in Mazzei, 2007, p.71)

Does the 'co-operative' school provide something absolutely new and a break? As an 'ethical brand' this is perhaps unlikely, but if the co-operative model of schooling aspires to situate itself as a contingent democratic project then perhaps it could begin to move in the right direction. If therefore, we begin to engage with the co-operative model as a possible site of deconstruction that brings into view some of the greatest challenges for educational projects aspiring to bring about greater social justice a transformation from brand to project just might begin to emerge. That is to say, by critically exploring the recent emergence of this model of schooling from within the public sector it becomes possible to conceive and tease apart the possibilities for transformation towards a more socially just model of education by examining the memories of an (un)even educational heritage alongside the promise of 'something new- a break' which offers an 'equality' of voice/s 'to come'. Especially since, schools inheriting a co-operative culture whilst being mandated to perform a neo-liberal practice are positioned within this contrary position. The stories that have unfolded as part of my ethnographic engagement map out how such ambiguities, (in)consistencies and collisions of ideology, pedagogy and history work together to transform what is possible and underscore the challenges that arise as co-operative ideology meets neoliberalism head on. Foucault developed his own approach to unveiling the paradoxes that Derrida highlights above in his genealogies. I would argue therefore that there is much fruitful insight to be gained by attempting a similar task in terms of documenting and critically engaging with the stories, dilemmas and institutional memories of the co-operative school as understandings of its fundamental purpose develop through time. Moreover, at present (with few exceptions)[70] the vast majority of co-operative schools have converted from pre-existing organisational structures and so contain a multitude of historical relations and educational structures and cultures which are 'assimilated' into the conversion to

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[70] At the time of writing, just one Co-operative Free School opened in Swanage Dorset, September 2013 and the Robert Owen Vocational School in Herefordshire, which is a new co-operative academy for 14-19 year olds, is due to open in September 2014 appear to be the only 'brand new' co-operative schools.

co-operative model. It is also important to recognise the potential of these 'old' relations and structures when considering motivations and aspirations to embed a (new/old) co-operative culture into pre-existing schools, and looking forwards, it will be interesting to examine whether these 'brand new' co-operative schools differ in significant ways to those schools who have perhaps converted to co-operative status as a 'least worst' option.

At present the co-operative school movement is attempting to build a legacy that is scaffolded upon a heritage that has prized education as a constitutive value but that, until this point, has not entered the 'mainstream' state educational sector. Maintaining a position that straddles the public sector and reflects a historical stance as a social movement could be argued as presenting an almost impossible task. One which might result in becoming more like a business in order to sustain a 'viable' position, or conversely by becoming such a powerful social movement that it could be squeezed out of public sector space on account of fears of its revolutionary potential. Therefore, how historical values and principles are put into practice and remembered and how what is desired weaves back and forth between conventional passage of time and works to re/create memories of what co-op schooling was, is and can be, are vital to its future success or failure. The legacy that co-operative schooling leaves in its wake will also be undeniably shaped by competing discourses about what 21st century education *is* and *has been*, what it seeks to be and the constraints and paradoxes that are brought about by performing co-operation in neo-liberal times. And it is towards the creation of a co-operative memory, a trace, and its capacity to make a mark upon the current educational landscape that constitute a unique strength of the co-operative model and a possibility of social justice 'to come'.

Can public educational institutions be ethical and efficient?

Stephen Ball (2003) reminds us that the performative effects of the neo-liberal educational agenda are not exclusively embodied by students but reach into the very depths of teacher's 'souls' (See also Ball et al., 2012). His long-term engagement within the field of educational research underlines the discursive demands of

neoliberal reform within his central argument that education policy: 'does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, *it changes who they are*' (Ball, 2003, p.215, my emphasis). For the last two centuries, state schooling has been predicated on the assumption that knowledge and cultural values can be objectively 'transmitted' to chronologically ordered and categorised batches of children in order to 'produce' a particular kind of individual and society (*cf.* Hendrick, 1997; Mc Cafferty, 2010; Perry & Francis, 2010). The current Prime Minister's calls for an 'aspiration nation'[71] underline the continued responsibilisation of schools, students and families as they remain politically and culturally defined as carriers and consumers of the future moral and economic health of the nation despite the emergence of a co-operative alternative. As this exploration of an emerging co-operative sector of schools demonstrates, the path towards co-operatives engendering greater social justice in the public education sector continues to be caught between identification as a brand and a political project, fraught with risk and dangers of a neo-liberal appropriation of freedom within education (Facer et al., 2012). As a result, it remains unclear as to whether co-operative schools can offer the wider material, social and symbolic resources needed to resist the dominance of competition within the contemporary educational arena, in addition to overcoming a history of social inequality and exclusion. In order to create and sustain the conditions needed for democratic action and participation, this growing sector of schools faces the significant challenge of renegotiating the conditions of democratic subjectivity whilst being subject to the demands of neoliberal readings of 'freedom' without equality. Its greatest asset may be that it has the potential to bring to the fore its own fundamental paradox, *can public educational institutions be ethical and efficient?*

Quiescent Conclusions…

Despite this challenge, the co-operative model offers the promise of a large-scale transformative change. Collaboration with a worldwide movement that engages with over one billion members could establish a powerful alliance, able to unite a critical

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[71] This refers to David Cameron's address at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, 2012.

mass of diverse voices towards a shared educational goal of democracy. Furthermore, capitalising upon co-operative approaches to education that continue to attract cross-party support via reforms that *claim* to offer greater freedom and autonomy enhances the scope of this educational model. Given the ubiquitous nature of recent policy reform that positions students and families as active consumers of education, it appears that increasing numbers of schools and families are ultimately faced with a 'Hobson's choice', as the coalition's default position on improving standards and addressing social inequality moves in the direction of 'academisation' at all costs (RSA, 2012), Warwick Mansell questions whether co-operative schools offer an antidote to academisation (Mansell, 2011), Webster et al., (2011) proclaim co-operativism *the hidden alternative*, and for Mervyn Wilson (Co-operative College Chief Executive) it's a quiet revolution. In truth, we just don't know how powerful this model of schooling might become - who it will appeal to, personally, politically, socially- or who will remain ambivalent or even actively contest the presence of a co-operative approach to school governance within the state sector. Some might argue that it's too radical, others will maintain it's not radical enough. Despite the quiet optimism of the co-operative movement's greatest enthusiasts, it is impossible to foresee where this new model of schooling might lead, if will disappear into the shadows of an epidemic of educational 'reforms' (Ball, 2008) or whether the Co-operative Bank's crisis ridden year of 2013 will mark the beginning of a irrevocable descent of the co-operative movement as a whole. Therefore, in view of the relative infancy of this growing sector of schools and the impending democratic deficit of school's *choice* of governance arrangements, the need to interrogate and understand whether an alternative, co-operative model of education can reconstruct the conditions for school members to act and remediate what it means to be a democratic subject within the current policy landscape of 'public' education becomes ever more pressing.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethnographic Activities

Research engagement with an emerging co-operative school discourse

National & International Conferences
The fourth annual Schools Co-operative Society conference: *Co-operative schools – where values matter*, Manchester (November, 2011)
Mainstreaming Co-operation Conference Manchester (July, 2012)
Co-operative Education Against the Crises, Manchester (July, 2013)

Institute Of Education, London Co-operative Education Seminar Series
Putting the community back into community schools? Learners, teachers, parents and community in co-operative schools. (March, 2012)
Co-operative schools: trade union perspectives. (November, 2012)
Time for a co-operative university? (December, 2013)

Attended 2 Business and Enterprise Cluster Meetings (2012-13)

Exhibition & Discussion: The People's Business – 150 Years of the Co-operative at the People's History Museum in Manchester. (January, 2014)
Training event for co-operative educators at the People's History Museum, Manchester. (January, 2014)

Co-op Identity Mark Pilot staff training 2 day workshop (April, 2012)

2 days spent examining the Archive at The Co-operative College, Manchester

National news, web searches and social media updates were monitored on a bi-weekly basis in order to maintain a sense of evolving educational policy debates and changes to state school practice.

Schools

Ethnographic fieldwork (average 3 days per week during term time) was undertaken at 3 co-operative Secondary Schools located in the North West of England during the academic year 2012/13.

Attended
11 Assemblies
2 Trust Board meetings
1 Public Open day visit
Non co-operative school Governors meeting discussing whether or not to adopt Academy status (Sept, 2011)
Off curricula day x 3 schools
Deep learning Day
Community Harvest Tea
Humanutopia anti-bullying workshops x 3
School Toy making Enterprise Workshop Event
Lion Heart Enterprise Challenge: "Our business is: making young business people"

Appendix 1: Ethnographic Activities

Bi-weekly meetings & email exchanges with co-operative co-ordinators & school improvement leaders across all schools.

23 Lesson/tutorial observations at different schools including;
Citizenship
R.E
P.H.S.E
Study Skills

2 Days spent on Reception Desk
2 days spent in Pastoral Referral Unit

Informal unrecorded interviews & conversations (notes taken afterwards) with
Parents
Head teachers
Teaching staff
Non-teaching staff
Governors
Students

Recorded interviews & 'walk and talks'
(including) 4 Focus group discussions with students
Completed 6 Field-work notebooks

Initially I transcribed Interview material using a traditional orthographic approach, noting down exactly what was said by whom verbatim and including significant pauses, hesitations, repetitions or false starts and non-verbal communication such as laughter. A total of 22 hours of recorded speech was transcribed over the course of 132 hours writing time. This was undertaken as soon as possible after visits between ethnographic sites.

ETHICS CHECK FORM

This checklist must be completed for every project. It is used to identify whether there are any ethical issues associated with your project and if a full application for ethics approval is required. If a full application is required, you will need to complete the 'Application for Ethical Approval' form and submit it to the relevant Faculty Academic Ethics Committee, or, if your research falls within the NHS, you will need to obtain the required application form from the National Research Ethics Service available at www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/ and submit it to a local NHS REC.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University's Academic Ethical Framework (www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/ethics/mmuframework) **and the University's Guidelines on Good Research Practice** (www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/rdegrees/goodpractice.doc)**.**

Project and Applicant Details

Name of applicant (Principal Investigator):	Gail Davidge
Telephone Number:	01625262718/07917624528
Email address:	gailsmith26@googlemail.com
Status: (please circle as appropriate)	Postgraduate Student (Research)
Department/School/Other Unit:	Institute of Education
Programme of study (if applicable):	PhD
Name of supervisor (if applicable):	Erica Burman & John Schostak
Project Title:	(Re)considering the place of democracy in education : an ethnographic study
Does the project require NHS Trust approval? If yes, has approval been granted by the Trust? Attach copy of letter of approval.	NO

Ethics Checklist (Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box)

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS, or involve NHS resources? If yes, you may need full ethical approval from the NHS.		X	
2. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)?	x		
3. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, nursing home residents)?	X		
4. Will the study involve the use of participants' images or sensitive data (e.g. participants personal details stored electronically, image capture techniques)?	X		
5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		X	
6. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		X	
7. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?		X	
8. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		X	
9. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?		X	
10. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		X	
	Yes	No	N/A

Ethics Matters

11. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and informed consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?		x	
12. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x	
13. Is there any possible risk to the researcher (e.g. working alone with participants, interviewing in secluded or dangerous)?		x	
14. Has appropriate assessment of risk been undertaken in relation to this project?		x	
15. Does any relationship exist between the researcher(s) and the participant(s), other than that required by the activities associated with the project (e.g., fellow students, staff, etc)?		x	
16. Faculty specific question, e.g., will the study sample group exceed the minimum effective size?		x	

If you have ticked 'no' or 'n/a' to all questions, attach the completed and signed form to your project approval form, or equivalent. Undergraduate and taught higher degree students should retain a copy of the form and submit it with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the end). MPhil/PhD, and other higher degree by research, students should submit a copy to the Faculty Research Degrees Sub-Committee with their application for registration (RD1) and forward a copy to their Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. Members of staff should send a copy to their Faculty Academic Ethics Committee before commencement of the project.

If you have ticked 'yes' to *any* of the questions, please describe the ethical issues raised on a separate page. You will need to submit your plans for addressing the ethical issues raised by your proposal using the 'Application for Ethical Approval' form which should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. This can be obtained from the University website (http://www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/ethics/index.php).

If you answered 'yes' to question 1, you may also need to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, via the National Research Ethics Service (NRES), found at http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/, and send a copy to the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for their records.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Guidelines on Good Research Practice and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.** Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the relevant committee (either Faculty Academic Ethics Committee of Local Research Ethics Committee if an NHS-related project) and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Approval for the above named proposal is granted

I confirm that there are no ethical issues requiring further consideration. *(Any subsequent changes to the nature of the project will require a review of the ethical consideration(s).)*   Signature of Supervisor (for students), or Manager (for staff): _____   Date: _____

Approval for the above named proposal is not granted

I confirm that there are ethical issues requiring further consideration and will refer the project proposal to the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee.   Signature of Supervisor (for students), or Manager (for staff): _____   Date: _____

Separate page for ethical issues:-

Ethics Matters

Ethics: Additional Information

(Re) considering the place of democracy in education: an ethnographic study

Description of Project: This Project aims to explore young people's experiences of democratic citizenship. In particular, the project aims to identify opportunities for student voice and to develop further understandings of how young people are able to practice democracy within their daily school activities. An ethnographic study of a range of educational institutions in the North West of England will inform this research. Data will be collected through 'participant observation', interviews and focus group discussion with young people aged between 11 and 16 and adult stakeholders of schools who agree to participate in the study. Although it is anticipated that interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature, a comprehensive interview question schedule will be submitted to the MMU Ethics Board for approval prior to undertaking any conversations with school members. It is anticipated that field work will be undertaken during a 12 month period between 2012/13 and will commence upon securing sites for fieldwork and receipt of enhanced Criminal Disclosure and full ethical approval from the Faculty ethics committee.

As soon as potential fieldwork sites have been identified, the researcher will submit a completed ethical request that clearly sets out;

- The number and age ranges of prospective project participants 11-19
- The type of activities that participants will be requested to take part in Focus group discussion & interview
- Details of how informed consent will be obtained. See attached information sheets and letters of consent

The nature and process of the entire research study will be explained to all parties concerned in order to ensure that participants and gatekeepers are fully aware of the consequences of participation. Please see appendix 1 which sets out a template for prospective letters of informed consent and information sheets that will be addressed to school head teachers, guardians and students.

Any personally identifiable data collected in the course of this study will be stored and utilised according to the requirements set out in the (1998) data Protection Act. Participants will be advised of the rationale behind collating data in addition to being given detailed information regarding how and where data will be stored and used.

Ethics Matters

Appendix 4: Summary of school models

Summary of school models following The Academies Act, 2010.

Academies

At present, Academies take the form of independent state funded schools which operate outside of local authority control and receive funding directly from central government for every pupil on the register. They currently also receive extra funding to cover the cost of services that used to be provided by the local authority[1] in addition to a £25,000 start up grant (Department for Education , 2014). They are allowed extensive 'freedom' from local authority control which also includes: the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff, choice in budget allocation and spending, choice in the type of curriculum offered (as long as it is broad and balanced), in addition to being able to change the length of school term and opening hours (Department for Education, 2012). Notwithstanding the profusion of critique and controversy that this model of schooling has generated, both within the realms of academia and wider educational and social policy debate, the number of academies open in England to date has risen significantly to the extent that over half of English secondary schools (53%) and more than 1,700 primaries had adopted Academy status by February 2014 (Department for Education, 2014).

Free Schools

Free Schools adhere to the same legal requirements as academies and can be set up by groups of parents, teachers, charities, trusts, religious and voluntary groups in areas where a case can be made for the provision of additional school places. They are funded in the same way as academies, directly from central government. Free schools have the same 'freedoms' as academies with the additional capacity to employ teachers who do not have Qualified Teacher Status. Despite an influx of applications, the number of approved Free Schools stands at just 174, although it is expected that approximately 125 more are due to open from September 2014 onwards. Once full these schools will provide 150,000 new school places (Department for Education, 2013).

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[1] See https://www.gov.uk/academy-funding-information-for-school-leaders for extensive details with regard to how this figure is calculated.

<u>Trust Schools</u>

These are state-funded foundation schools which receive extra support (usually non-monetary) from a charitable trust made up of partners working together for the benefit of the school. Under the previous Labour government, schools that joined the Trust Schools Programme received up to £10000 towards costs. (DCSF, 2009) In particular, the Trust model offers the broadest scope within which to develop a model of schooling aligned towards embedding the co-operative ethos within its organizational structure. Trust schools usually own their own facilities and land and work in partnership with the local authority and trust sponsor which: 'safeguard the ethos of the school, its land and its assets' (Wilson, 2013).

Appendix 5: How are co-operative school structures understood as legal institutions?

Which legal structure?

An organisation's legal structure is made up from both the legal form and its governing document. The legal form sets out how the organisation is seen in the eyes of the Law. In deciding which legal form to take, the group needs to ascertain whether the organisation should become a corporate body, (i.e. incorporate) or remain unincorporated. The type of organisational structure adopted defines the type of business or activity undertaken, ethos and sector which it will operate within, such as consumer, education, housing etc. Examples of co-operative organisational structures might include, but are not restricted to: worker co-operative; consumer co-operative; co-operative consortium; agricultural co-operative; credit union; housing co-operative; community co-operative, food co-operative; employee owned business; development trust; mutual; partnership; social enterprise; charity or co-operative trust school. Finally, the configuration of ownership and membership needs to be considered in terms of whether an organisation will adopt; common ownership, asset lock, beneficial ownership, co-ownership/joint ownership or charitable status[1]. In the case of the school, this might have important implications in terms of legal ownership of land and other assets, particularly in light of the diminishing role of Local Authorities, the fears expressed by a number of teaching unions regarding the threat of 'predatory academy chains'[2] and the fact that now the Secretary of State is able, under the Academies Act (2010), to make a scheme to transfer the land to the academy trust freehold or leasehold if necessary (Gillie, 2012).

Developing a Governing Document

This document details the purpose of the organisation and its relationship to its members and the outside world and should include a statement that sets out how the organisation plans to work and govern itself in addition to stating how membership will be defined. Members are those who own and control the organisation and can attend meetings and vote at a general meeting of the

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[1] See, Simply Legal, Co-operatives UK (2009) which sets out extensive details of differing legal structures that may be pursued.

[2] For example see, http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/Whatsnew/NASUWTNews/PressReleases/CallToResistPredatoryChains

Appendix 5: How are co-operative school structures understood as legal institutions?

organisation. The governing document sets out the criteria for defining who can be a member and also details how they may join the organisation. According to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) principles, membership must be 'voluntary and open', outlined further by the ICA as:

> Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination[3].

The governance document may also define different levels of membership, which is common in multi-stakeholder organisations such as schools or community supported enterprises. However, balancing the interests and levels of power of different classes of members lies in direct opposition to the co-operative principle of democratic control, usually defined as 'one member one vote'. On occasion, this tension is navigated by weighting the interests and powers of different constituent members in relation to the importance of their role within the organization. Finally, the governance document should also set out how the governing body (or committee; partnership; board of trustees; board of directors or management committee) will be configured in terms of stipulating the number and type of meetings to be held, in addition to stating how decisions making activities will be organised. However, if members of the governing body of a co-operative choose to remain unincorporated (and thus unrecognised as a separate unit from its members in the eyes of UK Law), members will be subject to unlimited, personal liability, which is usually joint and several[4]. This carries with it a liability for unpaid debts and other risks, which are not divided equally amongst members. This has important ramifications for thinking about the dispersal of power and the responsibility of a co-operative toward its members. For example, if all co-operative school members became liable for any financial risks that schools undertook, in addition to being legal owners of all of its assets, how might this impact upon the day-to-day activities and wider purpose of the

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[3] See, http://ica.coop/en/what-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles

[4] Unincorporated body: As the group does not exist as a separate unit (it is seen simply as a group of people), the relationships between these people are joint and several, in that they are seen as being jointly responsible for the body and its activities, but can also be held responsible individually. (See, Co-operatives UK, 2009)

Appendix 5: How are co-operative school structures understood as legal institutions?

this, the co-operative sector is constantly evolving and embracing new ways of re-thinking and applying the principles of co-operation to both public and private sector groups, particularly in response to the recent economic downturn and ensuing austerity measures.

Appendix 6: Blackbrook High Governance Structure

TRUST BOARD ORGANISATION BLACKBROOK HIGH SCHOOL

TRUST BOARD

TRUST PARTNER
Co-operative College

TRUST PARTNER
Local Sport & Leisure

TRUST PARTNER
Black City University

STAKEHOLDER FORUM

STAFF VOICE

STUDENT VOICE

PARENT VOICE

COMMUNITY VOICE

the
co·operative
college
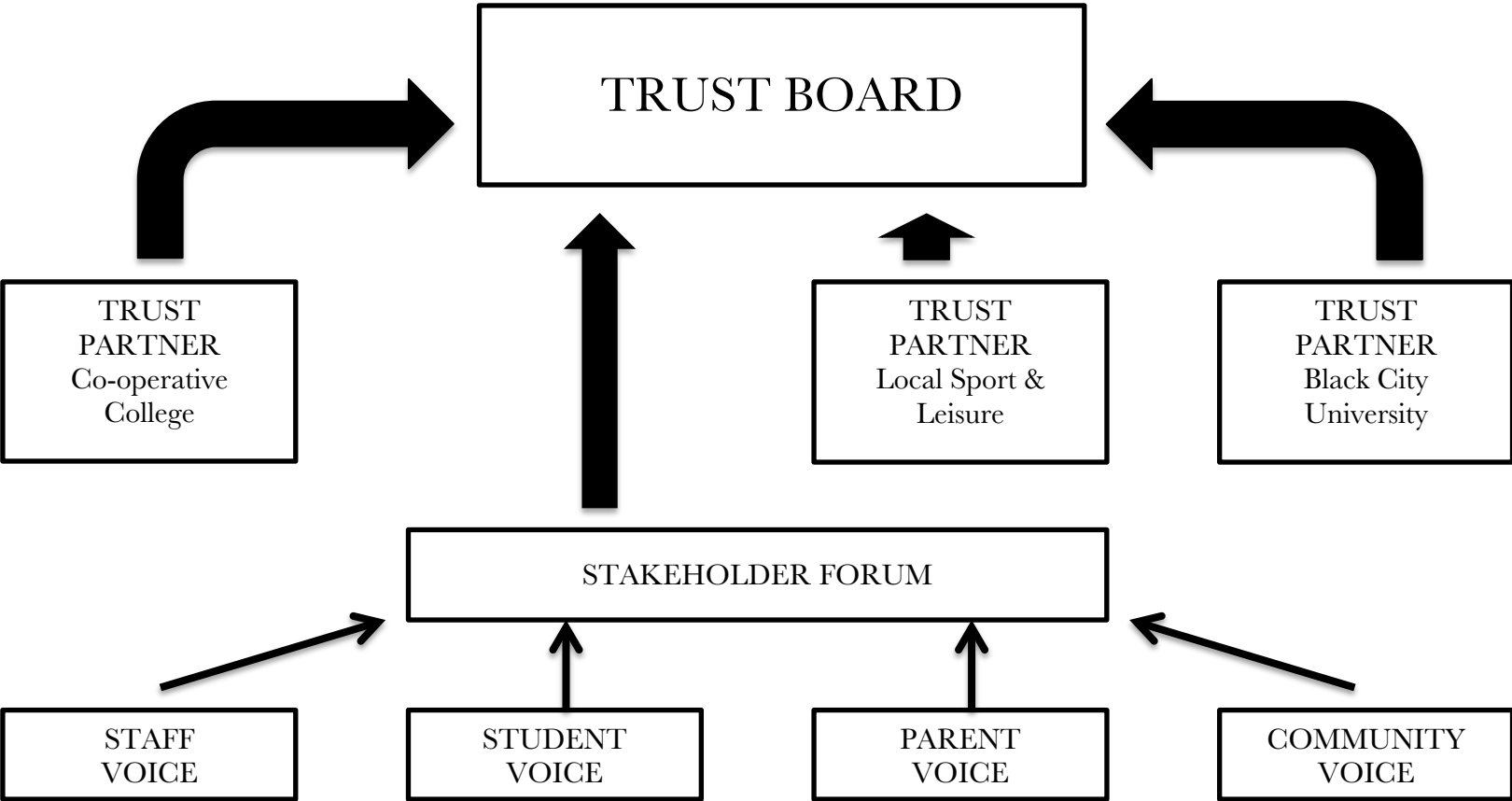
Co-operative Schools:
Stronger together

All over England schools are using co-operative values to unlock relationships with parents, staff and students and are achieving real change through mutual support.

The co-operative approach is a real alternative to the top down one size fits all society which has dominated in recent years. It develops social responsibility, balancing the needs of consumers with those of providers, giving stakeholders a real say.

This new bottom up approach is already resulting in sustained improvements, through a real sense of ownership by staff, students, and other stakeholders.

Much of this experience is shared with other countries, from Sweden to Malaysia and from Spain to North America, where co-operation is playing a central role in reforming public services, building communities and dealing with social problems.

Schools driving their own improvement

Heads, teachers, parents and governors have always known it – schools are best placed to improve themselves.

A new emphasis on co-operation is encouraging teachers to develop what they have always thought was so important - working with colleagues, strengthening engagement with students and students supporting each other through self-help to build success.

This movement is really starting to take hold, and building a distinct values driven co-operative grouping within the school system.

Co-operation within and between schools is sweeping across England, with more schools joining every month.

Co-operative schools are starting to release the huge pent up potential for schools to take more responsibility to improve themselves: to build a strong sense of a school and professional community of teachers and support staff working together to help one another. This is based on embedding co-operative values into the curriculum, life and ethos of schools and building it into their governance.

This wave of self improvement is also driven by schools interacting with their communities and with society as a whole and is helping them realise their potential to be a true hub for their communities.

What are co-operative values?
Co-operatives the world over share the values of self help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

The experience of the schools that have adopted co-operative governance models demonstrates that through the adoption of these values, children and young people can gain a better understanding of their role as citizens and how they can help build a fairer society.

How can co-operative values help schools improve standards?
Co-operative values can help schools raise standards in a variety of ways including through developing partnerships, helping to engage the local community in the strategic direction of schools and strengthening the curriculum.

It's your choice

Schools now have more choice to decide what type of ethos and school improvement strategy is right for them. And, there is certainly no shortage of options.

Perhaps that is why there are now over 200 co-operative schools in England, including a growing number of clusters of trusts and academies.

Co-operative schools use a range of the legal frameworks now available – trusts and academies – to build in a democratic element to their governance structures.

Co-operative schools are run using the same values and principles as the one billion member strong co-operative enterprises throughout the world – from local co-operative shops to fair trade – they are democratic organisations where students, staff, parents and stakeholders can have a voice by becoming members.

Co-operative schools put their ethos and values into practice through:
► Co-operative governance model.
► Co-operative pedagogy.
► Co-operative curriculum.

Co-operative Trust schools

Trust schools
Trust schools are maintained schools supported by a charitable foundation (popularly known as a Trust) which appoints some of the governors. The Trust involves one or more partners and may include, for example, a local college, university, business, and voluntary or community organisation.

Acquiring a Trust can help schools build long term, sustainable relationships with partners and, using their experience and expertise, strengthen leadership and governance to help raise standards. Any maintained school can become a Trust school[1] and the decision to adopt Trust status is taken by the governing body.

What is a co-operative Trust school?
The Co-operative College adapted the Trust model to embed co-operative values and principles into schools and provide mechanisms to directly involve key stakeholders, parents/carers, learners, staff and the local community in the governance of the Trust through a members' forum.

The Forum plays an important role in delivering the Trust's objectives.

How is a co-operative Trust school set up?
Becoming a co-operative Trust school requires a formal process that is undertaken by the governing body of the school.

[1] Although this is more complex where the school already has a Trust or foundation (as is the case with voluntary schools).

The Trust Process

Stage 1 - Decide who to work with and how
The school's governing body will meet to explore questions like: What benefits will this bring to the school? Who would the Trust partners be and which partners can help the school build a co-operative ethos? The Co-operative College can help schools firm up those plans and find potential partners.

Stage 2 - Consultation
It's important that schools canvass the opinion of all those who could be affected by the school's change of status. The consultation stage is the turn of parents, staff, trade unions and the local community to give their views on the school's Trust plans. A minimum four week consultation period during term time is required.

Stage 3 - Publish statutory proposals and invite representations
The school publishes formal proposals, which include specific details on the Trust. It must post notices in public places, so all the school's stakeholders are able to express their views. Any objections or comments must be addressed to the governing body within the four week period[2].

Stage 4 - Consider representations and decide whether to acquire the Trust
Proposals must be determined – and it is the school's governing body (if the proposals have not been referred to the Adjudicator during the period for representations), that makes the decision on whether to proceed after taking on board the views and opinions of stakeholders. The decision must be made within six months of publishing proposals.

Stage 5 - Implementation
Once the governing body of the school has decided to become a Trust school, the school's land and buildings are transferred to the Trust for it to hold on the school's behalf and the governing body is reconstituted.

For more information on co-operative schools please see:
www.co-op.ac.uk/schools-and-young-people

[2] If the local authority has concerns that the governing body has failed to consult adequately or not taken account of the consultation or if the LA has concerns that the Trust will have a negative impact on standards at the school, then it may refer proposals to the Schools Adjudicator who will decide the proposals rather than the governing body. Any referral must be made during the 4 week representation period.

Your questions answered

Will the governing body and headteacher have less control in running the school?
There will be no reduction in the role and responsibilities of the governing body of Trust schools. Headteachers will retain their responsibility for the day-to-day running of their schools.

Does Trust status mean that schools are selective?
Trust schools are subject to the same rules as foundation schools. This means that they set their own admissions arrangements, but they act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and are not allowed to introduce selection by ability. Trust schools will play their full part in taking hard to place pupils, having fair admission, and working with other schools.

What difference will being a Trust school make to the school's funding?
A Trust school will continue to receive its funding from the local authority on the same basis as other local schools – and funding will be delegated to the governing body, not the Trust. There will be no additional funding from the local authority on the basis that a school is a Trust school, and there is no expectation that the Trust will provide the school with additional funding.

Co-operative academy conversion model

A co-operative model for converter Academies has received approval from the DfE.

The co-operative Academy model was developed in partnership with a group of co-operative Trust schools that wanted to pursue academy status in view of the additional freedoms and funding available, whilst maintaining the essential characteristics of co-operative Trusts:

....

▶ **An ethos based on the globally-shared co-operative values – which are included in the definitions in the articles for a co-operative academy together with a specific values clause.**

....

▶ **Direct engagement of key stakeholders and the local community in governance through membership and a members' forum.**

In addition, the model provides a mechanism for mutual support through a network: the Schools Co-operative Society - a co-operative owned and democratically controlled by co-operative schools and supported by the Co-operative Group, Britain's biggest co-operative, and the Co-operative College an educational charity.

Several schools that are currently members of co-operative Trusts are working towards achieving co-operative Academy status.

The Co-operative College and Cobbetts LLP, which undertook the legal work on the co-operative model, offer a comprehensive package of services to support schools throughout the process of conversion.

If your school has already converted to an Academy using the standard articles it can convert to the co-operative model - and become part of the growing network of co-operative schools.

Why we chose co-operation...

"For us the Co-operative Trust model was all about the ethos of the co-operative society and completely embedding that within our school and our traditional values as being extremely beneficial. The membership side of it again is going to bring real benefits not just to us as a school but also to all our stakeholder groups, our community, our parents, pupils, and of course our staff."
Angela Gaywood, Parent governor, St Clere's School and Co-operative Trust Thurrock, Essex

"Co-operative trusts are about mutualisation, not privatisation, groups of schools working strategically together towards a shared vision for educational advancement with the involvement of the wider community, and protection of educational assets, working together to make best use of resources, all striving to achieve better outcomes for children and families."
Dr Pat McGovern, Head teacher, Helston Community College

"I do feel that we are getting better communication with a number of stakeholders who feel more engaged with the school."
Paul Griffiths, Head teacher, St Clere's School and Co-operative Trust, Thurrock, Essex.

"The major reason for becoming a co-operative school is local accountability. A co-operative Trust is rooted in democracy. Staff, students, parents, community groups, all have a voice in how this school is run. We want to embed the school in the local community."
Mark Cottingham, Head teacher, daVinci Community College

The Schools Co-operative Society

The Schools Co-operative Society provides a support network, enabling both existing and prospective co-operative Trust schools to share ideas and best practice and develop services for member schools. It is owned and controlled by its member schools and its remit includes exploiting the benefits of joint procurement, sharing expertise from curriculum development to school improvement, and giving co-operative schools a voice in the national education policy agenda.

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For further information see:
www.co-operativeschools.coop
Telephone: 0161 246 3052
Email: enquiries@co-operativeschools.coop

For Further Information:

Governance

The Swanage School is a locally accountable academy run along cooperative principles.

Our school is run by the principal and staff, overseen by the Governing Body, who are appointed by the Academy Trust, Education Swanage. Any member of the community is able to join the trust for a £1 annual fee as long as they agree to the trust's values.

Members of the Trust appoint the majority of Governors, who have an overall responsibility for the school. The Governing Body also contains the Headteacher and two Staff Governors, and at least two Parent Governors. Governors are subject to DBS checks (formerly CRB). All posts last for four years, and if Governors want to serve again they must stand for re-election.

The Governing Body welcomes input from the wider community and will also take advice from the Student Council, which will have members appointed by the students. By adopting cooperative principles of openness and democracy, Education Swanage seeks to make the Trust as locally accountable as possible and to embed The Swanage School in the heart of the community.

The Governance Structure in Detail:

Appointment of the Swanage School Governing Body will be in line with the standard Department for Education Memorandum and Articles of Association. In summary:

- The Head Teacher will automatically be a Governor
- Parents will be asked to vote for at least 2 Parent Governors. These Parent Governors must be parents of pupils when they are elected
- Members of Education Swanage can vote for up to 12 Governors
- Staff will be asked to vote for at least 2 Staff Governors
- The Governors themselves can co-opt up to 3 extra Governors

Governors are appointed for up to four years and may stand for re-appointment at the end of their term.

All Governors are also Directors of Education Swanage.

Associates

The Governors may appoint Associates to help with the work:

- The Associates need not be members of Education Swanage
- The Associates do not need to obtain a CRB check
- Associates may attend and participate in discussion at Governors' Meetings, but may not vote.

Constituencies

There are various groups who will be able to choose the Swanage School Governors, and Education Swanage want to involve people more widely if possible.

Education Swanage Members

- Members pay an annual membership of £1 (mainly to keep track of who is a member)
- Education Swanage Members vote for up to 12 Governors
- The Governors appointed by Education Swanage do not need to be Members of Education Swanage
- Any Governor appointed by Education Swanage will need a CRB check (which will be paid for by the school)
- New members are appointed by unanimous vote of members. Anyone can apply to become a member. There is a presumption that new members will be appointed as long as they sign up to Vision and Ethos.

Staff Constituency

- The Staff Constituency comprises all employees (teaching and non-teaching staff)
- The Staff Constituency will vote for two Governors, who are members of staff (employees)
- A Staff Governor will cease to be a Staff Governor when employment as a member of staff ceases
- In addition, staff may be appointed as Governors by Members of Education Swanage or co-opted as Governors by the Governors, though the number of Governors who are employees (including the Principal) must not be more than one third of the total number of Governors
- The Staff Governors, with the Head Teacher, will act as a conduit between the Staff Constituency and the Governing Body. This is in addition to the day to day management structure of the school.

Parent Constituency

- The Parent Constituency comprises parents of pupils of the school
- 'Parents' includes step-parents, adoptive parents and any person who stands in the position of primary carer of a pupil of the school
- The Parent Constituency will vote for two Governors, who are part of the Parent Constituency
- Parent Governors must obtain a CRB check (paid for by the school)
- Parent Governors may continue to be Governors for their full term even if the pupils who are their children have left the school
- The Parent Governors will act as a conduit between the Parent Constituency and the Governing Body. This is in addition to the day to day open door policy of the school.

Student Constituency

- The Student Constituency comprises all pupils at the school
- Students do not vote for Governors on account of their age
- Students cannot be Governors on account of their age
- The Student Constituency will vote for a Student Forum
- The Student Constituency will set its own rules for electing and running the Student Forum (subject to approval by the Governing Body)
- The Governing Body would like students to have a voice in the running of the school and we intend to seek their opinions on meaningful issues
- The Governing Body would like students to give feedback on teaching and learning at the school
- The Governing Body would like students to assist with the recruitment of staff
- The Governing Body would like the Student Constituency to feel that their constructive opinions are valued, and that they are part of the team that makes the Swanage School a success. As part of this, the Student Forum will act as a conduit between Student Constituency and the Governing Body.

Community Constituency

- Members of the wider community are not directly involved in running the school
- Members of the wider community will not vote for Governors (unless they are members of Education Swanage)
- Members of the wider community may be appointed as Governors by members of Education Swanage or co-opted as Governors by the Governing Body
- The Governing Body hopes that the school's relationship with the community will be good for both the school and the community, would like the wider community to feel that their constructive opinions are valued, and that they are part of the team that makes the Swanage School a success. As part of this, the Governing Body proposes that there should be a Community Constituency which will include any person or business with premises inside the catchment area of The Swanage School.
- The Governing Body would like to hear their feedback on a regular basis and intend to hold meetings for the Community Constituency once or twice a year, where information and views will be shared
- The Governing Body hopes that some businesses, organisations and individuals in the community will be involved with school clubs, work experience, and community service
- The Governing Body wants the school to be an asset to the community, and hope that the community will be able to use the school's facilities at a modest charge (with any profits going to The Swanage School)

The current Governing Body:

Paul Angel, Chair of Governors, is a web developer and is well known locally as a photographer. He lives in Swanage with his wife Vicki and their two sons. He is a fully qualified adult education teacher, previously working as an arts project leader in schools and on a number of social inclusion programmes in Bournemouth.

Geoff Atkinson, Chair of Staffing Committee, worked at a senior level at ICL and Norwich Union and for 15 years has been a consultant in organisation development. He and his wife live in Swanage.

Brian Erskine, Parent Governor.

Liz Gilmour, Governor, is a solicitor and brings her legal knowledge to the Governing Body. She lives in Swanage with her husband John and two daughters, who attend St Mary's and Castle Court Prep School, where John is deputy head.

Lisa Gray, Staff Governor. Lisa teaches History and is also Curriculum Area Leader.

Nikki Harman, Governor, lives in Swanage with her husband and two children, and works in nursing. She was previously a trustee at Cygnets preschool.

Tristram Hobson, Headteacher. Joins us from the highly successful St Edmund's School in Salisbury, where he was previously Deputy Head. He lives in Wimborne with his wife and their two sons.

William Knight, Chair of Finance Committee and Treasurer, has a background in IT and senior management and has been a school governor for 30 years, currently serving at St George's Primary School. He lives in Langton.

Audrey Lang, Staff Governor. Audrey teaches French and Spanish.

John Lejeune, Parent Governor.

Helen O'Connor, Vice Chair and Chair of Students Committee, is a secondary school teacher with 22 years experience and is studying for a professional doctorate with Anglia Ruskin University. She works part time at Highcliffe and Lytchett Minster schools. She lives in Knitson with Nick and three daughters.

Stephen Parker, Governor, is the former Finance Director for Bournemouth Borough Council and has a wealth of financial experience. He lives in Swanage.

Amanda Rowley, Governor, runs an advertising and marketing company. She lives in Swanage with her husband and two children.

Alison Stephens, Governor, is a teaching assistant at St Mark's Primary School. She was a Governor at Swanage Primary School for several years. She lives in Swanage with her partner and their two children.

Carl Styants, Chair of Community & Partnerships Committee, is a magazine editor and journalist. He served several years as a parent governor at Swanage Primary School. He lives in Swanage with his partner Elaine and their two children.

Isobel Tooley, Governor, is a Fellow of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, and has used her business and finance skills to manage the project. She lives in Langton with husband Steve and their two children.

Associates:

Collette Drayson is a former TA at St George's with 20 years SEN experience. She is a lead facilitator in Transition Purbeck and a Langton Parish Councillor. She is currently studying for an OU degree in Child and Youth Studies and has three grown-up children.

Jo Tatchell has a marketing and management background and is currently a full-time mum to four children. She lives in Langton.

Steve Tooley has led the premises work within Education Swanage, is a former UK sales director for Kodak and was previously Vice Chair of Governors at Swanage Middle School.

Contact the Governing Body

You can contact any of the members of the Governing Body by emailing info@theswanageschool.co.uk or by writing to them c/o The Swanage School, High Street, Swanage BH19 2PH.

See http://www.theswanageschool.co.uk/page.php?pagename=Governance

Appendix 9: Co-operative School membership form

Why become a member?

- To ensure your voice is heard!

- For updates on all the trust activities that you can join in.

- To join our Stakeholder Forum where you really can make a difference and advise our Board of Trustees.

- Benefit from special offers and reductions such as money off school events & trips & reserved seating at events.

JOIN TODAY MEMBERSHIP IS FREE!

Appendix 10: International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) values and principles.

The ICA (2011) define a co-operative as:

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Co-operative Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Co-operative Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or

raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

(See, International Co-operative Alliance, 2011.)

Parent/Carer letters of consent & information sheets

<div align="right">
Gail Davidge
Manchester Metropolitan University
Gailsmith26@googlemail.com
Date
</div>

Dear

This letter, and the material that comes with it, is an invitation for your child to participate in a research study being undertaken as part of my PhD research at Manchester Metropolitan University. The information sheet attached to this letter will introduce you to the study and explain how it will be carried out.

This research aims to explore young people's experiences of democratic citizenship within co- operative schools. The purpose of this study is to further develop understandings of how children and young people experience democracy within the course of their daily school activities and wider participation in society.

I would also like to assure you that details of any communications with your child will remain completely anonymous. Every child's name will be changed and any reported findings will be of a generalised nature and will be discussed only between myself and my research supervisors. A copy of the final thesis will also be made available for any interested parent or carer to read and can be requested from the above email address.

I would be very grateful if you could fill in the slip below to indicate whether you and your child consent to being involved in this study as soon as possible.

Thank you for reading through the material.

Yours sincerely,

Gail Davidge.

Ethics Matters

Parent/carer Information Sheet
Research Project:

(Re) considering the place of democracy in education: an ethnographic study

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study. Before both you and your child decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.   Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends, relatives, or any other relevant professionals if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish your child to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
I am PhD student, exploring possibilities for re-thinking educational opportunities for young people at the beginning of the 21st Century with Manchester Metropolitan University. My research will be based on an ethnographic study of the opportunities available for young people to participate as democratic citizens in education and wider society. Ethnography is a type of research that involves lots of different methods, which enable the researcher to gain a greater understanding of life in a particular setting or culture. Various methods are used such as recording natural everyday conversations or conducting open-ended interviews that ask for views on different experiences or issues. My overall aim is to explore how children and young people experience citizenship within a variety of contexts. It is hoped that this valuable information will generate better understandings of children's everyday life and practices in order to improve future educational provision.

What will happen to my child if they take part? What do they have to do?
If your child is happy to be involved they may be asked to participate in a lesson observation, individual interview or focus group discussion with other students which will take no longer than one hour.

During this time they will be asked about their experiences of life within a co-operative school. For example they might be asked what opportunities they have to participate in school decision making processes or may be observed participating in lessons or working with the school's democratic forum. I would like to record some of these conversations in order to analyse and identify particular themes and issues that may arise. Recorded data (in the form of audio/video/photographs) may be included in the data analysis and small sections may also be used to illustrate project findings within the final thesis. Your child is under no obligation to participate in these recordings, if either you or your child prefers not to be recorded (in any format) you can indicate this on the consent form. This material will be used only for the purposes of this research and it will be stored in a secure locked cabinet in accordance with the Data Protection Act. All paper documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, computer records will be password protected; they will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

Ethics Matters

Does my child have to take part?
Participation is voluntary; it is up to you and your child to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part your child is still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Will my child's details be kept confidential?
All information that is collected during the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential. Your child's real name will not be disclosed on any document used in this research, in order to ensure that your child's identity remains anonymous. Recorded details of individual children's participation in general conversations or interviews will not be discussed with other parents or teachers. General findings will be documented and discussed with University supervisors and will be available for you to read upon the completion of this study should you wish to do so. Details of your child's responses to any conversations or individual interviews will not be discussed with other professionals unless you give specific permission for me to do so, or I am required to do so by law, or I have good reason to believe that failing to share the information would put someone else at risk.

Complaints

If at any point during this research you feel that you have grounds to complain about the researcher involved with this research project, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you or your child has been approached or treated during the course of this study, Contact:
Professor Erica Burman Manchester Metropolitan University, Tel 0161 247 2557
e.burman@mmu.ac.uk
Professor John Schostak Manchester Metropolitan University, Tel 0161 247 2320
j.schostak@mmu.ac.uk
Thank you for reading this information sheet and, if it is possible, participating in this study.

Ethics Matters

<u>Parent/ Carer Consent Form</u>
Research Project - (Re) considering the place of democracy in education: an ethnographic study

Please delete as appropriate
- Have you read the information sheet?
  YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions that you or your child may have and discuss these with the researcher?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that your child is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for doing so?
  YES/NO
- Do you agree to your child taking part in this study?
  YES/NO

 I _____give my permission for my child's data to be used as part of this study and understand that they can withdraw at any time and data will be subsequently destroyed.
Contact Phone number .... Email
Address...
Signature……………………………………………....... Date…………….......

Audio recording
I ……………………….give permission for interviews to be audio recorded and used as part of this study.
Signature…………………………………………Date………………………..

Video recording
I …………………give my permission for my interview to be video recorded and used as part of this study.
Signature…………………………………………Date………………………..

Photography
I…………………give my permission for ………………… (insert child's name) photograph to be taken and used as part of this study.
Signature…………………………………………Date………………………..

Ethics Matters

Changes to the college mobile phone policy

After consultation with the learner forum, parents/carers and staff

8.40am - 3.10pm switched off and in your bag or pocket.

You can use your phone if your teacher lets you, for example as a calculator, stopwatch or e-reader.

- If you are seen with your phone out at any other time, it will be taken off you.

- You will be given a receipt and can collect your phone from ▮▮▮▮▮▮ at 3.10pm, the NEXT DAY.

- Failure to follow this instruction will result in a one day exclusion, which will go on your record.

- Your parent/carer will have to meet with ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Headteacher and a governor before you can return.

This policy meets your needs and ours, as well as keeping you safe.

██████████████ – Proposed Mobile Phone Policy

What we propose

- Students should be able to use their mobile phones before school, and during break and dinner.

- Zero-tolerance on use during changeover and in classes.

- Teachers should be able to allow students to use mobile phones in classes on with their permission, this could be for research or common features on a mobile such as a calculator , the use of mobiles in class would be illustrated by The phone sign.

- We think that we should keep the existing system where if students use their phone outside of the allocated usage periods their phones will be confiscated and put in the safe, having to be picked up by a parent or guardian.

- We propose a trial period for this new system, we think that by having a trial period we will be able to see if such a change could successfully implemented on a full scale in college.

We think that all of these rules should also apply to other electronic devices such as iPods, MP3 players, and the various available accessories.

Notes

- Break/lunch- you can use your phone.
  reduce the amount of phone usage in class.
- Teachers are worried about letting students use their phones in class, get in trouble off of management.
- PHONE SIGN:

When it's up, you can use your phones for the purpose that your teacher tells you.

- Driving license system- get points for abusing the system.
- NOT in changeover.
- Funny announcements/jingles over the radio.
- Harsher rules when you are caught using it when not allowed/on the wrong things.
- Packing up period- use your phone a couple of minutes before class ends.
- Phone can be confiscated until the end of the lesson and if you refuse to hand it over, it goes in the safe.
- Trial period (last half term).
- Keeping the safe system.
- All this also applies to iPods, mp3 players, headsets etc.

The Co-operative College
Supporting Membership Development

Course programme – Autumn 2011

The Co-operative College is delighted to offer a full programme of training events to support the development of your co-operative Trust during the Autumn term 2011.

These courses are designed for membership champions and leading figures from each of your stakeholder constituencies - parents and carers, staff, students, and community representatives.

We hope you will encourage attendance by representatives from your Trust to provide them with an introduction to co-operative values, and ideas about ways to recruit and engage new members.

Additionally we will again be running the popular Company Secretary training course which will give your Trust secretary a solid introduction to their role and responsibilities.

NB - the student workshops will be run in parallel to the staff ones to facilitate attendance at these.

the
co·operative
college

Membership Development Workshop (1 day)

The aim of this interactive workshop is to help key stakeholders develop a membership strategy. **(£250 including a copy of the membership toolkit)**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- Have a clear understanding of the values that underpin all co-operative enterprises and link these to their co-operative school

- Determine why all co-operative enterprises (regardless of their type or structure) need members

- Conduct a stakeholder analysis

- Develop a strategy for developing membership (including ways of promoting membership of your co-operative school)

- Discuss a range of items, including: databases, member rules, communicating with members, member benefits, and encouraging participation

This workshop is for: Students, Board members, Staff, Parents, Community Representatives, Business Representatives

Membership Development Workshop Dates Autumn 2011
25 November 2011 Leeds

Parents and Carers Membership Development Workshop (1/2 day)

The aim of this ½ day session is to assist parent member champions to create a meaningful membership offer and strategy for attracting members. **The cost of this workshop is £50 per delegate.**

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Have created a list of easy wins to get parents and carers involved

- Have spent time identifying new methods for hard to reach groups

- Identify key member groups

- Discuss what membership means and what makes it meaningful for each member group

- Discuss the ways in which parents can add value

- Create a meaningful membership offer

- Develop a communication strategy for potential members

Parent Membership Development Workshop Dates Autumn 2011
26 November 2011 Manchester

Student Membership Development Workshop (1/2 day)

The aim of this ½ day session is to assist student member champions to create a meaningful membership offer and strategy for attracting members. **The cost of this workshop is £50 per delegate.**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Have an idea of what will encourage students to join the schools membership

- Identify what the school can offer that the students really want

- Identify key member groups from the students at the school

- Discuss what membership means and what makes it meaningful for each member group

- Discuss the ways in which students can add value

- Create a meaningful membership offer which is tailored for students

- Develop a communication strategy for potential members

Student Membership Development Workshop Dates Autumn 2011
22 November 2011 Bristol

Staff Membership Development Workshop (1/2 day)

The aim of this ½ day session is to assist teacher member champions to create a meaningful membership offer and strategy for attracting members. **The cost of this workshop is £50 per delegate.**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Be able to address some of the key concerns brought up by staff
- Have developed targets and methods of embedding membership in the curriculum

- Identify key staff member groups
- Discuss what membership means and what makes it meaningful for each member group
- Discuss the ways in which staff members can add value
- Create a meaningful membership offer
- Develop a communication strategy for potential members

Staff Membership Development Workshop Dates Autumn 2011

22 November 2011 Bristol

Community Membership Development Workshop (1/2 day)

The aim of this ½ day session is to assist community member champions to create a meaningful membership offer and strategy for attracting members. **The cost of this workshop is £50 per delegate.**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Have a better understanding of which groups of the community can be effectively engaged

- Discuss what membership means and what makes it meaningful for each member group
- Discuss the ways in which the community individuals and groups can add value
- Create a meaningful membership offer
- Develop a communication strategy for potential members

Community Membership Development Workshop Dates Autumn 2011

26 November 2011 Manchester

Company Secretary (1 day)

The aim of this 1 day course is to, develop your company secretaries' knowledge of how a co-operative trust functions, gain an understanding of the legal framework for a co-operative trust, and receive advice and guidance on how to manage a trust and receive sample policies and procedures for a trust and how to use these.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will have developed their knowledge of the following:

- Structure of a Co-operative Trust.
- Importance of membership for a co-operative trust.
- Roles and responsibilities of members, stakeholder forum, trustees, and governors.

- Roles and responsibilities of the Company Secretary
- Essential requirements for the first 12 months of a trust
- Legal requirements of running a Trust.
- Where to find information to assist them in their role

This session is for:

Company Secretaries, Governors, Trustees

Company Secretary Training Dates Autumn 2011

28 November 2011 Manchester

How to book

Please fill out the attached form and return it to the Co-operative College, by email, fax or post.
Alternatively, book online at **www.co-op.ac.uk/schools-and-young-people/membership**

Name of your Co-operative Trust:

Key contact name:

Tel:　　　　　　　　　　　**Email:**

Membership Development Workshop
(£250 including toolkit)
Leeds 25 November 2011

Number of places required

Names of Delegates

Student Membership Development Workshop
(£50 per student)
Bristol 22 November 2011

Number of places required

Names of Delegates

Staff Membership Development Workshop
(£50 per member of staff)
Bristol 22 November 2011

Number of places required

Names of Delegates

Parent Membership Development Workshop
(£50 per parent)
Manchester 26 November 2011

Number of places required

Names of Delegates

Community Membership Development
Workshop (£50 per community representative)
Manchester 26 November

Number of places required

Names of Delegates

Company Secretary Training
(£250 including Trust Handbook)
Manchester 28 November

Number of places required

Post: Co-operative Schools Membership Development
The Co-operative College
Holyoake House, Hanover Street
Manchester M60 0AS

Email: steve@co-op.ac.uk
Fax: 0161 246 2946
Tel: 0161 246 2966
www.co-op.ac.uk/schools-and-young-people

Consultancy

In addition to the workshops that we offer bespoke consultancy services that are entirely tailored the needs of your co-operative school. **Price on Application.**

Consultancy services that the Co-operative College offer:
- Attendance at trust meetings to support membership
- Designing application forms, leaflets and other promotional materials
- Follow up support (one to one, email and telephone)
- Development of database

November (1908, p.339) Vol. I No.14 Co-operative Press, Manchester

BLACK CHILDREN HAVE THEIR SORROWS AS WELL
AS WHITE CHILDREN.

Now, I want you to think about this for a minute, for this will help you to understand the habits of only half-civilised people. The truth about these races is that although they grow up to be men and women, in a way they remain babies. Between your own baby brother and one of these black little ones there is not very much difference. But as they grow up, a change takes place. For the white boy and girl, and the white man and woman have more opportunities of learning than the black, and so they become what we call "civilised". If the black people had the same opportunities, they might not be come quite so clever as the white, but still they would become very much cleverer than they are. And so we must remember that the duty of white people is to try and educate the black so that in the times to come they will leave their savage habits behind them, and enjoy with us the fruits of civilisation. Let us hope however, that they will not learn the vices of white people, as the children in the picture who are smoking cigarettes seem to have done. This is very bad for them, and I hope none of you will copy this dangerous habit.

Learner Forum Development Plan

If done in a meaningful and supported way, student voice can be a powerful tool for school improvement. It can give learners an opportunity to shape and improve their own education. As a Co-operative trust, democratic practice is an essential part of our culture and needs to be developed. Given the ideas and confidence of many of our learners, it would be a missed opportunity not to harness their energy.

The following points are an overview of the suggested steps forward to develop a formalised and purposeful learner forum (formerly called the school council). The basis for the structure is that a number of learners would be elected by their houses to sit on the learner forum and would be responsible for gathering views and advocating on behalf of the learners in their house.

Short term (remainder of 2011-12 session)

- Define the role and remit of the learner forum including their role (if any) on the governing body. This should be approved by senior leaders and a representative body of learners to ensure that expectations are agreed ahead of the launch in September.

- Dates agreed and resources set aside for the learner forum in September. This will include booking assemblies, allocating staff responsibilities, and deciding on the meeting arrangements for the forum.

- Investigation by ▭ into schools using democratic methods to continue and inform the developments of these plans.

Medium term (2012-13)

- A high profile competitive election held in September for the new learner forum members. This would serve the dual purposes of giving the forum legitimacy and providing students with a democratic experience.

- The forum should be formalised into a tutor group of 20-25 learners. This would give the forum capacity to be trained, build a team, and provide regular and quality representation. For example, members of forum could use the tutor time to design, practice and deliver assemblies on an issue. It would give consistency and a member of staff who can provide daily support to the forum. As with other tutor groups, the learner forum group would be checked for standards (uniform, planners etc.) and the tutor would be the regular contact for parents/carers.

- Training session based on the session run in 2011-12 to shape action planning and to make the role and remit of the group clear. This should also inspire learners to take action. Provisional location of the People's History Museum

- Regular assembly and tutor updates led by the learner forum members back to the Houses. This could also be the main method for learner forum members gathering views from other learners.

Long term (2013-15)

- Full learner involvement in QA processes including planning and observations of lessons. This may need to start with more enthusiastic departments.

- Full learner involvement in the development of teaching and learning at the school giving regular and informative feedback. This could include involvement in parts of department planning and some of the professional development session such as Embedding Formative Assessment.

- The learner forum has established good relations with political, business and community partners to express the views and interests of learners at the school.

- This should develop the Co-operative ethos of the school where learners feel ownership over their education and where self-help and democratic action are regular features.

3. After and out of school activities that instil a passion for the subject

To be the best school for Citizenship we need to inspire learners to learn beyond the curriculum and outside of lessons. This is a long-term project but the school already has alumni that are fantastic examples of this approach. The Citizenship staff and space should be welcoming, imaginative and open to providing extra opportunities for learners in and out of the classroom. It is only through this approach that we will build enthusiasm for the subject and instil a culture of citizenship at the school.

Longer term, we will support and promote vibrant Learner Forum elections annually as a way of giving learners access to a democratic experience. Homework will be purposeful and engaging for learners and will move towards a project form that develops skills and extends learning with a clear aim. Staff will be encouraged to run regular and visible whole school and after school activities that support the curriculum.

Delivery

This long-term plan is designed to share the vision and direction for the department so that we are all working towards a common goal. It also serves as a reference point for resource decisions and the priorities we make in the coming years. The annual tasks are flexible and the timings will need to be reviewed annually. The plan also serves to support whole school goals and will be drawn down in more detail in the annual curriculum improvement planning process.

General Questions for non/teaching staff…

General background

- Can you tell me a little about how you came to be working at this school?
- What is your role here?
- What is your relationship with the students?
- What sort of responsibilities do you have in terms of your own role and in terms of responsibilities for other members of the school?
- How would you say that the school has changed (if at all) since it became a co-operative trust?
- Are you aware of the co-operative values and principles? (if not offer a quick reminder)

How are the co-operative values and principles embedded into everyday school life?

- Within the classroom?

- Within the curriculum?

- How much 'voice' do you think staff have as stakeholders of the school?

- Do you feel as if you have a say in how the school is run? Are you able to take part in democratic decision-making processes?

- How easy is it to develop 'an open and honest' working environment?

- What opportunities are there to work collaboratively/co-operate with other members of the school (including students, support staff etc) and other local schools? And other members of the co-operative movement?

- Are you a member of the teacher's union? How much contact do you have with union representatives?

Student Focus Group Prompt sheet

<u>Thank you</u> for coming to see me in your own time, it really means a lot to me and it's really encouraging to see that you are committed to improving the experiences of other learners in the future too.

<u>Intro to my research</u>
This research project is really important as it is aiming to look closely at the experiences of young people as members of a co-operative school. I am hoping that together we can make a difference to how young people in education are thought about and experience their time spent in school in years to come.

As you might know, your school was one of the first schools in the country to become a 'co-operative school'. Unfortunately there hasn't been much research done that considers how this might affect the experiences that young people have as important members of this kind of organisation. As I see it, the co-operative school model might have the capacity to change how young people are treated and thought about both in school and out in wider society. What I'm trying to do is get a picture of what life here at your school is like for you...

As it's a while since I was at secondary school, I could really use your help in collecting this important information. With your help we might be able to show other people the kinds of things that are happening at your school and also be able to draw attention to the problems that you face as young people (under 18) who don't always get taken seriously both inside and outside of the school gates.

I am not a teacher at this school and I can assure you that whatever you say to me remains confidential. I will only discuss what you say with my research supervisors and if I write about anything that you have said your name will be changed and you will be completely anonymous. Please don't feel that you can only tell me positive things that happen here and outside of school as sometimes, drawing attention to the problems that you face as young people can help start to make a difference and get other people to think about what can be done to make things better...

<u>I'm really interested in your stories and experiences. I need your help in answering questions such as:</u>

- Who listens to me and takes my views and opinions seriously? How does it feel when I get the chance to be heard?

- Where do I get the chance to have a say in important decisions that affect me?

- Where is it difficult to speak? And why is that?

- Who doesn't listen or take my opinions seriously? How does that make me feel?

For those of you who had a chance to visit Summerhill, I would like you to think about your experience there and to think about how it was similar or different to your time spent at your school and outside of school too.

Some ex-pupils from Summerhill have been involved in writing a book about how their time there changed their lives. Some of them said that although they thought it was great that they got to be involved in 'the meeting' and to experience democracy as young people, they also felt that outside of the school gates in their own local community, things were very different and that once they left school they were shocked to find that in 'real life' things weren't always so democratic...

I am open to your ideas about the best way to go about collecting this information and am very aware that there is little free time within your school day that can be spent on this. I would like you to recount your experiences in any way that suits you, in a way that you most enjoy and that is easiest for you. I have given the matter some thought and come up with the following options, what do you think?

Personal video diaries... I have a flip cam that you can take turns in borrowing and you could borrow it for a couple of days each and record what you think and feel about school life here.

Writing a regular or email diary

Just chatting to me as a group for half an hour at lunchtime for one day a week over the next half term.

Talking to me on a one to one basis at break/lunch/after school

Taking photographs or drawing the spaces and places where you put co-operative values into practice.

Making a visual map/collage about how you experience democracy in your life (include school, home, on the streets, in shops etc)

I also want to ask your permission to join your student forum meetings as this is YOUR space and your chance to get your voices out to a much wider audience, I think that it's really important that we do that together, on your own terms...

Remember that if you say something and then decide at a later date that you don't want it to be included you have every right to withdraw from the project at any time

<u>Todd Phone Policy</u>

G.D: So, tell me what happened really in your own words

T: Okay

G.D: Your first ideas of ... of wanting to do something... about the phone policy, what was like the rationale behind it?

T: Okay what it was that we thought to ourselves (pauses) it's erm... the policy that's been in place now, has been in place for about I think it's.... more than 10 years, I think it was more than 15 years, I don't know.

G.D: Were mobile phones even about before then?

T: I don't know, I just know is in place was in place when my sisters have been here and that... my (pauses) the sister that's nearest to my age is eight years older than me. So ... But, erm (pauses) We just thought there's lots more you can do on, on a mobile phone now a lot more

G.D: Right

T: …that you can do before, so whatever we needed help with we could find it on the internet somewhere 'cause the majority of us have smart-phones. Erm...

G.D: Yeah, do you use them a lot for homework and stuff like that or?

T: I do.

G.D: When you're on the go, or?

T: Yeah, and erm... I've, I've asked before if I can look stuff up in say... in history or something like that and I've been allowed. Erm... So we decided we tried to formalise it and put it in writing.

G.D: So did, were all the teachers responding in the same way when you asked if you could use your phone?

T: (Coughs)

G.D: Or was it quite inconsistent?

T: It really depends as long as you don't turn to them and say 'can I go on my phone?'…

G.D: Yeah

T: …and you're more specific and say 'may I look at this on the internet' … erm 'may I research this?' … 'may I work this out on my calculator?' something like that. They'll let you do that. Than if you say 'can I go on my phone?' they will probably want, want a reason (pauses) erm… so we decided we'd try and get, get a band of people who agreed and sit them in the theatre and get our… head teacher… and talk to him directly about it.

G.D: So what was the… role, at this point, of the democratic forum, was it anything to do with them or did this sort of just run alongside?

T: It had just… The meeting itself had been formed by them. It had been arranged by the democratic forum. But we got… members of the forum and other students who agreed and wanted their opinions…

G.D: Yeah, yeah

T: …heard and we sat them in, in the audience, so to speak?

G.D: So were these people, erm probably never come across the democratic forum before, or?

T: I Think, I think they'd certainly had heard of it. They were people who were … more took a back seat and let other people…

G.D: Yeah

T: …do it rather than speak up themselves

G.D: Was this an issue that probably.. erm drew in people across…

T: it did

G.D: …across the school

T: Because (pauses) obviously mobile phones are an important part of people's lives, so ... all the students were thinking if we can get a policy that says we can our phones at these times then.. erm, why not? There's a lot of the people who were on their phones at break and lunch times when it wasn't a problem.

G.D: Okay

T: They weren't distracted from learning 'cause we weren't learning anything.

G.D: So... at break time and erm... lunch time, just to clarify, are you allowed to use your phones in school?

T: No

G.D: No?

T: No, no. That's what we were trying to put across but it wasn't…

(Awful bell screeches)

G.D: So at this point you weren't allowed to use your phones at all, anywhere... all day?

T: All day

G.D: Right, okay.

T: So, like I said we held this meeting and myself... and two friends of mine were going to... sort of stand and speak to everyone, or more or less lead it but those two friends were were taken out by their.... current teacher of the lesson they had. So I was more or less speaking on my own.

G.D: How how? what, what happened to them?

T: They had to be, be... at the time they had an assessment in I think French

G.D: Right okay.

T: And the teacher wasn't too thrilled about fact that they…

G.D: Yeah

T: …were missing it. I'm not sure why my teacher didn't come but…

G.D: (Laughs)

T: Erm…

G.D: So you spoke on your own, to…

T: …More or less, yeah

G.D: ..who, who was this? To the senior leadership?

T: The head teacher

G.D: Right okay

T: erm (pause) erm.. truth be told that it wasn't the most successful of (pauses) of erm, confrontations.

G.D: Right, so how did the head teacher respond?

T: I think, I think he ended up being quite annoyed. But I think it was because we was highlighting all these things that were didn't like…

G.D: Right

T: …but not really suggesting

G.D: Okay…

T: …ways to improve them, so it wasn't like erm.. here's the negative and here's how we can make it positive.

G.D: Yeah

T: So it was like... here's a negative.

G.D: Okay

T: and here's another negative, and here is another negative. So I think that kinda sort of got him annoyed.

G.D: Right okay. Did you ask him for for his imput on…

T: Yes

G.D: On the phone policy then?

T: We, we, whatever we brought up what we thought could be improved, without suggesting improvements as I said. Erm (pauses) we did give him a chance to explain, why he thought that... these things we the way they work and how they could or couldn't Continue in some cases…

G.D: Right, so how did you justify it?

T: erm... the mobile phone policy he was more (pauses) I thought he was more like, smart with her but he sat back and said I think this but I'm willing to... do this and we ended up, erm... I think we ended up with... in quite a trial period

G.D: Okay

T: And we took it to the governments of the school

G.D: Right

T: and erm (pauses) there were some people in the form/forum who... who will be able to give more information on that 'cause I…

G.D: Yeah

T: I myself didn't go…

G.D: So, you got the ball rolling then?

T: With that meeting, I put the ball in place. I'm not too sure about rolling but

G.D: Yeah..but you raised the issue?

T: Yes, yes

G.D: And when was this?

T: this was (pauses) this was before year eleven. This was about...

G.D: Was that 2010?

T: That was the end of... it was more the end of the year ten, it was more six months ago.

G.D: Right okay

T: Six, seven months, something like that. Erm (pauses) but yeah, I can only offer information from that.

G.D: Yeah that's fine

T: There's other people who you can talk to if you, erm

G.D: So you had this inital meeting with the head teacher, you then went back to the forum?

Teacher enters

G.D: Have you got to go to your next lesson now? Are you going to get in trouble?

T: Yeah

G.D: Do you need a note or something?

T: No every time I see him I just... get told off afterwards. You know who we've got now, don't you?

Teacher: Who've we got now? English, maths...go on,

T: who came to you last week?

X: Oh dear, guess we'd better get in there then? Eugh..Science

G.D: I'm really sorry!

T: Oh, it's okay

G.D: Thank you so much for your time

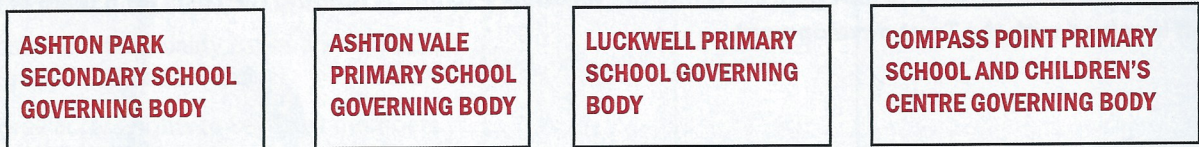T: I was just saying that it might be worth speaking to the others s about when he got taken to the governors…

Teacher: I Think you're right.

Appendix 20: Example Co-operative learning Trust Model

2. TRUST BOARD AND MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

When designing the size and shape of your stakeholder forum you need to refer to your Articles of Association section 13. It may be wise to consider the fact that one third of members are replaced annually so having multiples of three for each elected constituency could make life easier in the future – see a possible model below where a secondary school and three primary schools formed a Trust. You will also need to consider the role of head teachers and partners on the stakeholder forum.

1.   South West Bristol Co-operative Learning Trust organisational model

ASHTON PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY	ASHTON VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY	LUCKWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY	COMPASS POINT PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE GOVERNING BODY

TRUST BOARD	
Headteachers & Chair of Governors from each school,	8
Chief Executive Bristol City Football Club (BCFC),	1
Chief Executive Futurelab,	1
Professor of Education University of West of England (UWE),	1
Assistant Director of Children's Services for Bristol (BCC),	1
Regional Manager for The Co-operative Group	1
Stakeholder forum representatives	2
Total:	15

Note: Numbers may increase if new schools or new Trust partners are added.

2.   Constituencies of the forum

➤ Parents/Carers

➤ Staff

➤ Pupils

➤ Partner organisations from local community constituency (designated by Trustees – entitled to one member each).

➤ Local authority members (at least one as an officer).

➤ Local community persons (legitimate interest in the schools – decided by Trustees).

3. Elections and terms of office for forum representatives

➤ The parents/carers, staff and pupils constituencies should elect one or more of their members to the forum.

➤ The majority of forum members must be elected representatives from the membership constituencies.

➤ No one constituency shall have more than one third of the forum membership. Staff shall not have more than one fourth of the forum membership.

➤ Local authority shall appoint 2 members – one of whom must be an officer.

➤ Trustees may designate one or more of the community organisations as partner organisations and they shall be entitled to each appoint a member of the forum.

➤ Terms of office for 3 years. Re-election possible for up to three occasions then must be one calendar year gap before re-election. All retirements shall be at AGM and elections after Y1 & 2 at AGM.

➤ Community organisations are not elected members so in total must not exceed 50% of all forum members.

➤ The forum will elect one of its members to be chair each year. The chair cannot be a member of the staff constituency.

4. Structure of the forum

a) Elected

Parents/carers	Secondary school (6), each primary school (3)	15
Staff	Secondary school (2 teachers, 1 support staff)	3
	Each primary school (1 teacher, 1 support staff)	6
Pupils	From secondary school	6
	From each primary school (2 each)	6

b) Appointed by Trustees

Partner organisations – up to 10 (perhaps not all appointed in Y1)	10
Local community persons – up to 6 (perhaps not all appointed in Y1)	6
Local authority	2
Total:	54

5. Aligning forum meetings with Trust board

Trust board meetings:	November	March	June
AGM members/trustees:			July
Stakeholder forum meetings:	October	February	May

Appendix 21: Research reflection, *Fifteen Minute Mêlée*

A thought from the 'the field'…

This wasn't my first visit to the school canteen, but it was certainly one of the noisiest. My previous visits had been after school to grab a quick coffee or just passing through in order to get to a lesson. Today was different. There was a lot riding on this meeting. What if nobody showed up? What if nobody was interested? What if? What if? What if? It was too late to worry. Students began to make their way towards us chomping toast and asking Tom what he wanted. Tom was also struggling to be heard amongst the clash and clatter of chairs and plates and incessant chatter that enveloped the entire area. In the end he did what he could and then handed over to me and it was my turn to wrestle with the acoustics of the canteen filled to burst. Riding on the crest of Tom's introduction I tried to explain that I was really interested in finding out more about student's experiences of co-operative schools and that I wanted these students to be an active part of the entire process. It was almost impossible not to shout in order to be heard over the sea of continual chatter; I didn't want to appear authoritarian, but at the same time I needed to be heard. I really wanted to get the message across that I was offering something different, not some tokenistic gesture but a real opportunity to be involved in a project from start to finish. Yet, by the time everyone had arrived and written down their names and form numbers the usual screech of the bell signaled the end of break and the beginning of lessons. The students departed en masse, bags over shoulders, packets screwed up and onto the next lesson. Still, I had the names of nine people who were interested, a promising start! I heaved a sigh of relief and sought sanctuary in the staff room whist I planned my next move.

Appendix 22: Research reflection, *A Paralyzing Paradox*…

Thoughts from 'the field'…

I failed to find a solution to this aporetic mess, and had become caught up in an intricate web of contradictory pushes and pulls which called into question my capacity to ever be ethical enough. This predicament weighed heavily on my mind and as I reached the reception desk, I was relieved to catch sight of Neil, a close colleague of Tom's, and quickly recounted my angst about Jo's refusal of a lift. He reminded me that he had no idea how most of Blackbrook's students got home each night and if I really wanted something to worry about I should take a peak at the endless stack of files of 'at risk' students which plague him night and day. He resigned that the school 'could only do so much' and advised me not to 'lose any sleep over it'. All the same, Neil's pragmatic approach did little to quell my uneasiness. I sat in my car for a long time that afternoon replaying our conversation, silently willing Jo's safe return. That evening I replayed the dilemma over and over until the sun finally rose and I could ease my conscience by checking the morning register. Jo was Present.

Broken voices, Broken records

Students which initially expressed an interest in participating with this research project at the outset appeared to be enthusiastic and extremely vocal in articulating their experiences of being 'schooled'. Indeed, after just one meeting they seemed have much to say about their role as peripheral decision makers, despite the ostensible promise of 'voice' as co-operative members of the school. However, at this early stage in the research process, I had yet to grasp the extent to which the excessive demands made on students' time which traditionally fell outside of the statutory timetable reflect wider cultural trends which dissolve the traditional boundaries of work and pleasure in 'adult' lives (Lee, 2001). The story that follows begins to sketch out how the construction of 'free-time' as an increasingly valuable and rare resource had unforseen effects upon my capacity to develop a participatory action research approach as initial interest waned following students having spent the majority of the half term holidays back 'in school'.

A Story from the margins of 'the field'

'I will fix you'

1. Half-term came and went in a blink. During the 'holidays' I sent a short email to all of the students who had expressed an interest in being involved at our first meeting in the canteen. Just to be sure, I followed this up with a quick reminder the day before our next meeting. Nada de nada. Nothing. Zilch. Zero replies. Not even anything from Tom, which was most unusual. Perhaps they were all too busy to reply and would simply just turn up? Unlikely, but I hoped so all the same… That afternoon, I popped into Tom's office and was greeted by Neil who advised me that Tom hadn't been in all week. He sighed heavily and added that he had no idea when he would be back and had to cover his workload in the meantime too. Neil didn't offer any further explanation and I dare not push him for more, I had never seen him quite so morose. Something was definitely amiss. Our usual light-hearted banter didn't seem appropriate somehow, not knowing what else to say, I looked at my watch and announced that I had better

make my way to the canteen before the bell went. With one foot already out of the door Neil turned to me and asked:

2. 'What exactly are you doing here with these kids Gail?'

3. His tone unnerved me a little, and sounded more like an accusation than a question, which was odd, Neil was usually very friendly.

4. Ignoring the disapproving timbre of his voice I replied with more confidence than I actually felt and said:

5. 'I'm researching how co-operative values and principles are interpreted by different members of the school, I'm especially interested in how students make sense of the model and I really wanted them to be involved in the whole research process - not just ticking boxes on a survey or something…it's just so difficult trying to do all of this in their *own* time'.

6. His voice softened slightly as he turned towards me and replied, 'ah well, an ambitious project! Best of luck with it all, there's some great kids in this school and others…well it's hard enough trying to even get them through the gate!'

7. Thanks Neil, I'll let you know if anyone turns up. By the way, thanks for the other night. Jo was in the next day, 'safe and sound' just as you said. Neil nodded, the corners of his mouth itching to extend into a self-satisfied smile as he silently returned to his work. He refrained from the obvious, 'I told you so' but seemed gratified that I had acknowledged his support all the same. I was relieved that our conversation had ended on a more agreeable note, as without Tom to broker my research activities and relationships Neil might be the only other sympathetic ear in this place. My thoughts returned to Tom's silence. It all seemed most peculiar…

8. The bell screeched as I rapidly made my way to the canteen cursing my tardiness, I wasn't in a hurry to repeat my earlier 'learning' experience of navigating the home time corridor. My footsteps soon accelerated to a gallop but my exertion proved short-lived. I suddenly remembered the omnipresent surveillance systems that were part and parcel of an educational history I was glad not to share on a daily basis and slowed to a brisk march. Being the first to

arrive, I took advantage of the rare opportunity to claim the best corner for our work to take place and began to get out my material. It was strange being alone in the canteen without the usual soundtrack of students exchanging gossip and friendly banter. For the first time I noticed the sound of the radio as the comforting rhythm of a familiar tune played in the background. That's a nice touch I thought, a bit more relaxing than having the leftovers of Alex's phone conversations droning through the conference room wall at any rate. Whilst I waited for the others to arrive, I noticed a collection of 'co-operative case studies' pinned to the wall behind a small group of student chatting amongst friends over a snack. From the corner I could just about make out a list of co-operative values and principles and began to wonder if anybody ever read these. Distracted by the memory of a conversation I'd had with a teacher from the South-West, I recalled how she had told me about her plans to involve students in re-writing the values and principles in order to, 'make it more meaningful to them' and began to think about how I might try something similar with the students at Blackbrook, that is if they wanted to, and if they ever turned up.

9. The unmistakable stamp of football boots clonking across the canteen floor diverted my attention away from the notices and towards a gang of boys plastered with the remains of this morning's downpour. I looked across to the hatch and noticed the profile of someone familiar, edging nervously to the side as the gang of lads barged to the front of the queue. It looked a bit like scooter-boy, only he wasn't wearing school uniform and was accompanied by a much older boy who bore the trademark of a similarly disheveled appearance. His arm protectively over scooter-boys shoulder he spat out a sarcastic response.

10. 'It's alright, don't mind us, just push in why don't ya!'

11. Fortunately, Helen a seasoned dinner lady who I had met previously during the harvest community tea dance, stepped in to keep the rabble under her expert control.

12. 'Right lads, I know you're all starvin' but I'm not having any pushing and shoving in my kitchen, these two were here first. No need to panic Jacob there's plenty of sarnies left today. Just wait your turn. Come on Harry, whatcha fancy for your tea tonight love'

13. Scooter-boy caught me staring his way and managed a half-hearted wave. I returned his extended arm with a solemn smile and desperately tried to mask my thoughts, lest I revealed my shock and concern about his welfare. The taller lad, who I could only assume to be his brother, shoved a couple of sandwiches in each coat pocket and motioned towards the door, eager to get away from the others. The boys trudged out with their heads bowed low, leaving the rowdy footballers to fight over the remaining sandwiches and I wondered whether scooter-boy's brother protected him at home? I sincerely hoped he did. I imagined what might greet them when they got home and hoped that these two weren't the same subjects of the distressing conversation I'd had with Caroline earlier in the week. Amongst a string of other disturbing tales she had also explained that she often washed students clothes to try and stop the other students from noticing the familiar stench of extreme poverty and troubled family life that many of Blackbrook's students endured. The familiar chords of Coldplay's 'fix you' interrupted my anxious musings and sent a shiver down my spine. Why this track? Why now of all times? It was almost half past four and the canteen would be closing soon. Nobody had showed up after all. I gathered together the reams of notes that littered the table beside me and decided it was time to go home.

14. 'If you never try you'll never know'

15. … Christ I needed to get out of here and clear my head. Right now! Who was waiting for Scooter Boy? What the hell was I doing here? I really didn't know. No word from Tom, no word from any of the students - not even Maddy or Jo! It was time to re-think everything. In my rush to block out those words I knew only too well, my bag swung across the table and sent the neat piles of research notes to the ground in a chaotic jumble, just in time for the final refrain.

16. Lights will guide you home,

17. And ignite your bones,

18. And I will try to fix you.

19. As I picked up the last sheet the shutters slid down with a crash and I swallowed hard and concentrated on getting to the car before I burst into tears. I tried hard not to think about the stark differences between after-school life at Blackbrook and my own local town, where just a few miles away there were probably teams of immaculately dressed school kids invading the local coffee shops and bistros, stopping off for a cake and a coffee on their way home at this very moment. This blunt reminder of the polar lives that kids of the same age led - just a few miles away from each other was sickening. The difference was sickening. Maybe Neil was right to question my motives. What was I doing here? How could a paltry piece of research on 'student voice', ever hope to make a significant difference. What was the point? I should be out there doing something. Not just writing but doing something useful. As I waited for the lights to change, Neil's words splintered Coldplay's as he argued and drowned out the old lyrics and transformed the patchwork of voices in my head into a new mash up, bound together by the unmistakable original melody.

20. 'When you try your best but you don't succeed'
21. 'We can only do so much…'
22. 'Lights will guide you home, And ignite your bones, And I will try to fix you'.
23. 'When you get what you want but not what you need…'
24. 'What exactly are you doing here with the kids Gail?'
25. *What do they want? What do they need?*
26. 'If you never try then you'll never know…'
27. 'Lights will guide you home, And ignite your bones, And I will try to fix you.'
28. *Could a co-operative model of schooling 'fix' anything?*

29. The final chorus haunted my entire journey home and a hundred and one doubts raced through my mind as I hurtled down the fast lane. I was desperate to get home and shut the door and get this place out of my head. I desperately wanted to see my own kids and breath the reassuring scent of home.

30. Was the 'no show' a sign of the student's resistance? Had my endeavours to underline the 'voluntary' nature of participation and move away from

'consultation' bitten me in the face? I wondered. I wondered all week. Had I misread the girl's comments about wanting to 'rant for ages' as enthusiasm for the project when instead, perhaps they simply just wanted to speak and to be listened to? I didn't want to believe that was the case. Had I overloaded them with too much information, or offered too many possibilities? Almost definitely. Had I made it seem like I expected a huge investment of their time and energy? Probably. Had I failed to recruit enough willing participants? Almost certainly. Had I made it look like too much work? For sure. Was I over-theorising their absence? Perhaps. I remained determined not to give up. With little else to go on I became ensnared in replaying our last meeting over and over, scrutinising every last word for possible clues...