Geo-identity, urban school choice and education campaigns for public schools

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Contents

Abstract

Educational campaigning has received little attention in the literature. This study investigates long-term and organised urban campaigns that are collectively lobbying the Victorian State Government in Australia, for a new public high school to be constructed in their suburb. A public high school is also known as a state school, government school, or an ordinary comprehensive school. It receives the majority of its funding from the State and Federal Australian Government, and is generally regarded as 'free' education, in comparison to a private school. Whilst the campaigners frame their requests as for a 'public school', their primary appeal is for a local school in their community. This study questions how collective campaigning for a locale-specific public school is influenced by geography, class and identity.

In order to explore these campaigns, I draw on formative studies of middle-class school choice from an Australian and United Kingdom perspective (Campbell, Proctor, & Sherington, 2009; Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011). To think about the role of geography and space in these processes of choice, I look to apply Harvey's (1973) theory of absolute, relational and relative space. I use Bourdieu (1999b) as a sociological lens that is attentive to "site effects" and it is through this lens that I think about class as a "collection of properties" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 106), actualised via mechanisms of identity and representation (Hall, 1996; Rose, 1996a, 1996b).

This study redresses three distinct gaps in the literature: first, I focus attention on a contemporary middle-class choice strategy—that is, collective campaigning for a public school. Research within this field is significantly under-

developed, despite this choice strategy being on the rise. Second, previous research argues that certain middle-class choosers regard the local public school as “inferior” in some way (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 111), merely acting as a “safety net” (Campbell, et al., 2009, p. 5) and connected to the working-class chooser (Reay & Ball, 1997). The campaigners are characteristic of the middle-class school chooser, but they are purposefully and strategically seeking out the local public school. Therefore, this study looks to build on work by Reay, et al. (2011) in thinking about “against-the-grain school choice”, specifically within the Australian context. Third, this study uses visual and graphic methods in order to examine the influence of geography in the education market (Taylor, 2001). I see the visualisation of space and schooling that I offer in this dissertation as a key theoretical contribution of this study.

I draw on a number of data sets, both qualitative and quantitative, to explore the research questions. I interviewed campaigners and attended campaign meetings as participant observer; I collected statistical data from fifteen different suburbs and schools, and conducted comparative analyses of each. These analyses are displayed by using visual graphs. This study uses maps created by a professional graphic designer and photographs by a professional photographer; I draw on publications by the campaigners themselves, such as surveys, reports and social media; but also, interviews with campaigners that are published in local or state newspapers. The multiple data sets enable an immersive and rich graphic ethnography.

This study contributes by building on understandings of how particular sociological cohorts of choosers are engaging with, and choosing, the urban public school in Australia. It is relevant for policy making, in that it comes at a time of

increasing privatisation and a move toward independent public schools. This study identifies cohorts of choosers that are employing individual and collective political strategies to obtain a specific school, and it identifies this cohort via explicit class-based characteristics and their school choice behaviours. I look to use fresh theoretical and methodological approaches that emphasise space and geography, theorising *geo-identity* and the *pseudo-private* school.

Declaration

In accordance with Monash University Doctorate Regulation 17.2 Doctor of Philosophy and Research Master's regulations the following declarations are made:

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes two original papers published in peer reviewed journals. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the candidate, working within the Faculty of Education at Monash University under the supervision of Mary Lou Rasmussen.

In the case of chapter one, two and five my contribution to the work involved the following:

Thesis chapter	Publication title	Publication status	Nature and extent of candidate's contribution
2,5	Theorising *geo-identity* and David Harvey's space: school choices of the geographically bound middle-class, to be published in *Critical Studies in Education*. Routledge, Australia. (Rowe, In press)	In Press	100%
1,2	The discourse of public education: an urban campaign for a local public high school in Melbourne, Victoria. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 35*(1), 116-128. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2012.739471 (Rowe, 2014)	Published	100%

I have not renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis.

Signed: ……

Date: ……

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My original venture into research was in the form of my Masters thesis with supervisor Dr. Joel Windle. Joel encouraged me to continue my research by applying for a PhD scholarship. I don't think I would have taken up a dissertation if it wasn't for his encouragement and influence, for which I am very grateful. He was the main supervisor for the first year of this study and he influenced the original ideas of this research. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with Joel.

Dr. Scott Bulfin became my supervisor towards the later stages of this dissertation. I am incredibly appreciative of the feedback I received from Scott, which helped to sharpen and develop my arguments. I am grateful for his insightful critique and guidance. I would also like to thank academics who sat on my confirmation panel, pre-submission panel or read earlier (and final) drafts of this thesis—Jane Kenway, Terri Seddon, Trevor Gale and Anne Harris. I appreciate your

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This study would not have happened without the input of the campaigners. I am very grateful for their generosity, time commitment and willingness to be involved. They allowed me to attend many campaign meetings, armed with a notepad and pen. There were many people who gave me their time for an interview and even though I was unable to use them all, I am sincerely appreciative.

I am very thankful for the support that I have received from Monash University. The Australian Postgraduate Award, ongoing financial support to attend conferences, and the office space has given me the time and space to undertake this dissertation. I have enjoyed my time at Monash University, and it has been rewarding to work in such a supportive and stimulating environment.

And finally, to my much loved family, you are my heart:

Frances, Clementine and Elisabeth.

List of Figures

1 What do we want? A local public high school

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the collective campaigns and aims to highlight the tensions that are produced by collective campaigning for a local public high school. The tensions are mapped out in a logical sequence, initially by introducing the campaigns and dominant geographical characteristics of the campaigns, before considering the research aims that frame the study. Finally, this chapter examines the public school—how it is defined and understood; the symbolism of public schooling; critical policies that have shaped the public school; and briefly, how parents are choosing the public school. This examination draws on both a historical and contemporary lens, in addition to a global and local lens.

1.2 The Campaigns

Figure 1"We want a local high school".

The Lawson High Campaign (see Figure 1) emerged in the inner-city suburb of Lawson in 2003, formed by a number of local families (Field notes - August 26, 2012), even though politically-affiliated members tend to claim merit for its beginnings (Robert, Interview February 27th, 2012). It is currently ongoing at the time of writing. Their exclusive purpose is to obtain a government-funded high school in their immediate locale[1]. I am referring to a school that is commonly understood as a 'government', 'public' or 'state' school. It receives the majority of its funding from the State government, but it also receives funding from the Australian Federal Government (which is the central government). The public school is different to the 'private' or 'non-government' school, which is generally regarded as a fee-paying and select entry school. Even though the campaigners are lobbying for a public, government or state school, their central emphasis is continually on a "local" and "community" facility (Lawson High Working Group, 2009; Smith High Campaign Website, 2008; Tarica, 2010). The geographical position of the school is of upmost importance to the campaigners.

The Lawson High Campaign is not alone in this bid for a 'local community' school. There are many other campaigns dotted around the city of Melbourne—the Smith High Campaign, Klein, Dodson and Williams[2]. More campaigns that share the same goal are continually emerging; in April 2014, another six collective campaigns were counted. In this study, data is drawn first from the Lawson High Campaign (LHC) and second, from the Smith High Campaign (SHC). As both represent current

[1] A high school educates the upper years (students aged 12-18) and is also referred to as a "secondary school".
[2] I use pseudonyms for all campaigns, participants, suburbs and schools, in the interests of ethical research.

or ongoing actions, this study also draws on a past and successful campaign for a local public high school, in the suburb of Thompson. This campaign achieved a school in 2011. I have included a foldout map that shows each of these campaigns, in the back of this thesis (see Appendix C), which is an important tool for the reader in visualising each of these campaigns. The maps illustrate each campaign in relation to its proximity to the city and the location of schools in their surrounds. They are intended to visually demonstrate the boundaries and margins of choice-makers and choice-spaces.

The campaigns are sizeable, sustained and well organised. The Lawson and Smith High Campaign have an emailing list of 1300 and 1500 members respectively; however Lawson High Campaign meetings typically contain between five to ten people. The time which is necessitated by the lobbying is *exhaustive*; members from the Lawson and Smith High Campaign meet regularly with bureaucrats from the Department of Education; they also meet occasionally with politicians, such as the State Minister of Education or the opposition Minister; they meet monthly as a closed working group, but also monthly as a group open to the public; each campaign maintains a social media presence, in the form of a professionally-designed website and a Facebook page; they independently conduct research, such as surveys or questionnaires, and publish and compile these results for public viewing. For example, the Smith High Campaign produced a 36-page survey that included 267 responses to four questions. This was published and made available to the public on their website (Smith High Campaign, 2013). The Lawson High Campaign produced a 44-page research document in support of their goals and made this available for

download on their website (Lawson High Working Group, 2009). They organise petitions and annual or bi-annual protest events, such as rallies and marches. They write letters and press-releases for newspapers; members are interviewed regularly by local and state-wide newspapers, and members agree to be photographed; the campaigns run stalls at community events; design maps, posters and t-shirts to promote their cause; and each campaign elicits donations from individuals and businesses (such as a $1,000 donation from a bank or a $10,000 donation from a property developer). The Smith High Campaign has featured on television and frequently on radio. There are over forty support letters available on their website, written by individual campaigners, local businesses, political representatives and so on. The campaigner's commitment to the cause is considerably evident, over a long-term period. Indeed, the Smith High Campaign leader asserted that it is a "full-time job" (Topsfield, 2012a).

Lawson High Campaigner Mark says, "it (the campaign) actually has structure, it has some political influence, political clout" (Interview August 23, 2012). Even though the Lawson and Smith High Campaign attract political attention—in the form of meetings with government officials, politicians and also their attendance at campaign events—the extent of political clout is debatable. Despite its long-term presence, the Lawson High Campaign is yet to be successful and there exists no public secondary school in the suburb of Lawson, albeit distances to neighbouring schools differ. The closest public school to the suburb of Lawson is Mountain High School (900 metres), however I do not include it within the following analysis because it is not accessible to everyone. It is a single-sex school, educates

only the upper years and is select entry (this further highlights the problematic labeling of schools as public/private).

There is a public secondary school in the suburb of Smith, but enrolment is restrictive on the basis of age and academic results. The State Government regularly commissions feasibility studies, in order to assess whether these suburbs require a new school. In these studies, independent research consultancy groups use Census data to ascertain whether the new school would achieve adequate student enrolments.

In their agitations for a locale-specific school, geography is an over-riding facet of choice and I turn to the importance of geography, to consider the dominant spaces of the choice-makers but also the schools in this study.

1.2.1 The importance of geography

Figure 2 "We need a local high school" Lawson High Campaign.

Figure 3 "This village needs a high school" Smith High Campaign.

There are shared geographical characteristics in terms of where the Lawson and Smith High Campaigns are located. Each suburb is situated within ten kilometres of the Melbourne city centre and represents a politically left seat. Both campaigns had a public high school in their suburb, which was closed during a surge of state privatisation reforms in the 1990s. Fast-forward approximately ten years, after the suburb has experienced a considerable gentrification overhaul and a collective campaign for a local public high school has emerged. To illustrate this point, I refer to an economic profile of suburb Lawson, from the period 2001 to 2006:

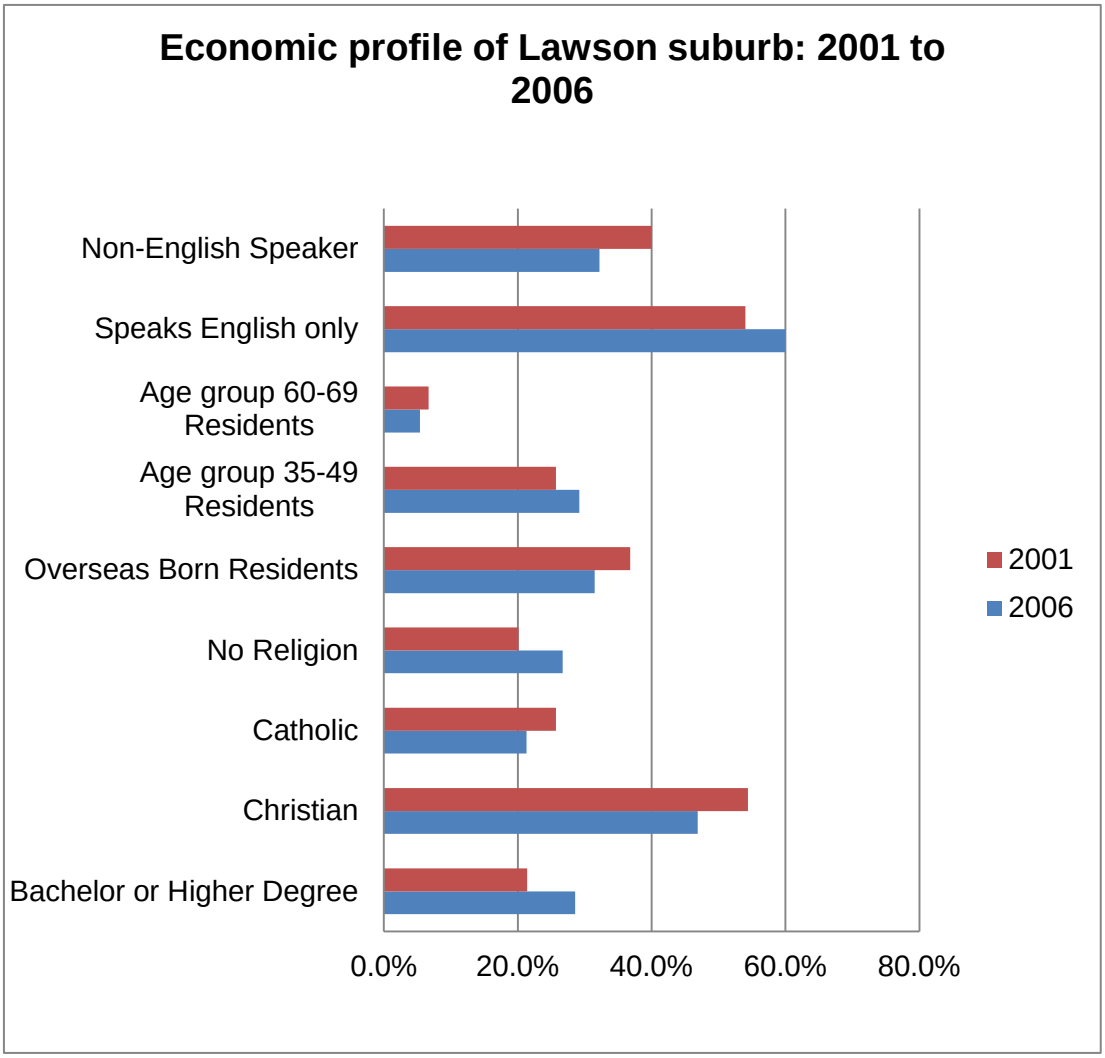


Figure 4 Economic profile of Lawson suburb 2001-2006.

Statistically, there is an increase of persons with university educational qualifications, who speak English only and identify with 'no religion'. There is a decline of traditional religions, such as Catholicism or Christianity, and non-English

speakers[3]. The Lawson High Campaign emerged during this period (2003) and the relationship between gentrification processes and organised, collective lobbying for educational services is evident. Gentrification is spatial redistribution that occurs individually, but it also occurs collectively, in that a large cohort of individuals (who share similar social, economic and cultural attributes) decide to establish residency in a particular geographical location, in the same period of time. This collective spatial movement can be used to acquire additional services. Each campaign in this study has emerged in a recently gentrified suburb, and this includes the other campaigns such as Dodson, Klein and Melville (Atkinson, Wulff, Reynolds, & Spinney, 2011).

There are evidently strong patterns that may all be connected to geography. The central purpose of campaigning is to acquire a high school that is geographically or locale-specific. The school-of-choice for the campaigners is measured and constituted by its location and proximity to residential address. This cannot be emphasised enough. In addition, all campaign action occurs within this fixed geographical site—the suburb of Smith or Lawson—making the campaign itself physically contained within absolute space (Harvey, 1973).

Aside from the campaigner's emphasis, the matter of geography is relevant when considering the public school. In Australia, the public school is theoretically free and open access, but in practice, geography operates as a principal mechanism of exclusion/inclusion. This mechanism is referred to as a 'catchment area' or 'school zone', and parents retain automatic access to the school measured as closest to their

[3] These figures were obtained from an economic profile of the Lawson suburb (Lawson City Council, 2008, 2012).

residential address. If parents desire a school that is outside of their school zone, enrolment depends on whether the school is experiencing high-demand, and consequentially turning away students from outside of the zone. In exceptional cases, enrolment may be allowed for students who live outside of the zone, if they sit a special entrance examination or if they possess certain skills or abilities that are of particular value to the school (Rowe & Windle, 2012). Therefore, in the context of the public school, your residential address is of upmost importance. Parents may also choose a private (non-government) high school and the enrolment restrictions vary from school to school. The vast majority impose a certain level of fees onto parents and some schools are select-entry.

In regards to the surrounding schools, the campaigners stress the problem of distance and geography. They also claim that certain schools are over-subscribed. But these are arguably smokescreens for preferences. As shown in the map below (see Figure 5), government and non-government schools are located within five *walking* distance kilometres from suburb Lawson[4]. The name of the school also denotes the name of the suburb:

[4] All distances are reported in kilometres (1 km is equal to 0.62 miles). For more information regarding how distances were calculated, see Appendix A1. For more information about how to read this map, see section 3.4.2.2.

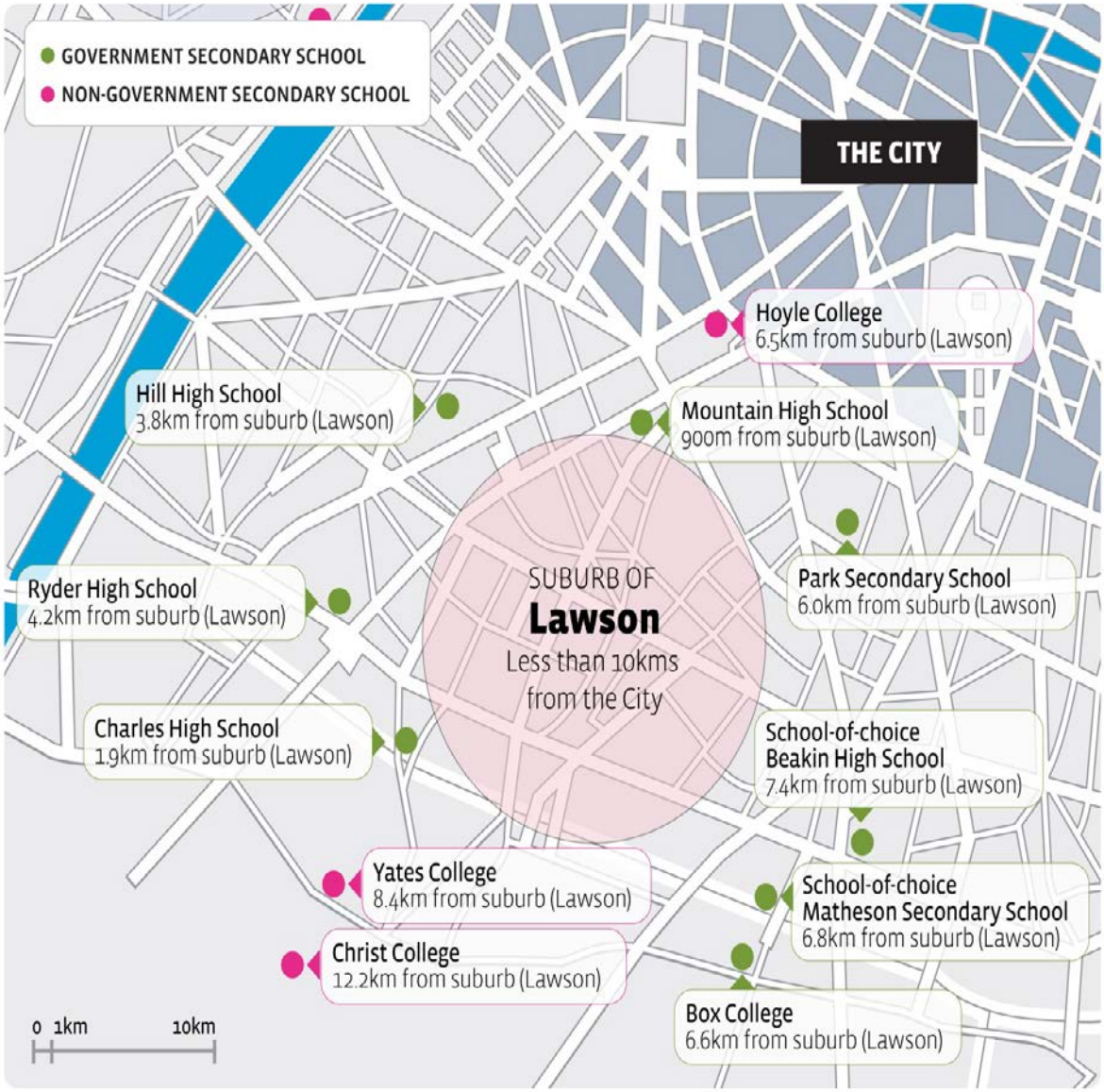


Figure 5 Lawson suburb and surrounding high schools.

The measurements on this map are my own and they do conflict with the distances calculated by the campaigners. The campaigners argue that the surrounding schools necessitate over five kilometres of travel and are "too far away" (Lawson High Working Group, 2009). The campaigners repeatedly rely on an argument of

proximity. Not only do individual campaigners distance themselves from outright denigration of the surrounding schools, but so too does the collective as a whole. The Lawson High Campaign firmly promotes partnership and collegiality with the surrounding schools, as evident in this announcement on their website: "We have always been supportive of the existing public schools in the region—they are just too far away" (Lawson High Working Group, No date).

For the Lawson High Campaigners, if a local high school has not been obtained, the preferable schools in the surrounding suburbs are Matheson Secondary and Beakin High, located in the suburbs of Matheson and Beakin respectively. They are labelled as 'school-of-choice' on the map (see Figure 5). These preferences are mentioned in the majority of interviews. However, enrolment in Beakin High and Matheson Secondary is unlikely due to strict catchment areas and high demand for places in these schools.

Matheson Secondary is renown in Melbourne for its high-achieving school leaving results[5], with similar results as elite private schools (Better Education, 2008-2012). The enrolment pressures are immediately visible when entering the school's website and a strongly worded announcement (highlighted in yellow and coloured in bright red) regarding enrolment, is first and foremost on their home page:

> **ⓘ Please Note: The School has been receiving applications on behalf of students not yet living in Australia. Only applications for students currently living in Australia are considered. Similarly, the School has**

[5] In Victoria, students complete their VCE to access university (Victorian Certificate of Education).

> **been receiving applications on behalf of students who intend to move from interstate or other zones. Only applications for students currently living in the zone with requisite proof of residence are considered.** (Matheson High School, 2013, emphasis in original)

Besides for Beakin and Matheson, the surrounding schools are 'too far away' and so, it is necessary to consider how these schools can be accessed via public transport, walking or cycling. Therefore, I consider the driving distance[6] from the suburb of Lawson in relation to the surrounding schools that are co-educational and public:

[6] See Appendix A1 for more information about the calculation of distances.

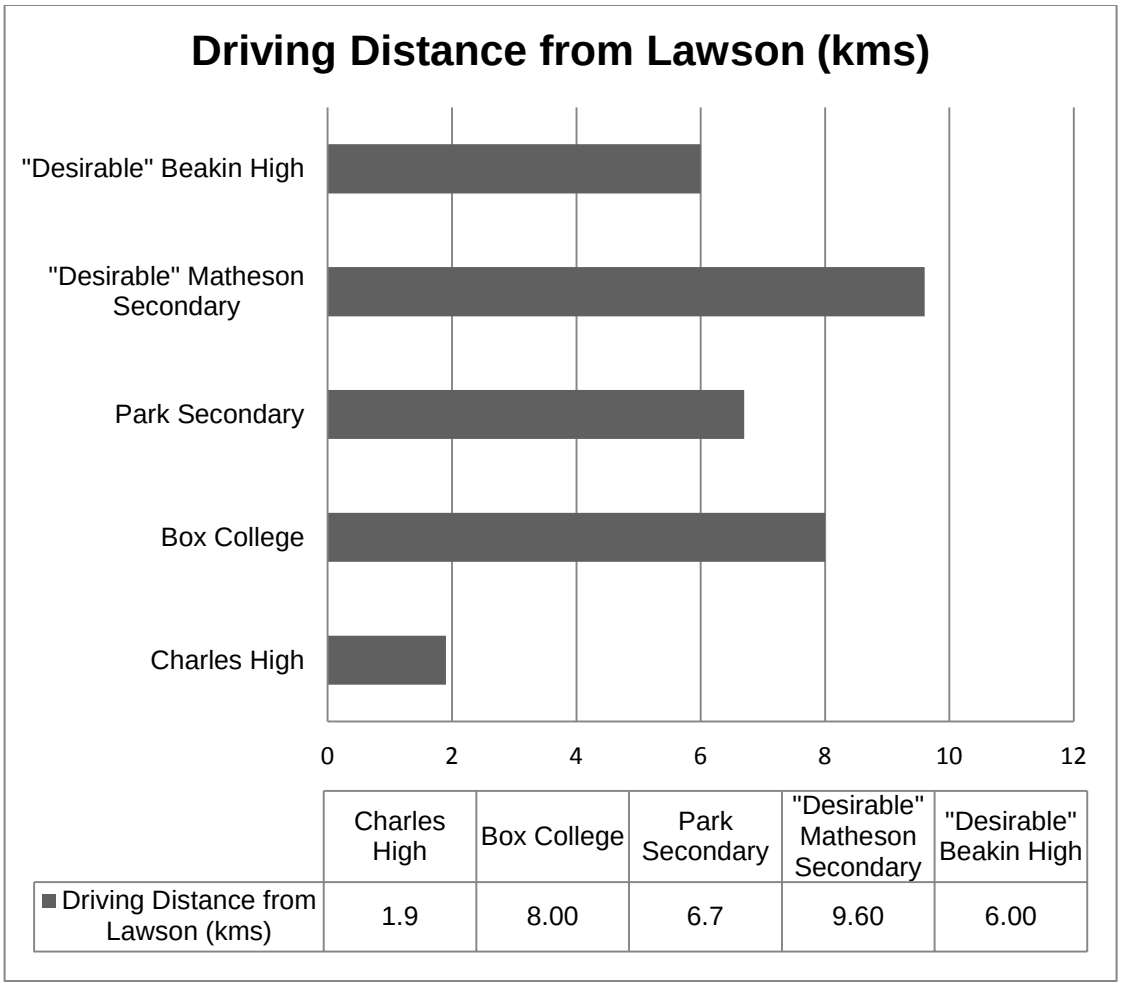


Figure 6 Driving distance from Lawson suburb to surrounding schools.

This chart shows the relative proximity of Charles High, particularly when compared to the preferred schools (Beakin and Matheson). Beakin High and Matheson Secondary are two of the furthest schools from the suburb of Lawson.

The campaigners continually assert their preference to walk to school and walking to the surrounding schools would be difficult and unlikely, when considering the arterial roads. There is an availability of public transport in Lawson, which includes buses and trains. Travelling to Matheson involves at least two modes of

public transport—something that campaigners are vehemently against—requiring an approximate travel journey of 40 minutes each way (Metlink Melbourne, 2012). This is compared to a one-way bus trip to Charles High School, and for the five out of the ten interview participants who reside less than 500 meters from each other, a one-way bus trip to Charles High School is approximately 17 to 20 minutes (Metlink Melbourne, 2012). Surrounding schools are willing to implement free-of-charge school buses that will pick-up and drop-off Lawson inhabitants from home to school (Karen, Interview August 23rd 2012; Robert, Interview February 27th 2012; Steven, Interview January 24th 2012). The State Government has previously funded a free-of-charge bus service, which picked up Lawson children from home to school, but it ended due to a lack of interest. Campaigner Adele talks about the bus service:

> Adele: I also met with a few of the principals in the area… two or three principals from Park Secondary and they were very keen to, you know, to encourage children to progress down there, to the point of… we can move a whole grade six class and make that a year seven class and we can help bus them down to our school etcetera…
>
> E: Oh right, they were very keen to have you there?
>
> Adele: Absolutely. Yeah.
>
> E: Why do you think that is?
>
> Adele: They've got the capacity, absolutely. (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

Adele's confessional-like anecdote conflicts with the position that the Lawson High Campaign outwardly expresses. The Lawson High Campaign continually emphasises the lack of capacity in surrounding schools, but only in relation to certain schools (Charles, Box, Park and Hill). Each of these schools does not currently enforce a school zone. Lawson High Campaign's Working Group report (2009) claims that these schools are at capacity, and argues they will be forced to implement portable classrooms in order to enroll more students, at the expense of student recreational areas. According to enrolment figures for each school, the preferred choice (Beakin High) actually has the highest enrolment number, Matheson Secondary is the second highest and Charles High School has the lowest enrolment figure[7]. However, the enrolment figures do not adequately demonstrate each school's differing resources.

In this section, I have scrutinised the concerns that the campaigners present, in their demand for a local public high school. The purpose of this is to establish the context, but also the tensions, surrounding the campaigns. The objective of this study is not to ascertain a response as to whether these suburbs require a local school or not. I am drawing on the collective action for a public high school as a sociological lens, in order to investigate school choice and the influence of geography and matters of class within choice politics and practices.

Campaigning for a locale-specific public school evokes important questions for cultural geographers, class theorists and school choice researchers, whilst the act

[7] These figures are the most recent figures available at time of writing, from *My School* website (2010).

of lobbying for a government-funded service raises important questions for education policy makers. In Australia, the public school annually receives 25.2 billion dollars[8] from the government and educates 66 per cent of the population[9] (Gonski et al., 2011). The public school is important—not only to the economy—but is also a fundamental social and cultural component. Considering the large portion of government expenditure attributed to the public school and that it educates the majority of the population, it is critical to consider how parents' are engaging with, and choosing the public school. The public school is positioned within a tense juxtaposition—one that serves both consumer and citizen.

1.2.2 Research questions and methods

The central question that drives this investigation is:

> *(1) How is campaigning for a locale-specific public school influenced by geography and class identity?*

The main question aims to contribute within three fields: school choice, geography and class identity. I am looking to emphasise the spatiality of the chooser, their school-of-choice and tactics and strategies they undertake to obtain this school. This also incorporates the school choice behaviour that is in *extension* to the collective campaigning. I consider the way these decisions, tactics or the preferred school is talked about, using common language.

[8] Australian dollars (this applies to all dollar references).
[9] 2009 figures

In looking to emphasise the spatiality of the chooser and their school-of-choice, this leans on arguments from Reay, et al.'s (2011) study, titled *White Middle-class Identities and Urban Schooling.* The authors identify the "school and the home locality as spaces where … tensions and possibilities for identity generation are played out" (p. 45). These spaces are fundamentally important in examining how campaigners identify, the choices they make in relation to schooling, and their imagined school. In this, I scrutinise the campaigners objective (the local community school), but I also examine surrounding schools.

This dissertation endeavours to contribute to understandings of the public school and therefore I include a sub-question which reflects this aim. This study considers how the public school functions within a marketised system, that is, a system that emphasises the value and freedom of school choice for consumers. Is the public school attractive for the consumer and if not, why not? This sub-question is:

> *(a) In the context of educational privatisation reforms, how does the public high school achieve market value?*

In order to investigate these questions, this ethnographic school choice study utilises visual representations (photographs, detailed graphic maps and images) to explore primary knowledge contributions. The study also relies on participant observation, informal and formal face-to-face interviews, newspaper reports, campaigner's publications including online documents and resources, and statistical data. It is influenced by traditional modes of ethnography, in that it uses qualitative

and quantitative data, and seeks to convey a sense of place through narrative (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Atkinson, Delamont, & Housley, 2008; Delamont, 2009; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Pink, 2009). The selected methodological approach reflects the intended contribution, in that it facilitates lived and immersed participation within the central geographical site and ongoing, meaningful interaction with participants (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001).

The following section underlines the tensions of collective campaigning for a public school. This is an important starting point, in order to frame the research questions. The campaigners are lobbying for a "public high school", but what does this really mean in a privatised era? What does the public school come to symbolise and represent, via the campaign action? In making these arguments, there is a danger of generalising in regards to the public school. There are broad differences within the public school sector, but I make these arguments in order to set up juxtapositions and tensions, before teasing out the nuances and complexities.

1.3 The symbolism of public education

> Lawson High Campaigner Mark: *I believe in a public school system, yes*—that should be properly funded and properly supported by the government. Politically, that's where I sit. (Interview August 23rd, 2012b)

The discourse of public education continues to be utilised as a reference point, serving to embody what Scott (2009) refers to as "metonymic slippage" (p. 1). The

continuing reliance on simple dichotomies of “public/private” (Ball, 2007, p. 15) or “government/non-government” is grounded within an historical perspective of public education as “free, secular and compulsory” (Wilkinson, Caldwell, Selleck, Harris, & Dettman, 2007) and despite the palpable shifts away from its historical beginnings, the shorthand reference of public education continues to be utilised (Feinberg, 2012).

How we understand and perceive of the government-subsidised public school holds significant sociological, cultural, economic and political ramifications. The public school frequently evokes impassioned responses and debate within the wider global community, and stands as the centre-point in political and social debates (Gonski, et al., 2011; Kenway, 1987; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013). For many people, “public education” is a symbol of Australia’s alleged classless and egalitarian society, one that values a “fair go” for all (Graham, 2007), whilst others associate it with declining learning and teaching standards, immoral student behaviour and sloppy uniforms (Donnelly, 2004; McInerney, 2006).

When it comes to political debates on education, which often arise from funding disputes, the private/public division is staunchly opposed, with one Australian Education Minister referring to the division as “stale old ideological warfare” (Ferrari, 2011; Harrison, 2012). Despite politician’s best efforts at distancing themselves from this “stale old ideological warfare” regarding schooling sectors—and the differences between them, such as levels of government funding—the debate continues to incite what popular media label as “class war” (Topsfield & Preiss, 2012), “ideological war” (Ferrari, 2011) and a “battle between private and public schools” (Thompson, 2012).

In an era of privatisation and free market rules, there is an ongoing tension at the heart of public schooling, whether this concerns funding levels or perceived quality of services. Pring (1987) describes privatisation in education as a two-way agenda. First, “making public education increasingly dependent on private funds” and second, “encouraging the development of private education by supporting it with public funds” (p. 289). Privatisation reforms have gradually, yet fundamentally, altered the composition of the public school, in terms of how decisions are made (decentralisation), how it attracts customers/citizens and how it is funded.

In Ball’s (2007) work, he outlines how contemporary privatisation has eroded the “traditional dividing line between public and private” (p. 24). The decline of traditional dividing lines throughout OECD nations is well documented within academic research (Ball, 2009, 2012; Ball & Youdell, 2008; Levin, 1999; Lubienski, 2001, 2003b, 2005a, 2007; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013; Muzaffar & Sharma, 2011; O’Neill, 2011; Reid, 2005; Seddon & Angus, 2000; Watkins, 2012). Indeed, as Picower (2012) argues:

> It is no longer considered radical to say that market forces are transforming public education as we know it. A few years ago in the United States, only in the circles of academia and the far left was the demise of the ‘public’ in the public school system at the hands of politicians, the elite, and Wall Street investors being criticized. Now such commentary has become relatively mainstream. (p. 44)

There is a paradox of the public. Whilst neoliberal principles of competition, privatisation and unregulated school choice corrode historical divisions of schooling, these policies simultaneously heighten segmentation and marked differences, according to sector. The public school comes to be *known* via a lens of disadvantage; but what happens when individuals collectivise to specifically agitate for this service? The campaigners are utilising their rights as both consumer—the right to a school of their choice—and citizen, their right to a free education.

The public school is an institution that is contentious in terms of its failures and successes, but also how it is named, known and understood. It is associated with multiple historical assemblages and symbolic understandings. The agitation for a public high school results in a "conflation of different discourses" (Krimmer, 2010, p. 3), generating historical and nostalgic conceptions of government services (Seddon & Angus, 2000); social and community identity; and a selective meaning of local (Reay, et al., 2011). There are multiple 'truths' surrounding the campaign. Are the surrounding schools reasonably too far away? Are the surrounding schools at capacity? This lends itself to how Foucault (1980) thinks about 'truth' and the battle "for truth":

> … or, at least 'around truth' – it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth,

> but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. (p. 132)

The battle for truth and the economic role of 'truth' is a relevant line of thinking within the context of this study. However, rather than focus attention on proving a truth as right or wrong, I will focus on what this debate produces and accentuates.

The notion of a public school is a discourse, one that "produces knowledge [and] governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about" (Hall, 1997, p. 44). The public school contains a truth-telling discourse, one that is replete with connotations, symbols and imagery. It is a discourse that is emblematic and positioned within a "particular historical moment" (Hall, 1992, p. 291). To make this argument, it is necessary to consider the particular historical assemblages of the 'public' school.

1.3.1 Historical assemblages

> The idea of public can be traced back to the Greek "Agora" where citizens would come to exchange both goods and ideas and where matters of state might be deliberated. (Feinberg, 2012, p. 1)

In tracing back to the origins of the word 'public', it was utilised to indicate an exchange of goods and ideas in a central location, between members of the public. It was in the late 1800s that a formalised concept of mass-compulsory education, that

was available to the public through a government-owned and legislated system, grew in the Western world and developing nations:

> In the last third of the nineteenth century, systems of mass compulsory schooling were established in most countries of the Western world. Between 1869 and 1882 alone, schooling was made compulsory in Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba in Canada, in 14 of the American states, in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales in Australia, in New Zealand, Scotland, the 15 crown lands of the Austrian Empire, in the Netherlands and Switzerland, and in France and England. (Miller, 1989, p. 123)

The introduction of mass-compulsory education is a significant sociological event, driven by a multitude of complex factors including social welfare concerns and economics. Public concern was expressed over the disturbing levels of child labour and the financial inaccessibility of education for poorer children. Lower educational levels correlated with levels of crime and imprisonment of young men (Simon, 1965; Sirisena, 1967; Wallis, 1984). Sirisena (1967) discusses the relationship between crime and education in Sri Lanka and the historical social movement of the middle-classes to establish compulsory education:

> Where punitive measures had failed, he felt education would succeed. The national leaders too declared publicly that ignorance was the main cause of

> crime and that it was not surprising that the two lakhs of boys who received no education of any kind grew up to be criminals. The obvious remedy was compulsory education, the demand for which came at this time from an articulate middle-class. (p. 333)

In Australia, Victoria was the first colony to establish the officially legislated public school, after a long campaign resulted in the *1872 Victorian Education Act* (Campbell & Proctor, 2014; Grundy, 1972; Wallis, 1984; Wilkinson, et al., 2007)[10]. The central foundation of this Act was "free, secular and compulsory" education (Wallis, 1984) and this discourse established the fundamentals of the public school. Education was 'free' because it was compulsory, universally accessible and available without payment. It was 'secular' in that all religious instruction was excluded from schooling and state aid for religious schools was abolished. It was 'compulsory', in that attendance was enforced and parents were legally expected to comply (Grundy, 1972; Wilkinson, et al., 2007).

Establishment of "free, secular and compulsory" education was based on a firm belief that a common education would "create opportunities for all", remove elitism, religious discrimination and fundamentally unite the community (Sherington & Campbell, 2007, p. 16). Leading campaigners evoked in speeches that all children, of all citizens, "whether high or low, rich or poor, are entitled to the best education

[10] For a comprehensive account of the history of Australian schooling, see Campbell and Proctor (2014).

that the state can attend, and none can have superior rights over others" (Sherington & Campbell, 2007, p. 28).

The *1872 Act* abolished funding for religious or private schools and while parents were free to choose private fee-paying institutions established by the Catholic or Protestant churches, public state funded education was provided freely to parents, without monetary contribution (Bonnor & Caro, 2007; Grundy, 1972). The primary arguments for the abolishment of government funding for religious schools were that public funds could only be used for "universal benefit" and "the state could not devote resources to serve only a portion of its citizens" (Sherington & Campbell, 2007, pp. 28, 29). It was alleged that religion caused division in the community, due to ongoing conflicts concerning which religion should be instructed in schools. Religious instruction was eventually excluded from public schools (Wilkinson, et al., 2007).

However, the concept of "free, secular and compulsory" schooling is limited in scope when thinking about the contemporary public school. The substantial increase in number of students and increased emphasis on secondary school completion is considerably more pronounced in contemporary times (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982). In addition, sources and level of funding have changed considerable since the 1800s. In Australia, many changes were made following World War Two, when the Federal Government first funded the secondary school (Marginson, 1997; Wilkinson, et al., 2007). This argument will be continued in the following section, by comparing the historical assemblages of the public

school with a contemporary composition. It will argue that the notion of a public school evokes important and symbolic connotations.

1.4 Defining the public school: a problematic proposal

> People erroneously understand public education almost exclusively in terms of funding, access, and provision. (Lubienski, 2001, p. 639)

Within the international context, the term 'public' school contains different meanings. In the United Kingdom, a public school actually refers to a group of fee-paying and elite private schools. The sector that is free and government-owned is understood as the 'state' sector, in the United Kingdom (Graddy & Stevens, 2005).

The public school in the country of Chile is known as the municipal school and it is publicly funded. Chile has three sectors, "the publicly funded municipal schools, independent private schools … and state subsidized private schools" (Burton, 2012, p. 3). The Spanish school system is also set up in this way, with a public, private and subsidised private (Bernal, 2005). Unlike Australia's private sector, Spain and Chile's independent private sector receives no tax-payer monies.

Finland is considered to be the world's most educated society in terms of literacy rates, OECD rankings and number of college graduates (40%). It is also largely described as a free education system for the population, from elementary to tertiary (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007; Peltonen, 1993). There is a small number of state-funded, privately run religious schools and Steiner schools that are permitted to

set catchment areas, but they are not allowed to charge fees (Field, et al., 2007). Finland has "relatively little variance in performance associated with the school" (Walker, 2011, p. 75) and also has a literacy rate well-above the OECD average[11] (OECD, 2011). Whilst there are many factors that contribute to their high literacy rate, such as teaching quality, the equitable distribution of resources and managed differences between schools contributes to these outcomes.

In the United States, the public school may be referred to as the "state", "government" (Caldwell, 2010) or "traditional public school" (Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holme, 1999) to denote a government-owned and subsidised school. However, a public school may also refer to the charter school which is available in thirty-four states and gains accreditation by specifically stating their educational purposes within a charter (Wells, et al., 1999). Lubienski (2001) writes that "virtually every definition of charter schools asserts that they are a form of public schooling" as they are funded by tax-payer dollars, widely accessible and managed by "public entities" (p. 634). The constitution of public is problematic in this instance (Lubienski, 2001), as the charter school is publicly funded, yet arguably retains limited access to the public. Enrolment lotteries and an explicit educational purpose enable a mode of inclusion and exclusion.

In other countries, school systems that resemble the charter school model are also emerging (or have already emerged). Similarities can be drawn with the "mini school" in Vancouver, Canada. Even though mini schools are officially part of the

[11] In 2007, it was reported that Finland had the highest literacy rate in the Western world with only 1% of 15-year-olds unable to demonstrate basic functional reading skills, compared to the OECD average of 7% (Field, et al., 2007).

public school system, they retain selective entry procedures and are distinguished through a unique curriculum and a more intensive academic focus (Yoon, 2011). Mini-schools are considered to be the "upgraded alternative to the standard, comprehensive secondary school … yet, what has become an important characterization of these schools has been its emphasis on and adaptations of the term 'community'" (Yoon, 2011, p. 255).

This study comes at a time of a push for independent public schools in Australia, a Federal Government[12] initiative that aims to make one-fourth of all public schools more autonomous and increase the decision-making powers of both schools and parents (Australian Government Department of Education, 2014). The similarities to charter schools in the United States are evident. However, even though these policies are currently being pushed on a wider Federal scale, these policies have been evident in the State of Victoria, where this study is based, since the 1990s.

I canvass these different definitions of the public in order to demonstrate that there is no pure definition of the public school. The notion of public schooling is becoming increasingly diluted, across the world. In Australia, the public school is understood as the government school because it is funded and owned by the government. However, this definition is fraught with contradictions. One method of defining whether a school is public or private is to assess how decisions are made within the school. For example, the OECD (2004) notes that a school "is classified as

[12] The "Federal" government refers to the central Australian government, as opposed to each State Government.

either public or private according to whether a public agency or a private entity has the ultimate power to make decisions concerning the institution's affairs" (p. 314).

Assessing decision-making powers in order to make a private/public distinction is problematised by decentralisation (Caldwell, 1993), a process that seeks to transfer decision-making powers from the central body to the school. When a school is "decentralised", decision-making and responsibility is "devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling" (Gonski, et al., 2011, p. 5). The independent public school model is an example of decentralisation.

The State of Victoria was the earliest state in Australia to embrace decentralisation through formalised legislation (Gonski, et al., 2011) via the 1998 *Education (Self-Governing) School Act* (Parliament of Victoria, 1998). The fundamental objective of the Act was to enable government schools to be "self-managing" and operate autonomously from government sectors and agencies (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Crooks, 1996; Hannan, 1996; Seddon, 1996). The aim was to model public high schools to be more like private schools. The majority developed independent charters and elected independent school councils. Ideally, these councils would appoint business leaders in order to facilitate competitive engagement within a marketised environment and more efficient use of budgets. Approximately 90 per cent of the public school budget was decentralised (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Spaull, 1999), which is a crucial privatisation underpinning. Schools were to ultimately blend into the market-place, be "competitive and corporate, enterprising and accountable" (Hannan, 1996, p. 61).

This period of time in the State of Victoria was a period of massive change for public services, including the public school. The 1998 Act was the conclusion of an aggressive privatisation agenda by the State Kennett Government, and Victoria became the most privatised state in Australia (Cahill & Beder, 2005; Walker & Walker, 2000). During the period from 1992 to 1996, over three hundred public schools were closed and more than 8,000 public school teachers were dismissed (Spaull, 1999), due to a so called need for an "education revolution" (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998, p.79). This education revolution focused exclusively on public schools.

Indeed, making a clear distinction between the public school and private school is difficult, in the face of decentralisation. The naming of the public school as "public" is more so about the connotations and understandings that underpin this label. There are many dominant assumptions when it comes to public schooling, for the consumer. As Lubienski (2001) noted, people tend to understand the public school as a place that is free, secular and inclusive. I will now examine each of these concepts, to continue troubling the conceptualisation of public schooling.

1.4.1 Free, secular and inclusive

In Australia, government policy theoretically enforces accessibility of public schools. Parents are able to enroll in any government school of their choosing, provided the institution has sufficient places (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), 2007; Gonski, et al., 2011). However, for certain public schools, demand far exceeds places available. These are "high-demand"

public schools. Whilst many public schools remain accessible and inclusive, there are public schools that practice selective entry enrolment, whether that be via academic testing, music or sporting selection, active and enforced zoning of residential location or streaming of student abilities (Caldwell, 2010; Rowe & Windle, 2012).

Public schools are also thought to be values-neutral or secular. In Australia, public schools are mired in controversies surrounding religion and Maddox's (2014) book, titled *Taking God to School*, effectively explores this debate. The Federal Government funds a National Christian chaplaincy program and primary public schools in Victoria hold religious classes, run by volunteers from a Christian organisation (Marshall, 2014; Topsfield, 2011a). Religion may interfere with matters of accessibility and inclusion. In comparison to OECD standards, Australia maintains a "relatively high concentration of religious schools" (Buckingham, 2010, p. 8).

The private school sector in Australia is made up of two separate sectors—the Independent and the Catholic. The private school tends to be religiously affiliated, even though there are extensive differences as to how religion is applied and understood in each school. When it comes to the Independent sector, which makes up 30 per cent of all schools in Australia, many different religions are represented. The Anglican-affiliated forms the highest percentage of enrolment within this sector (27.98%), whilst Hare Krishna is the lowest (0.01%) (Gonski, et al., 2011).

Perhaps the most dominant assumption when it comes to the public school is that they are free. In the State of Victoria, many public primary and secondary schools charge annual fees, in the range of hundreds to thousands of dollars (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Hannan, 1996; Schmidt, 2011; Spaull, 1999). Charging

fees interferes with accessibility. However, Australian government policy allows for schools to charge "modest fees … for additional materials and excursions". At the same time, "a student should not be denied an education program because a payment has not been met" (Gonski, et al., 2011, p. 5). This policy is reinforced in the State of Victoria by the *2006 Victorian Education and Training Act*. A school council may ask parents to "make a financial contribution" and may use this contribution for "any purpose" (Keating, Annett, Burke, & O'Hanlon, 2011, p. 62). The divide between 'free' and 'fee' is certainly slippery. Government policies promote "modest fees" to cover shortfalls but do so in combination with an endorsement of "free".

Many of the schools considered to be 'elite' in Australia are within the Independent sector, with the exception of select-entry public schools. Elite Independent schools tend to emphasise academic results and charge the highest fees. For example, an elite Independent school in Victoria charges $29,260 per student (2014 costing). This is a net annual fee for one student, in year eleven or year twelve. This represents more than half of the gross median Australian salary, which is cited as $57,400[13] (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). One year of secondary school at an elite Independent school is far more expensive than most university undergraduate degrees.

It is possible for students to win a scholarship to partly cover the school fees, by sitting an examination. The scholarships are competitive, and many parents send their children to specialised tuition in preparation (Rowe & Windle, 2012). The cost

[13] This is the most recent figure available at time of writing. The median is different to the 'average' Australian income, which is higher because it is increased by the large salaries of a small number.

of elite secondary schooling may partially explain the commitment of the campaigners. Alongside the purchasing of a home, the secondary school may be one of life's major financial outlays. This is exploited by private interests, such as banks and scholarship saving funds, like the Australian Scholarship Group (ASG) (2011):

> Education is one of the fastest rising components of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). During the past 10 years, education has risen at almost twice the rate of inflation. Therefore, Australian Scholarship Group encourages parents to take a proactive approach to their children's education early in their children's lives. This enables parents to have greater choice and peace-of-mind. (Profile page)

The Catholic sector makes up 60% of the private sector (Independent Schools Council of Australia, No Date) and generally maintain an emphasis on "modest fees", in the name of accessibility (Gonski, et al., 2011, p. 6). Certain Catholic schools charge a comparable fee to public schools ($2,000 annually per child). Fees differ quite extensively from school to school and many Catholic schools advertise scholarships or financial subsidies to assist parents. Some Catholic schools require Baptismal certificates on enrolment applications.

1.4.2 A government-funded service

Describing the public school as "government-funded", in order to demarcate public/private distinctions, is problematic. In Australia, all private schools are

subsidised and aided by the public purse, ranging from 42 per cent to 82 per cent of annual costs (Caldwell, 2010; Gonski, et al., 2011; Vickers, 2005). The contradictions travel in both directions; certain public schools receive grants from private business and enterprises, or commissions and contracts from private bodies.

Overall, however, the public school operates via taxpayer subsidies. It receives 80 per cent of its net recurrent income from its respective state or territory government, 15 per cent from the Federal government and 5 per cent from private sources (Gonski, et al., 2011). This equates to 25.2 billion dollars (net recurrent income) and 3.2 billion dollars for capital expenditure[14] (Gonski, et al., 2011).

The Independent and Catholic sector receives the majority of its funding from the Federal Government, rather than the State. The Catholic sector receives only marginally less governmental funding compared with the public school, accruing a total of 77 per cent of net recurrent income from combined forms of government (compared to 95 per cent). It educates 20 percent of the population (Gonski, et al., 2011).

The Independent sector, on the other hand, receives a total of 45 per cent of its net recurrent income from combined forms of government. This equates to 8.2 billion dollars[15] to educate 14% of the population (Gonski, et al., 2011). The high funding of Independent schools "sets it apart from many OECD countries" (Gonski, et al., 2011, p. 11). Lamb (2007) notes the "real shift in expenditure in favour of private schools" in the 1990s and Australia's method

[14] 2009 figures
[15] This includes net recurrent income plus capital expenditure. These are 2009 figures.

> … of supporting private provision in schools through public funding is quite rare internationally because the funding from governments is provided without any regulations or conditions governing use and without any accountability requirements. (Lamb, 2007, p. 7)

Australia spends less on education than other OECD countries such as Canada, Finland or New Zealand. The average OECD government expenditure is 3.5 percent and Australia's expenditure is only 3 percent. The education system also receives twice the amount of private expenditure, which is largely made up of parental fees, in comparison to other OECD countries (Gonski, et al., 2011). Funding of schools—whether they be public or private—has been an ongoing contentious issue in Australia, and a vast amount of research has concluded that the existing funding arrangements are "exceedingly opaque" (Dowling, 2007) and wholly lacking in transparency (Gonski, et al., 2011; Vickers, 2005). This was the impetus for the landmark 'Gonski' Report (2011), a review of school funding that was initiated by the Gillard Federal Government, of the time. This review of funding argues that public schools should receive an increased level of funding, in order to specifically address disadvantage and achieve more equitable distribution of resources.

1.4.3 What distinctions can be made?

An important distinction that can be made in regards to private/public is the composition of the student cohort. Australian public schools educate the majority of

students within the lowest quarter of socio-educational advantage. Compared to the Independent sector, which educates 13 per cent, the public school educates 36 per cent of the bottom quarter (Gonski, et al., 2011). This is described by Gonski, et al. (2011) as follows:

> Of all students in the lowest quarter [including the lower and middle two tiers] of socio-educational advantage, almost 80 per cent attended government schools … Government schools provide for a high proportion of Indigenous students and students with disability. In 2010, 85 per cent of all Indigenous students attended government schools … Seventy-eight percent of students with a funded disability attended government schools. (p. 10)

The distinctions to be made between "public/private" are class-based distinctions, and the Australian public school evokes the connotation of class. The "public" is associated with low-performance, disadvantage, poverty, an Indigenous identity and disability. Adversely, the subtext of the "private" school is packed with causal-like assumptions of success, but also criticised for being a place of privilege and elitism. Indeed, these connotations are troubled and nuanced, due to the exaggerated differences in, and between, the sectors. I speak more to these differences in the following chapter.

The second distinction that can be made relates to school choice. Consumer demand for the public school has significantly declined over the last ten years, as demonstrated by Australian Bureau of Statistics:

> The number of students in private schools has increased by more than the number of students in public schools … since 2000 the number of students in private schools has increased by 21% compared with an only 1% increase in students attending government schools. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011)

This "consistent increase" is firmly substantiated in the Gonski Report (2011), with the Independent sector recording the largest proportional increase (14 per cent), in comparison to both the Catholic (6 per cent) and public school (2 per cent). Notably, the Independent sector stands out in terms of demand and student composition. It contains the highest tier of socio-economic advantaged students and also, the largest growth in student enrolment.

It is fair to argue that the public school is associated with disadvantage in Australia, and it has experienced quite a rapid decline in consumer demand. In the context of educational privatisation, the public school is struggling to compete. The scope of privatisation, in the form of decentralisation and funding differentiations, has resulted in marked and exaggerated differences between schools. There is a paradox of the public, in that whilst the public school is associated with disadvantage, it grows more difficult to define and increasingly amorphous. This presents clear tensions in campaigning specifically for a "public school".

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature, in order to identify how this study redresses gaps within the field. A central theme carried through this chapter is the tense juxtaposition between consumer/citizen. This is accentuated by collective campaigning for public education, but it is also highlighted via demand-sensitive school choice policies. Therefore, this chapter will be structured to reflect this theme.

First, I focus on public pedagogies of public schooling—the citizen's narrative—played out via social movements and collective action. This section also offers a renewed analysis of social movements and collective actions, and the differences between the two. Collective campaigning for a public school is invariably understood or positioned within the literature as a tool of social justice, as a means to achieve empowerment and overcome discrimination. This study seeks to engage with this critique and re-examine it.

Second, I consider the consumer and freedom of choice, by briefly examining the main tenets of educational privatisation, contemporary debates about equity and how the literature speaks to middle-class, identity and choice. As this represents in-depth fields, I endeavour to focus on the literature that specifically relates to this study.

Lastly, this chapter theorises space and considers how spatial theories can be integrated and drawn upon effectively in school choice research and class analysis. These arguments inquire into the fields of choice, class and geography.

2.2 Public pedagogies of public schooling: the citizen's narrative

> We are reclaiming our voice in education and putting the public back in Public school(s). (Occupy Education, 2010, capitalized in original)

In this section, I examine the public pedagogies of the public school by exploring collective campaigns for public education. I refer to this as the citizen's narrative, because I argue that these collective campaigns construct important symbols and representations of public education. These campaigns depict public education as meaningful for the citizen and speak to important conceptualisations of citizenship. Fundamentally, these campaigns suggest passionate attachments to the *concept* and idea of public schooling—what it symbolises and denotes.

The internet contains images and stories telling of violent and intensive people-powered protests for public education. The public school evokes dramatic conflicts in many countries. From the mass-hunger strikes and violent protests in Chile (Barrionuevo, 2011; Stromquist & Sanyal, 2013), to the large-scale marches in the United States (Buras, Ferrare, & Apple, 2012), the public school is indeed, a critically important place for many and a place that is immersed in grand narratives.

In scholarly terms, this grand narrative of public education extends at least back to the works of Dewey (1916, 1927), in which the public school is lauded as a core component of democracy.

These protests highlight the “public school” as a concept that is far from neutral or empty for the citizen; instead it represents meanings of justice and equality, egalitarianism and hope for a better future. For many, the public school is a deeply held symbol of freedom and a counterpoint to oppression.

These beliefs about the importance of public schooling are overwhelmingly reflected in the intense show of commitment that individuals collectively demonstrate, in the name of public education. Whether in the form of violent protests, letter writing or petition signing, there are demonstrations of dissatisfaction regarding public education occurring in many OECD countries. For example, the “Occupy Education” movement in the United States:

Figure 7 "For Sale" Public Education.

"Save public education" and "For Sale: public education" is on display during the Occupy Education Movement in California, December 2011 (Hyde, 2013)[16]. The sign in the background reads, "For sale—public education". This image suggests protestation towards the selling and privatisation of public schooling for citizens in the United States[17]. By engaging in forms of protests, these activists are also engaging with democratic principles, such as free speech. Evidently, there is an association between public education and fundamental democratic and citizenship

[16] This image was graciously provided by photographer David Hyde and full citation details are provided in the reference list.
[17] See Picower (2012) for a scholarly exploration of the Occupy Education Movement.

values. Public education protests tend to proclaim “public education is a civil right” (e.g. Institute for Wisconsin's Future, 2012) and “good education = good citizen = good society” (see, Bacon, 2010). The notion of public education is important for the citizen; for many, it is highly symbolic and a meaningful facet of social and community life. This is illuminated by the numerous collective campaigns that are lobbying for public education, such as “Our Children Our Schools” in the United States and Australia[18]. These collectives are working “together to support a vision of public education”. There is also “Save our Schools” in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia (National Union of Teachers, 2012; Save Our Schools (Australia), 2006; Save Our Schools (United States of America), No date).

These campaigns are occurring in countries such as Greece and Nigeria:

Figure 8 "Save public education in Greece!".

[18] See their website: www.OurChildrenOurSchools.org and www.OurChildrenOurSchools.com.au

This image shows the Greek Federation of Secondary State School Teachers (OLME), who organised an online petition to protest against the planned suspension and dismissal of teachers. Their sign reads, “save public education in Greece!” (Education International, 2013).

In the next photograph, Nigerian students are protesting to save public education in Lagos. They are led by the National Secretary on 13th of August, 2012 (NAN image from Reporters-365, 2013):

Figure 9 "Arise Nigerians, to save public education – education is a right – system change is our goal".

Arguably, the most violent and dramatic protests for public education are occurring in Chile. Student protestors and activists are demanding greater accessibility, equitable and free public education (Bellei, 2009; Burton, 2012; Cabalin, 2012; Coles, 2001; Matear, 2007; Paley, 2001). Reportedly, the protests have been violent and ongoing over many years (since 2011), involving riot police, occupations, protests and demonstrations, mass rallies, sit-ins and kiss-ins (Barrionuevo, 2011). Online reports allege the use of water cannons on the protestors, artillery trucks and machine tanks (RT Network, 2013). In a student protest on the 10th of August 2012, in Chile's capital Santiago, a bus is reportedly set ablaze to protest the mass inequality and lack of accessible education (National Turk, 2012). The images below show some of the protests[19]:

[19] Figure 10 is a photograph by Simenon (2011) and figure 11 is a photograph by Valdebenito (2011), see references for further details.

Figure 10 "Education Not for Sale" Chilean protestors, 30th June 2011.

Figure 11 "The fight is for the whole society. Everybody for free education", Chilean protestors, 14th July 2011.

Figure 11 shows the front of the University of Chile, which was occupied by students at the time of this photograph (Valdebenito, 2011). On August 25th, 2011, there was a national strike for "free quality education" which saw one million demonstrators march on the streets of Santiago in Chile (The Internationalist, 2011). It was reported that this strike ended with bloody fighting and the death of one protestor (photograph by Victor R. Calvano):

Figure 12 One million demonstrators march for free quality education, Chile.

One Chilean campaigner claimed that reforming the public school concerns the making of history: “The whole country is watching this movement ... watching us with hope, with faith that we have the strength to change this education system and make history” (Barrionuevo, 2011).

In Australia, collective campaigning for public education has a history. In the State of Victoria during the 1990s, large scale protests transpired in response to the mass closure of public schools (over three hundred public schools were closed in a period of four years, see Spaull, 1999). The media described the movement as “the biggest battle over education in more than a decade” (Painter, 1993a)[20]. The protests consisted of large-scale marches through the city centre, but also collective vigils that forcibly took over closed schools. The groups of protestors became ‘occupiers’ in that they occupied the school on a twenty-four hour basis, making demolishment impossible.

The most sustained occupiers lasted for over a year at Melville Secondary and Klein High School. At Klein High School, the collective went so far as to initiate a “rebel school” by running education programs and hiring teachers (Jolly, 1996). Police were sent in to extract the protestors from the closed school, after more than a year of occupation had passed. There were violent clashes between the protestors and police, and the police were eventually charged with excessive force used on the

[20] To read more about these protests, see (Farouque, Painter, & Dunlevy, 1994; Jolly, 1996; Muller, 1993; Muller & Mangan, 1993; Painter, 1993b; Painter & Magazanik, 1993).

protestors[21](Deputy Ombudsman (Police Complaints), 1994). This image was taken by Leo Bild (2013) and protestor Stephen Jolly is pictured here:

Figure 13 Protestors clash with police, Melbourne Australia.

The citizen is aware and responsive to privatisation reforms, and mass protests occur in the midst of these privatisation reforms. All of the campaigns in this study are located in the suburbs that once had public schools, but they were closed during this period of closures in the 1990s.

[21] For more information about this protest, see (Conroy, 1996; Forbes, 2000; Jolly, 1996; Lewis, 1993; Munro, 1993; Pegler, Dunlevy, & Johnston, 1993).

Common characteristics of these protests and demonstrations—such as the Chilean protests, but also those occurring in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia—is that they are occurring in countries with gradual declines in PISA results (OECD, 2004, 2010), but also, as seen in Chile, they are transpiring in the context of rising costs for education and increasing segregation. Much like Australia, the public school is markedly symbolised by disadvantage and this corresponds to the United States, United Kingdom and Chile, where the lowest socio-economic quarter occupies the public school (Crosnoe, 2009; Gonski, et al., 2011; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). Many of the campaigns are mutually driven by a desire for accessibility and quality, or "funding, access, and provision" (Lubienski, 2001, p. 639).

At this point, I shift my attention to thinking about the 'public pedagogies' that I have explored in this section. Many of the above images are acquired from blogs or alternative reporting streams and it is debatable how much attention these social movements attract in the scholarly field. A scholarly inquiry into the purpose and nature of campaigning for public education holds implications for policy-making and it also holds significant implications for the identification of sociological patterns of behaviour.

There is considerable scope for extending on scholarly contributions regarding collective campaigns for public education. Albeit, there are formative exceptions and important work has been done in this field by Anyon (2005, 2009) and Buras (2011, 2012, 2014) from the United States. Buras researches grassroots social movements in response to rapid privatisation and the development of charter schools in New Orleans (Buras, et al., 2012). Picower (2012) explores the Occupy

Education movement. Collective campaigns for public education is brought to the fore by Reay, Crozier, James and colleagues in the United Kingdom (Crozier et al., 2008; Reay, et al., 2011; Reay et al., 2008). In Australia, little attention has been paid to educational campaigning in the literature. The bulk of work exploring social movements is unrelated to education (e.g. Andrew & Maddison, 2010; Doyle, 2010; Maddison & Martin, 2010; Tazreiter, 2010; Walter, 2010; Willett, 2010).

Educational campaigns tend to be projected in the existing literature as a tool of resistance against oppression and hegemony (Buras, 2012; Lipman, 2011; Mirza & Reay, 2000; Nespor, 1997; Warren & Mapp, 2011). These are valid arguments in the context of the research and I am not looking to annul these claims; rather, I am arguing for an additional lens to view and understand collective campaigns for public education. Thinking about these campaigns via a lens of choice is important for the extension of scholarship, critical policy making and the critique of funding differentiations between schooling sectors.

The following section will outline how I theoretically understand the notion of collective action, how I see this as distinct from social movements and why I am using the former in my discussion of these campaigns for public education.

2.2.1 Collective action and social movements

> The term *collective action* broadly refers to actions undertaken by individuals or groups for a collective purpose, such as the advancement of a particular ideology or idea or the political struggle with another group. (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002, p. 527, emphasis in original)

The term “collective action” is specifically adopted in this study, instead of “social movement”. It is important to note that even though I am purposefully delineating the campaigns as collective action, I will refer to literature that relates to both collective action and social movements. The reason for this is due to a cross-over within the literature. Many theorists continue to use both terms within their work (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Ellison & Martin, 2000; Foweraker, 1995). Other researchers purposefully select only one term, as demonstrated by Anyon (2009). Anyon argues that social movements and collective actions are theoretically separate and clarity is required, because “it is important to note that one organization, no matter how large, does not make a movement” (p. 195). A social movement involves “collective conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 20).

My purpose for selecting the term, collective action, is twofold; to describe the differences between “*soft* and *hard* actions” (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002, p. 527) and to thematically include an emphasis on individual motivation and individual action.

Literature pertaining to social movements, those that evoke the historical social movements of anti-war crusades, gay and lesbian rights, the women’s movement or the civil rights movement, are physically engaged with *hard* actions—occupations (Auyero, 2003), blockades or hunger strikes that result in severe hardship, such as prison or death (Dawson & Sinwell, 2012; Tazreiter, 2010). Most

importantly, and this point must be reinforced, the majority are borne out of social, economic or cultural disadvantage or, a committed fight for social justice.

I use collective action in this study to describe a *soft* action, not to imply superiority of one to the other, rather to describe differences in "nature and intensity" (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002, p. 527). A collective action is an interconnected act, which consists of multiple individuals (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002) to achieve a "collective good" (Jordan, 1996, p. 164). In this case, the "collective good" is subjective, in that it is debatable whether the local public high school will be beneficial for the collective good, or just a select group. Thus, the term "collective action" refers to:

> More individualistically perpetrated acts as *collective*. For example, sabotage, civil disobedience, and letter writing can all be thought of as collective in nature in the sense that they serve a collective purpose in the struggle between different groups and, hence, can be intended and used as means of achieving a collective outcome. Thus, what distinguishes collective action from individual action in this broad definition is that a collective action is, essentially, an intergroup act. (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002, p. 527, emphasis in original)

The campaigns in this study demonstrate forms of individual action conducted as an intergroup act, in order to obtain a collective interest that is

beneficial for the individual—and the collective. It is debatable whether this interest is beneficial for broader citizenship interests.

In order to obtain this collective interest, members individually sign petitions, write letters to members of parliament and the State Minister of Education, meet as a collective and meet with officials from the Department of Education. Campaigners explicitly state their desire to avoid forms of conflict or controversy, politically and socially (Field notes - August 26, 2012; Field notes - May 7, 2012). This is *soft* action, as it looks to avoid severe hardship or conflict. I also refer to the individuals engaging in collective action as campaigners. In alignment with collective action, a campaign consists of more than one individual lobbying in a deliberate and purposeful manner to acquire a certain product, service or object.

2.2.2 Social justice

> I believe we all have the right to public education. [Thompson High Campaigner] (Topsfield, 2011b)

> Unless all children experience a sense of belonging in our schools, they are being educated in institutions that exclude and marginalize them, that perpetuate inequity and inequality rather than democracy and social justice. (Shields, 2004, p. 122)

Social justice is often under-theorised, but over-utilised (Gewirtz, 1998). Matters of social justice are pertinent in the examination of collective action for public

education. Social movements relate to freedom of speech within a democratic environment, a fight against oppression, marginalisation and a battle for equity. This is evident for the Chilean students, who are willing to physically commit their bodies to painful hunger strikes (Barrionuevo, 2011). Their activity claims public schooling as a critical tool of social justice, that is, distributional justice (Rawls, 1972; Young, 1990). A society "perceived to be just clearly cannot exist without a fair distribution of resources, both material and non-material" (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 470).

Gewirtz draws on Young (1990), to argue that distributional understandings of social justice are limiting. To argue that social justice exclusively relates to equitable distribution negates relational social justice (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz, 1998; Young, 1990). Relational social justice refers to relationships of power or more specifically, the relationships that enable or disable social participation and social cooperation (see Gewirtz, 1998). This may be interpreted as infringing on concepts of class and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), in that forms of capital—economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu, 1986)—form institutional and relational structures that restrain or sanction individuals. 'Hard' social movements contain individuals who are heavily restrained, but are willing to commit physical harm to their own bodies (such as sewing closed their own lips, see Tazreiter, 2010) or endure extreme hardship, in order to achieve levels of authorisation.

These levels of authorisation concern freedom of speech, social cooperation and participation, and an individual's ability to act on democratic theories of freedom of speech, in the face of oppression. Young (1990) outlines five faces of oppression,

namely exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. In this work, I understand oppression as paired with domination:

> Domination consists in institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions. Persons live within structures of domination if other persons or groups can determine without reciprocation the conditions of their action, either directly or by virtue of the structural consequences of their actions. (Young, 1990, p. 38)

Not all forms of social movements or collective action are methods of resistance against domination and act as tools of social justice, distributional and relational. It would be a rather simplistic equation to group all forms of collective action under the social justice umbrella. Collective action for public education theoretically engages with principles of social justice—matters of distribution, access and equity—but does so within a specific policy environment, one that is staunchly dedicated to choice. In doing so, Applebaum's (2003) work is relevant here, in that we need to critique matters of power when evaluating freedom of speech and social participation. Freedom of "expression is democratic only on the grounds of an equal playing field" (p. 160).

In other words, a collective action may operate as dialectic; it theoretically stands as a struggle for freedom of expression and democracy, one that is engaged in matters of social justice, however, it may simultaneously perpetuate the

marginalisation of weaker voices. Even though the campaigners in this study are bound by structures of subordination and rules, this does not necessarily equate to discrimination (Young, 1990). In making this argument, it is intended as a critique and does not aim to polarize the "sounds of truth" but rather "engage with its noise". Critique is in need of *truths* it can rebel against (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2013, p. 882, my emphasis).

The campaigner's agitation for a locale-specific public school is their truth—a truth that doesn't require silencing—but rather, would benefit from critical engagement. It is the neoliberal policy context, one that heavily promotes choice, which constructs tensions with notions of social justice and public schooling. Whilst the campaigners are engaged with principles of social justice, equity and access, they are also actively engaged with consumerist tenets of choice. Notions of class, that is—social power and social structures—permeate these processes of choice.

There is an ongoing tension between the consumer/citizen and at this point, I will shift perspectives to examine that of the consumer. I begin by briefly exploring school choice literature and the history of school choice within Australia.

2.3 The Consumer: freedom of choice

> Choice, taken literally, might mean the right of parents to decide which school their child will attend. Such a right might be popular, but in practice it rarely exists, since school places are limited. (Field, et al., 2007, p. 62)

School choice relates to the degree of differences between schools (Field, et al., 2007) and research into school choice is extensive, across OECD nations. This thesis primarily draws on formative studies of middle-class choice, namely Campbell, et al.'s (2009) *School Choice: how parents negotiate the school market in Australia* and Reay, et al.'s (2011) study from the United Kingdom, titled *White Middle-Class Identities and Urban Schooling*.

I also draw on earlier work by Stephen Ball from the United Kingdom (1993, 2003), including work he has done with colleagues (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1995, 1996; Gerwitz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995). I look to Christopher Lubienski and colleagues for their work on choice and charter schools in the United States (2003a, 2005b; Lubienski & Garn, 2010), but also their analysis of academic differences between public and private schools (Lubienski, Crane, & Lubienski, 2008; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2005, 2006).

An OECD commissioned publication (Wöessmann, Ludemann, Schutz, & West, 2007) found that higher degrees of choice and competition produces better academic achievement and less-disruptive student behaviour. United States economist Caroline Hoxby (2000, 2003a, 2003b) is a vocal supporter of school choice, arguing that it decreases governmental spending and increases achievement levels. Advocates of school choice in Australia argue that marketisation and competition between schools raise productivity and performance (such as the Centre for Independent Studies, see Buckingham, 2001).

The primary concern about school choice is the notion of equity, being understood as the relationship between socio-economic status and educational achievement. The OECD publication, "Demand-Sensitive Schooling" (2006) identifies that "a number of potential negative, even vicious, circles and equity problems" are associated with a system that is demand-driven (p. 139). Research shows that an equitable education system equates to a higher performing education system (OECD, 2012b).

The relationship between "student background and educational outcomes is more pronounced in Australia, than in other comparable high-performing OECD countries" (Gonski, et al., 2011, p. 106). This is reflected in additional research, which argues that unregulated quasi-markets have led to an equity problem (McGaw, 2007; Perry & McConney, 2010). An OECD Report (2012a) did counter this to some extent, arguing that Australia retains the "greatest educational opportunities", because a higher than average proportion of children with parents of low education levels achieve university education (p. 102).

Despite this argument, the Gonski, et al. (2011) federal review of funding demonstrates that the Australian education system retains a significant gap between high and low achievers, a strong relationship between socio-economic status and achievement outcomes, and persistent declining OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings. Australia's schooling sectors contain concentrated levels of disadvantage and advantage. This concentration affects learning outcomes, because "any individual student outcome is correlated not only

with that individual's own social background, but also with the social background of other students in the same school" (Field, et al., 2007, p. 42).

School choice is associated with equity problems. When high-fee schools are well supported by the government, this complicates accessibility and equity for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Parents are positioned as *consumers* with a responsibility to strategically interact with schooling as a "private good" as part of a capitalist market. This is opposed to a *citizenship* role that understands schooling as a "public good", and prepares the citizen to be a competent and participatory member of a democratic society (Labaree, 1997). When Australia introduced the *My School* website in 2010, an online database that enables parents to view and compare a school's standardised test results[22], it highlighted the parent's role as that of consumer. The articulated purpose of the website is to enable parents to make more informed schooling choices (see Rowe & Windle, 2012) and thus, be 'better' consumers.

Freedom of choice and the associated privatisation reforms are composed of three major tenets, that is, funding, competition and marketisation. These directly impact on the government-funded school.

2.3.1 Funding, competition and marketisation

Historically, school funding in Australia was the exclusive responsibility of the State Government and private schools did not receive funding. However, in the aftermath of World War Two, a time in which the Catholic sector was struggling, the federal

22 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy results (hereafter referred to as NAPLAN).

government provided financial subsidies for private schools, in the form of new science blocks (Marginson, 1997). These funds were not intended to be ongoing, but it gained the right-of-centre Liberal party considerable support from voters (Marginson, 1997). As a consequence, ongoing financial assistance was established for private schools by 1963. One year later, the right-of-centre Liberal party were referring to the funding of private schools as a "citizenship right for parents" and "school choice" (Windle, 2009, p. 232). This period set a precedent for significant change.

Even though it was a right-of-centre political party that originally initiated federal funding of private schools, it was supported by both major political parties by the 1970s. This significant bipartisan policy shift transpired in concert with a globalised movement towards neoliberal policies (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005; Campbell, et al., 2009; Kenway, 1987, 1990; Sugarman & Kemerer, 1999). These policies aimed to promote competitiveness, choice and privatisation (Ball, 2007; Reid, 2005; Windle, 2009).

It is during the 1990s and onwards that educational policies in Australia significantly reshaped the public school, in terms of its structure, management and orientation. This time it was under a right-of-centre political party (the Howard Liberal party, from 1996-2007). The first policy reform targeted competition and it did this primarily by removing the "New Schools Policy" in 1996. The removal of this policy meant that new private schools were permitted to build in direct competition with a public school. Prior to this time, private schools were not allowed

to compete with public schools. This increased competition between all schools, regardless of their sector (Buckingham, 2001, 2010).

The introduction of the socio-economic status (SES) funding mechanism in 2001 increased funding for the private sector. It did this by rewarding schools for higher enrolment numbers and guaranteed recurrent grants for Catholic and Independent schools (Gonski, et al., 2011; Vickers, 2005; Watson & Ryan, 2010). The revised policy enabled 'cash for customers', and prior to the socio-economic status model, private schools received only a fixed amount of funding.

Subsequently, privatisation increased its scope in a multiplicity of ways. The number of Catholic and Independent schools exponentially increased (Cobbold, 2007) and the drift of students from public to private intensified (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 2011; Bonnor & Caro, 2007; Caldwell, 2010). This drift is effectively documented and explored by Proctor (2008). In the State of Victoria, education privatisation is arguably the strongest. Victoria retains the highest number of students attending private schools in comparison to other States, and also the lowest funded public school system in Australia (Gonski, et al., 2011).

2.3.2 A "crisis" in public education

The remodeling of the public school occurs in the context of a crisis, or an alleged crisis. Frequently, politicians' claim that reforms are necessary because of a "crisis in education" and the public school *becomes* a site of mass failures and deficiencies, making dramatic changes necessary (Cobbold, 2007; Watkins, 2012). There is a strong correlation between this discourse of crisis and privatisation reforms,

something that is well documented in many OECD countries (Ball, 2007, 2012; Bonal, 2003; Emery & Ohanian, 2004; Kenway, 1987; Picower, 2012).

Chicago Economist Milton Friedman, who wrote *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), argues that governments looking to deregulate their economies need to declare doctrines of crises. These declarations of crises are necessary, in order to achieve mass-scale change, especially when removing free government-funded public services[23]. The discourse of crises is frequently pronounced in twofold forms and equal measure: the economic and educational crisis. Rather than an uninvolved government, a paradoxical form of involvement is maintained. It is this propagated "crisis in public education" that feeds into the caricature of public schooling, a caricature that focuses on:

> The worst or most problematic or contentious features of some aspects of the government system … [this discourse of derision] has undermined … the image of the state system …. differences in schools and philosophies are conflated and consequently misrepresented. A caricature has been developed and presented to the public as an accurate depiction of the "real." (Kenway, 1990, p. 201)

The "discourse of derision" typically corresponds with a surge in private school enrolments, but also the rise in the number of religious schools (Buckingham, 2010; Maddox, 2014; Reese, 1985; Symes & Gulson, 2008). This rise in private

[23] Klein (2007) effectively explores these arguments in *The Shock Doctrine*.

school enrolments is attributable not only to increased funding, but also to a perception of values and inculcated moral differences in private schools, or the instillation of ‘Christian values’ (Proctor, 2011). Many Australian political leaders condemn and criticise the public school for being overly concerned with ‘political correctness’ and too ‘values neutral’ (Crabb & Guerrera, 2004). These concerns view the public school through a deficient *moralistic* lens. According to some commentators, the public school is associated with homosexuality, a lack of godliness and other forms of deviance (Donnelly, 2004; Reese, 1985). This is substantiated by Campbell, et al.’s (2009) study:

> [A surveyed parent] enrolled their child at a ‘Christian’ school so that he or she would not be taught by ‘homosexual teachers’, as would be the case in the government system. However, more frequently expressed were concerns about discipline and structure. (p. 163)

Thus, the important point to be emphasised here is that, for some people, public schools represent and symbolise specific ideologies and identities, and the *tag* of public schooling is notable for consumers as having particular, very strong associations. There exist ideological juxtapositions, in terms of how consumers regard private/public. On one hand, the “private school” is more responsive to the consumer and equates to higher academic achievement, whilst the “public school” is linked with poor management and lower achievement levels. However, research by

the Lubienski's (2013; 2005, 2006) in the United States challenges the idea that the private school equates to higher achievement levels.

In this section, I have explored the politically propagated discourse of crisis, in relation to the public school. However, as I have previously noted, there are extensive differences *between* public schools and therefore, these negative associations do not apply to all. For some choosers, the public school is regarded as the more ethical decision, and this is evident in Reay, et al.'s (2011) study. The authors write that, for some middle-class choosers, electing the local public school has "clear reference points in the political and moral landscape" (p. 71). This opens up a discussion of middle-class and choice.

2.3.3 The middle-class and choice

> The old binaries no longer work in a contemporary world where there are tensions and increasingly complex differentiations within intra-middle-class categories. Divisions have opened up within divisions. (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 14).

In thinking about the middle-class and choice, there is a danger in imagining the middle-class as a homogenous group. Due to the significant and ever-increasing income differences between high and low earners, but also the rapid changes to the work-force, there are growing disparities and distinctions between the middle-classes (Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011). In Reay, et al.'s (2011) study, they refer to these differences as horizontal, vertical, geographical and political. There is a

blurring of distinct categories, if measured primarily via employment or income levels. However, a key commonality of the middle-classes is their relationship to education which the authors argue "has become a central mechanism of white middle-class identity formation" (p. 19). This argument is also reflected in Campbell, et al. (2009) who contends that the urban middle-class in Australia is increasingly defined by their "connection to schooling … and the distinctive ways in which middle-class parents manage children and their schooling" (p. 18).

Borrowing from these studies, I use school choice and their relationship to education as a central analytical lens to study the middle-class. I argue that the middle-class is characterised by certain school choice behaviour and strategies they undertake in obtaining a particular school; and second, the middle-class is identifiable by particular ideals and values, when it comes to schooling. I will now extend on this by considering how the literature speaks to middle-class and choice.

Campbell, et al. (2009) describes the Australian middle-class as "significant players" (p. 35) within the education market. Ball (2003) depicts the middle-class manoeuvring of the education system in the United Kingdom as "interesting ... because they constitute a major contemporary phenomenon in their own right" (p. 5). A significant bulk of research has argued that the middle-class relies heavily on education for social mobility and acquisition (Crozier, et al., 2008; Reay & Ball, 1997; Taylor & Woollard, 2003; Teese & Lamb, 2007) and are generally "distinguished by the fact that they largely depend on educational credentials to acquire or maintain their position" (Power, 2001, p. 197). For these reasons, the middle-class tend to be strategic and long-term planners when it comes to choosing a

school (Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009). Ball, et al., (1996) argues that the choice of school is "very directly and powerfully related to social-class differences … Choice emerges as a major new factor in maintaining and indeed reinforcing social-class divisions and inequalities" (p. 110).

The campaigners in this study are characteristic of the middle-class "skilled/privileged chooser", in that they demonstrate certain patterns in their choice process. These characteristics are summarised by Ball, et al. (1996):

> First, an inclination to choice. The idea and worth of having a choice between schools is valued … Second, a marked capacity to engage with and utilize the possibilities of choice …. Third, from the interplay of unclear or contradictory social principles, of diverse aspirations, desires and concerns related to their children and their children's future … choosing a school often emerges as a confusing and complex process …. Fourth, *they identified their impressionistic, affective, personal responses to schools … as often providing the clinching factor in arriving at a final choice, or eliminating a final alternative. The role of the affective, of ethos, atmosphere, 'feel', impression, sense, climate is absolutely fundamental to choice.* (pp. 93, 94, emphasis in original)

The emotionally-driven interpretation of educational facilities is largely "patterned … by class concerns and distinctions" (Ball, et al., 1996, p. 97). There is an ability to be removed from the more utilitarianism aspects of education, as

reflected in Bourdieu's (1979) writing about the leisure class, "economic power is firstly the capacity to put economic necessity at a distance" (p. 58). The privileged/skilled chooser pursues a "moral community" (Ball, 2003, p. 158), in that they seek to acquire a school community which reflects their own value system. This is described by Ball (2003) as "drawing boundaries" between different groups of parents (p. 158). Kenway and Bullen (2001) suggest that parents construct their identities through their school-of-choice and want to be part of a community that reflects their own value system. These assertions are strongly reinforced by Reay, et al. (2011) who write that, "schooling is … high-stakes business in the formation of identities" (p. 21).

The middle-class parent is more likely to be engaged or involved in their child's schooling (Connell, et al., 1982; OECD, 2006), and when it comes to expressing dissatisfaction with their child's school, the middle-class chooser is more likely to utilise "voice" than the working-class parent. Voice is defined as "any attempt at all to change, rather than escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30). This is particularly pertinent for the campaigners in this study, who are petitioning to change what they perceive to be an objectionable state of affairs, via individual and collective petition. Across all OECD nations, there is commonality in terms of which class subsets are exercising voice:

> Across all countries, there are the familiar equity issues regarding *who* is most likely to be those exercising their "voice" in the affairs of the school,

> especially in the more fundamental issues concerning educational policy ... These are issues about the gap between activists and the rest … as well as the equity issues about who tends to concentrate among the activists. (OECD, 2006, p. 90, emphasis in original)

This OECD report asserts that there is a "gap between activists and the rest" when it comes to expressing dissatisfaction with educational provision. Research demonstrates that parents with higher levels of formal education are more likely to utilise voice, than those with lower levels (OECD, 2006). The ability for parents to be involved in their child's schooling is affected by social class, poverty, single parent status and race (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Crozier (1997) extends on this:

> It is my contention that parents' social class location has a direct impact upon their ability to intervene in their child's schooling and to participate as 'active consumers'. The active consumer is the parent who can discern the nature and value of the education on offer and act on this, in order to maximise the opportunities for her/his child to achieve success, usually in the form of high-status examinations. (p. 188)

Class stands as an enabler—and barrier—to utilisation of voice. Another option for the consumer is to "exit", that is, to leave an unsatisfactory school (Reay & Lucey, 2004; Vincent, 1997). For many choosers, exiting may involve physically

changing residential addresses, in order to acquire school-of-choice. This is evidently linked to the middle-class, which possess adequate resources to make such an exit (Reay, et al., 2011; Reay & Lucey, 2004). Physically changing residential addresses is an important facet of choice and class—but so too it requires attention to spatiality. The following section will explore the spatiality of choice and class, which is the overarching framework of how this study interrogates these fields.

2.4 The spatiality of choice and class

> Geographies of schooling are highly class differentiated. Compounding these inequitable geographies of schooling are invidious representations of inner-city comprehensives as unruly places, characterised by poor performance and bad behaviour. (Reay, 2007, p. 1191)

Choice practices are inherently spatial in that a school-of-choice is the means to construct spaces of distinction and also, social and cultural distance from working-class schools (Reay, 2007; Reay & Lucey, 2004). There are geographical "circuits of schooling" (Ball, et al., 1995) and middle-class parents navigate the educational market in a strategic way, similarly to how they navigate the housing market. Gentrification is a derivative of these movements (Butler & Robson, 2003).

Research based in the United Kingdom and the United States has demonstrated strong relationships between spatial arrangements and schooling (e.g. Ball, et al., 1995; Ball & Vincent, 2007; Butler & Hamnett, 2007; Gulosino &

Lubienski, 2011; Lubienski & Dougherty, 2009; Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009; Reay, 2007; Reay, et al., 2011; Taylor, 2001). In order to obtain a perceived higher quality of state funded education, studies show that parents are willing to pay more for houses enabling access to state-funded school-of-choice (Lubienski, Lee, & Gordon, 2013; Reay, et al., 2011; Reay & Lucey, 2004) and further, parents are willing to geographically relocate (Butler & Robson, 2003; Robson & Butler, 2001). There is scope for extending on these contributions in the Australian context.

School choice policies theoretically enable parents to freely choose and therefore, be socially and geographically mobile. However, catchment areas (or school zones)—policies that inhibit open enrolment and open choice—restrict these choices. Subsequently, there is a strong relationship between the socio-economic composition of non-selective schools and residential address (Butler & Robson, 2003; Taylor & Gorard, 2001). This is in spite of school choice policies and is referred to as "post code apartheid in non-selective secondary education" (Butler & Robson, 2003, p. 9). Indeed, "geographical location is the key to understanding the impact of choice on the school system" (Taylor & Gorard, 2001, p. 1849). A middle-class composition within the school relates to increased demand or over-subscription (Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011; Windle, 2009).

The geographical location of a school operates as a social exclusionary mechanism (Byrne, 1999; Jordan, 1996; Madanipour, Cars, & Allen, 1998; Reay & Lucey, 2004) and generates substantial implications for matters of access, inclusion and funding. Byrne (1999) writes that "spatial location determines access to crucial social goods, and in particular the different kinds of state education, which have

enormous significance for future life trajectory" (p. 10). In the Australian context, there is a dramatic segmentation that is visible—not only between the schooling sectors, in that wealthier children tend to populate the private schools—but a sharp segmentation physically perceptible in a geographical landscape. When comparing a public high school located in an upper-economic suburb (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012i; Schmidt, 2011) to another public high school located in a lower-economic suburb (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012b; Dunn, 2012), the difference in monetary fees for parents is more than two thousand dollars[24]. The geographical location of the public school strongly impacts the level of parental input and school resources, including fees.

Taylor and Gorard (2001) argue that residential differentiation is a key ingredient within schooling segregation, however, "research examining the impact of school choice policies on the socio-economic segregation of schools continues to ignore the importance of residential differentiation" (p. 1849). Furthermore, a "realistic analysis of the impacts of market reforms on school admissions" can *only* be achieved by accounting for the impact of residential differentiation (p. 1829). These arguments are substantiated in a later study by Lubienski and Dougherty (2009) from the United States. These authors argue for a "geo-spatial approach", by using the 'geographic information systems (GIS)' method to identify school choice

[24] This data analysis compared two geographically distant public secondary schools and the fees which each school separately charges, with each suburb's median weekly household income. The median weekly household income is a gross figure which includes single parents and families with and without children. It is acquired from the most current Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data. The reported school fees were obtained from the school website in addition to its local newspaper. The small-scale analysis found that the suburb with a higher median weekly household income retained a local public school that charged higher school fees.

patterns and stratification[25]. This enables researchers to conduct multi-level analyses by 'layering' spatial data onto a computer-generated map. The authors contend that this would better enable researchers to "understand contextual issues and spatial patterns and relationships that would not necessarily be observable through other statistical methods" (Lubienski & Dougherty, 2009, p. 486). Further, the identification of these spatial patterns is critical, in terms of improving broader equity concerns[26].

The "choice of schooling is far less open and more prescribed by where you live" (Butler & Robson, 2003, p. 7). A higher socio-economic student composition within a school may contribute to a renewed commitment to the public school, by some middle-class choosers. This is explored in Crozier et al.'s (2008) study, that asks whether this renewed commitment is a positive signal for "engaged citizenry?" (p.269):

> At a time when the public sector and state education (in the United Kingdom) is under threat from the encroaching marketisation policy and private finance initiatives, our research reveals that white middle-class parents are choosing to assert their commitment to the urban state-run comprehensive school. (p. 261)

[25] Taylor (2001, 2007) argues for the geographic information systems (GIS) approach in additional papers.
[26] The use of GIS is well-applied in a further study by Gulosino and Lubienski (2011).

The authors argue that, even though engagement with the public school appears to be "acting *against* self-interest", this engagement is related to "wider senses of identity and identification, and the extent to which these are influenced by class fraction, ethnicity and gender" (p. 261, emphasis in original). In other words, middle-class parents may claim a 'commitment' to the public school and this appears to be "acting against self interest" or, going against the tide. The authors expand upon these arguments in their later work, as "against-the-grain" school choices, or against the mainstream (Reay, et al., 2011). The public school is typically situated as inferior to the private school, or as these authors argue, there is a "prevalent middle-class fear that state comprehensives are in some way inferior" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 111). This is substantiated by Campbell, et al. (2009) in their study of Australian middle-class school choice. The authors write that the ordinary government comprehensive merely acts as "safety net" (p. 5). However, there are significant differences between public schools and middle-class parents are willing to relocate for more preferable public high schools:

> It is clear from our interviews with families that the trust once afforded to *most* government comprehensive high schools has diminished … The government comprehensive high schools afforded the most trust are often, but not always, in firmly middle-class areas of the major Australian cities. (Campbell, et al., 2009, p. 183, my emphasis)

When it comes to the local school (or, the "school that has always been there"), research has predominantly connected the local school to the working-class chooser (Reay & Ball, 1997; Reay & Lucey, 2000, 2004). Reay and Ball (1997) write that, "it appears from our data that working-class parents feel most at home in their local comprehensive" (p. 93). Reay and Lucey (2000) argue that "proximity was often key" for working-class parents and their children (p. 86). This is extended upon by these authors (2004):

> Research consistently shows that working-class children and parents place a higher value on going to local schools and are much more troubled by the idea of travelling long distances to secondary school than are middle-class children and parents. (Reay & Lucey, 2004, p. 40)

However, if middle-class parents relocate and 'buy into the zone' for a preferable public high-school, then the 'local' school becomes an important attachment and enables the parents to reflect communitarian ideals (Reay, et al., 2011). Middle-class parents are not only 'reimagining' and 'reclaiming' the public school, but they are also taking up the idea of space and locality, and redefining it for their own purposes. Reay, et al. (2011) write that the parents "made their 'space' work for them in a similar way to which they also made the school work for them" (p. 59). However, the point of difference in this study is that rather than relocate for a desirable school, the parents are collectively pushing for and pressuring the government for a new local public high school.

At this point, I will 'locate' the study by focusing on Harvey's (1973, 2006a) theories of space. I am arguing that there is further scope for the application of spatial theories in choice research. Gulson and Symes (2007) contend that "educational geography … remains relatively underdeveloped and 'unnamed'" (p. 3). Since this argument, there have been significant gains and critiques of educational geography (e.g. Gulson, 2007, 2008, 2011; Lingard & Gale, 2007; Nguyên, 2010; Peters & Kessl, 2009; Robertson, 2010). Herein, it is important to note the formative spatial work in educational sociology that this study borrows from, specifically those studies that draw on Harvey (Ball, et al., 1996; Buras, 2011; Reay, et al., 2011; Reay & Lucey, 2000). Buras (2012) offers a useful analysis and application of Harvey's relative, relational and absolute space in her study of social movements and educational privatisation in the United States.

2.4.1 Theorising space

> There are various ways in which we can think about space. It is crucial to formulate a proper conception of it if we are to understand urban phenomena and society in general; yet the nature of space has remained something mysterious to social enquiry. (Harvey, 1973, p. 13)

David Harvey (1973, 2006a) argues for a tripartite division of space, between relational, absolute and relative. Lefebvrian categories identify space as experienced, conceptualised and lived (Lefebvre, 1991). Both scholars refer to "social space" (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1991), in conjunction with Bourdieu (1999b). Massey

(2005) pushes against space as uniformly equated with representation, space as closed and static. She argues for space as open, composed of multiplicity and dynamic (or 'lively'). I focus here on utilising and extending Harvey's (1973) absolute, relational and relative space.

Relative space and relational space speak to the *relationships* between objects. Relative space is a movement between objects, "people, goods, services" (p. 14) whereas relational space implies a *structural* understanding of space. The space is constructed and represented via the "relationships to other objects" (p. 13).

This understanding of relative and relational space is compared to absolute space. Absolute space is described as fixed and immovable, a grid that may be calculated by physical geometry. This fixed and immovable space is symbolised by private property and "other bounded territorial designations" (Harvey, 2006a, p. 272). Absolute space, according to Harvey (1973), is limited and too definitive, in that absolute space becomes separate and detached from the movement and flows within the space itself: "if we regard space as absolute it becomes a 'thing in itself' with an existence independent of matter. It then possesses a structure which we can use to pigeon-hole or individuate phenomena" (p. 13).

I am proposing relational space as the composition of the school community, in other words, the socio-economic composition of the student cohort. Relational space also encompasses the socio-economic composition of the suburb in which the school is located. This space is structural in that a class label (working, middle or upper) is represented and constructed via the relationship between objects (material and symbolic). This conceptualisation of space is distinct from relative space, which

is conceived as the movement between the school chooser and the school. Relative space operates in proportion with a chooser's desires and subjectivities, in that the middle-class chooser will overcome the relative "friction of distance" (Harvey, 1973, p. 14) in proportion to their desire for enrolment in the school.

I am projecting the campaigner's *suburb* (not the socio-economic composition, but the actual parcel of land) as absolute space—which is a quantifiable measurement. Arguing for a space as 'absolute' implies that it is fixed and unchangeable, and this is indeed, a troubled proposition. Rather, what I am looking to emphasise is how spaces are used and *operated* by the school chooser. The projection of this space as 'absolute' is useful in that it enables a rethinking of how space becomes commodified, in the context of a public school choice "circuit" (Ball, et al., 1995). A 'non-selective' school-of-choice, one that is experiencing high-demand, defines inclusion and exclusion points. These inclusion and exclusion points are based on absolute space—or quantifiable measurements. This notion of "bounded" space is effectively explored by Reay, et al. (2011) in their analysis:

> Harvey (1989, 1993), for example, has argued that in contemporary society the urban dweller frequently becomes defensive, territorial and competitive about their urban space, creating spatial barriers or 'bounded space'... the middle-class inhabitants tended to relate to their locale in terms of Harvey's 'bounded space' (1993). (p. 56)

Spatial barriers and the notion of relating to a locale as a 'bounded space' are fitting in this study, in which the location of the school is of primary importance. Indeed, a "significant attribute of the middle-classes is the ability to erect boundaries, both geographically and symbolically" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 12). Geography constructs class, that is—social divisions, social separations and social hierarchies. Whilst the location of a school concerns practical components of this social separation—such as matters of access—the location of a school is also fundamentally involved in sociological processes of inclusion and exclusion. The geographical barriers of inclusion and exclusion represent more than metaphorical establishments, they exist as material and physical. As discussed in Gulson (2011), these barriers could be a physical stoppage such as a bridge or railway line that impede physical movement from one suburb to another, "physical barriers become social metonyms; the landscape reinforces a sense of disparity" (p. 66). This is well demonstrated by campaigner Adam, the only interview participant who grew up in the suburb of Lawson. He discusses his childhood memories:

> Adam: The place [Lawson suburb] has changed from what I remember it, to what it is today… its two different places… If I reflect back to my childhood, when I was going to this same school here… Lawson primary school right here… I reflect back, the park was a… *quarry*. The park that you see out there with the green grass, it was *a quarry with car bodies*. Aah, rabbits, horses were free to run, motorbikes were up and down… there was no greenery… and I remember the bridges that are concrete today, we had a

> wooden footbridge in the same place, that was about a meter away from where it was originally… it was a wooden footbridge that was missing planks so you had to hold onto the sides to get around… to get over to the school. (Interview January 19th, 2012)

A lesser amount of infrastructure within particular suburbs, such as the wooden footbridge, missing footpaths or a lack of schools, expresses matters of class within a physical realm—a sense of inferiority or superiority within space. Massey (2005) refers to this as "power-geometries" (p. 179) to call attention to the classed and political surfaces of space.

When it comes to relational space, there is a tripartite conversion occurring between the choosers and their school-of-choice, but also the suburb in which they are positioned. By 'tripartite conversion' I mean that there are dominant sociological characteristics present in all three relational spaces, and these characteristics concern class.

2.4.2 Theorising class and identity

> Despite a pervasive denial of class status, there are emotive intimacies of class which continue to shape individuals' everyday understandings, attitudes and actions. (Reay, 1998, p. 267)

In this work, I argue that class is seminal in how an identity is shaped (Reay, 1998). I have previously discussed the middle-class and choice, and in this section I address

theoretical understandings and debates about class and identity. These are two separate theoretical fields, and in this work I am privileging the examination of class, prior to identity. In this section, I briefly trace scholarly debates regarding the existence of class, before outlining how I understand class in this study and how it is connected to identity. I extend on this discussion in the following chapter, in terms of how class identity is methodologically applied in this study (see 3.4).

In the post-war period, sociological analysis dichotomised class on the basis of occupation and production (Breen & Rottman, 1995; Butler & Watt, 2007; Duke & Edgell, 1987; Parkin, 1971). In contemporary analysis, many sociologists argue for a critique that extends beyond simple dichotomies of class structure, as based on stagnant categories (Pakulski & Waters, 1996). Clark and Lipset (1991) argue that:

> New forms of social stratification are emerging … Social class was the key theme of past stratification work. Yet class is an increasingly outmoded concept … Class stratification implies that people can be differentiated hierarchically on one or more criteria into distinct layers, classes. (p. 397)

Reay's (1998) paper on *Rethinking social class* effectively engages with these debates. The author argues that class denials operate to perpetuate class interests and that "class continues to be an important part of social identity" (p. 259). I position my argument alongside this work. Although new forms of social stratification are emerging, class continues to exist and hence, my theorisation of *geo-identity* (see chapter 5). This borrows from the concept of class identity, and looks to extend it by

emphasising the weight of space, in class and school choice analysis. The notion of geo-identity has been used previously in literature outside of the education field. For example, as a theoretical framework to compare social identity attachments between the local and the national, and how these different attachments influence voting and media use (de Zuniga y Navajas, 2008). Polić (2007) uses geo-identity to explore the connection of romance and identity in Carol Shield's (2001) novel "The Republic of Love". The concept of geo-identity is yet to be taken up in educational research, to argue for the importance of geography in choosing a school, and how a geographically-informed choice relates to the production of class and identity.

I use Bourdieu as a framework for thinking about class. Bourdieu (1984) argues that class is a "collection of properties" but this collection of properties (sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin), is meaningless without the "structure of relations" that attributes value to each property (p. 106). In other words, class consists of multiplicity—a collection of properties—however, this collection requires a structure of relations to acquire value. Class is actualised and mechanised via identity and representation (Hall, 1996; Rose, 1996b). Identity is a narrative that is constructed in orientation with class and cultural systems (Devine, 1992; Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2001). As representations, identities rely on social and cultural traditions, the "narrativization of the self" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). They are imaginary and fictional, and at times, symbolic.

Class as a concept is equally disowned and embraced by its very performers. There is a mutual distaste of class operating simultaneously with the utilisation of class power. This is a struggle of identity, but so too it becomes a struggle of

methodology; individuals question how class is measured or validated (Savage, et al., 2001). Indeed, for many "class is an embarrassing and unsettling subject" (Sayer, 2005b, p. 1).

In this work, I am considering how class identity relates to school choice, but also to collective campaigning. This could be interpreted as the "identity/action relation" which is effectively taken up by Wetherell (2009) and the authors in *Theorizing Identities and Social Action.* Wetherell asks how an identity can function as a "productive collective force" (p. 2) and "authorise, anticipate and guide social action" (p. 1). A collective campaign brings together a type of collective identity and shared goals. This collective identity and the "identity/action" relation are accentuated via gentrification and notions of community.

2.4.3 A collective identity: gentrification and community

> One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle-class—upper and lower—shabby modest mews and cottages … they have been taken over when their leases expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation—have been upgraded once again … Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the working-occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (Glass, 1964, p. xviii)

In this study, each collective campaign has emerged in a recently gentrified suburb (Atkinson, et al., 2011; Cole, 1985; Howe, 2009). Gentrification is an en-masse movement of middle-class residents into a particular suburb, during a particular period of time. The new inhabitants tend to share similar characteristics, and I made this evident in the beginning of this thesis (see 1.2.1). Not only do the new residents reconstruct a type of collective identity, but so too does the gentrified locale. This is suggested in Glass's (1964) description of gentrification. The gentrifiers reclassify the social character of the district, to set it apart from what it *was.*

In this section, I will explore how the campaigners imagine and distribute a particular collective identity. This is most apparent in their shared appeal for a public high school, but the campaigner's emphasis is continually on 'the local' and 'the community'. I argue that celebration of 'the local' and 'the community' garner traction via gentrification, and this produces a type of collective identity. Bourdieu (1999b) provides a starting point, in speaking to 'the local':

> The ability to dominate space, notably by appropriating (materially or symbolically) the rare goods (public or private) distributed there, depends on the capital possessed. Capital makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance at the same time that it brings closer desirable persons and things (made desirable, among other things, by their richness in capital), thereby minimizing the necessary expense (notably in time) in appropriating them. Proximity in physical space allows the proximity in social space to deliver all its effects … (p. 127)

For the gentrifier, ‘the local’ becomes valuable but only in so far that it enables better consumption of capital, and reinforces social and cultural distance from the *other*. It is through this lens that the notion of community (or perhaps, the celebration of community) gains traction. Research suggests that the celebration of community emerges after processes of gentrification (Howe, 2009; O'Hanlon & Sharpe, 2009; Zukin, 1987). For the newly migrated residents, the neighbourhood *develops* distinctiveness, character and social identity (Bridge, 2001; Cole, 1985; Winters, 1979). This is an act of class power and the ‘reclassification’ of taste:

> Those with social power have a monopoly over ways of seeing and classifying objects according to their criteria of good taste. The ability to create new systems of discernment is class power. Gentrification can be seen as one such reclassification (away from the working-class city and the desirability of the middle-class suburbs) in which inner urban living became once again invested with ideas of status, style and cosmopolitanism. (Bridge, 2001, p. 92)

Occupying land is an act of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), in that the occupiers seek to distinguish themselves from their working class history, through aesthetic choices and consumption. Urban spaces are associated with particular social identities or groups—and this is frequently conveyed via slang, such as ‘trailer trash’ or ‘chav’, ‘hipster’ or ‘snob’, ‘bogan’ (Nichols, 2011)—and this social identity is

connected to dominant consumption points or the way in which a person dresses themselves, how they speak, or the car they drive. These are all related to class.

Research also connects gentrification with an increase in political activity and left-leaning politics (O'Hanlon & Sharpe, 2009) and formation of collective action (Auyero, 2003; Foweraker, 1995; Paley, 2001). Foweraker (1995) describes collective action as representing "a search for solidarity values, primary relations and community" (p. 12). Arguably, there is a strong interaction occurring here between gentrification, celebrations of community and collective action. Collective action is motivated by thematic conceptualisations of community and emerges after an active process of localised gentrification. 'The local' and 'community' public high school serves as a symbolic representation of shared values and identity.

Vincent (1993, 1997) argues that the proposition of a 'community' school is one-dimensional, routinely described as a school that is "welcoming, accessible and relevant" (1993, p. 368). This is augmented by Williams (1983) who describes community as one of the only "social organization" terms that is consistently used favourably:

> **Community** can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (*state, nation, society,* etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term. (p. 76, emphasis in original)

The term ‘community’ is frequently utilised in educational work, but it is poorly delineated (Vincent, 1993, 1997). The positivity of the term may be traced to Dewey’s work (1927) but it is also evident in more recent literature, that argues for community organisation to evoke educational change (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Rose (1996a) writes that the term ‘community’ has long been “invoked by sociologists as a possible antidote to the loneliness and isolation of the individual generated by ‘mass society’ (p. 332) and “the combined depredations of market forces, remote central government, insensitive local authorities in new programmes” (p. 335). It is a positive delineation of a group of people living side-by-side and sharing common concerns.

Concurrently, the notion of a community may be critiqued as enabling pockets of individuals to collectivise—a paradox within a neoliberal individualist framework—and garner greater power through stronger political voice. The community maintains stronger “demands upon political authorities and resistance to such authorities” (Rose, 1996a, p. 336). This is echoed by Vincent (1997), “to exercise voice most effectively would require a collective rather than an individual response” (p. 274).

The ‘community’ operates as a form of social capital—a relationship network (Bourdieu, 1986)—in order to acquire cultural capital, in the form of educational qualifications. This is not projected as an overt negative; rather, the purpose is to critique and analyse, to bolster understanding of school choice behaviour and networks, and how class identity is constituted and administered

within these networks. I continue to scrutinise these concepts within the data analysis chapters. The following chapter speaks to epistemology.

3 Epistemology

3.1 Introduction

> This hybrid or dialectical modernist/postmodernist, reconstructive/deconstructive epistemology, which rejects both dogmatism and relativism, also has implications for our own research stance. (Lingard & Gale, 2007, p. 15)

In this chapter I explore conceptualisations of knowledge, in relation to this study. I draw on Lingard and Gale (2007) in order to indicate that I am endeavouring to make an epistemological shift away from the compartmentalisation of ethnographic research practices. My approach to ethnography is one that borrows from classical but also interpretive forms of ethnography (Denzin, 1999) and is positioned "against a disposition of epistemological innocence" (Lingard & Gale, 2007, p. 15).

In this chapter, I consider the methodological tools (photographs, maps, statistics) and how these connect to epistemological contributions (educational geography and class identity). The purpose of this is theoretical precision, in order that my contributions to knowledge are established rigorously.

3.2 Overview of methods

This ethnographic study consists of multiple data sets and these are demonstrated in the following diagram (see Figure 19):

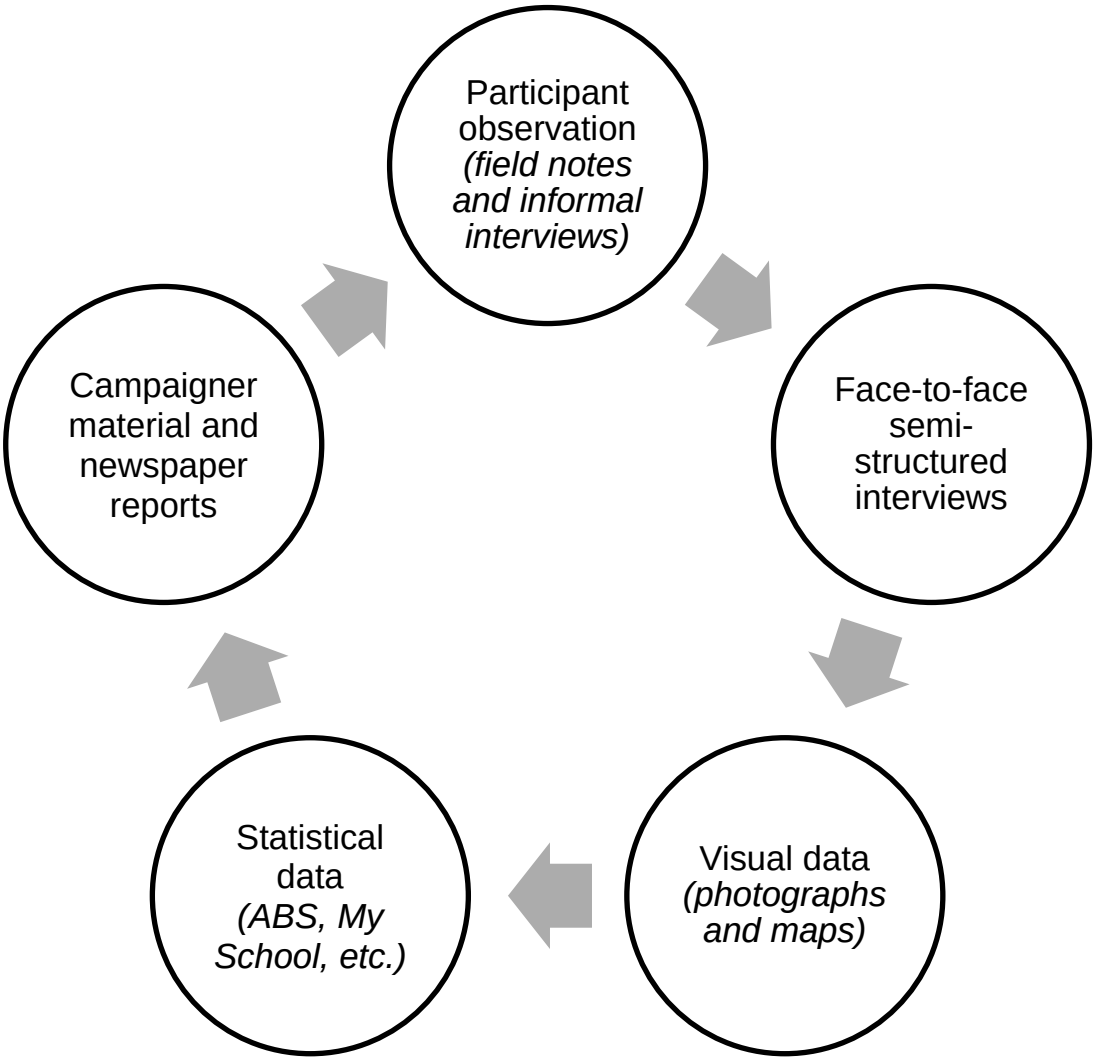


Figure 14 Sources of data.

All forms of data are generated for Lawson High Campaign (LHC) (see section 4.5 for a detailed description). In regards to the Smith High Campaign (SHC), I collect visual data, statistical data, published campaigners material and newspaper reports. For Thompson High School, I collect data from the Thompson High School website, including a school newsletter; from an interview with one parent (Michelle) who has a child enrolled at Thompson High School[27]; from newspaper reports that concern both the Thompson High Campaign and the new school; and, all four statistical resources are used (ABS, My School website, Google Maps, Metlink Public Transport).

The purpose of collecting additional data from Smith High Campaign and Thompson High School is to increase the study's rigor and depth. It highlights that the Lawson High Campaign is not the sole generator of data or findings. I chose to collect data regarding Thompson High School in order to examine the result of a past campaign. Lawson and Smith are present campaigns and therefore, data from a past successful campaign enables attention to be applied to the 'end-product'—the local public high school.

In light of the small amount of data and sample size for Thompson High, the ability to make conclusive and rigorous claims about this particular case is limited. Thus, this data is not intended to make conclusive findings or claims, but rather I draw upon this data as a means to compare, contrast and augment the data pertaining to Lawson and Smith High Campaign. In chapter eight, I focus on Thompson High to

[27] Michelle is also an active Lawson High Campaign lobbyist. Her eldest child gained enrolment to Thompson High when Michelle was living in the Thompson suburb, but she then moved her family to the Lawson suburb. She wants a public high school in Lawson for her youngest child.

explore how the pseudo-private school may be conceptualised. These are suggestions rather than findings, as based on the limited amount of Thompson High data and sample size.

3.3 Constructing knowledge via ethnography

This chapter considers ethnography as a field, one that is "bounded" and constrained. This is effectively argued by Grenfell and James (2004):

> Any field is also 'bounded', and there is that which is included in it and that which is excluded. If we regard educational research as a field, as a 'configuration of relations', then it is constituted by all that is methodologically possible within it; in other words, its topography amounts to the range of research activity and the principles that guide it. (p. 510)

The field of ethnography has evolved and changed considerably since its "going native" origins (Hinsley, 1983) and University of Chicago influences (Deegan, 2001). According to Deegan (2001), the Chicago School ethnographies "generally used more statistical data, and these data were usually combined with a series of qualitative techniques such as interviews, face-to-face-interactions and life histories" (p. 12). In a contemporary landscape, ethnography is repeatedly conflated with variant methodological subsidiaries and may rely considerably on one particular source of data collection (Atkinson, et al., 2008). In other words, a study may be referred to as 'ethnography' even though it exclusively utilises interviews, participant

observation or visual data. For example, the autoethnography seemingly replaces social world interaction with the primary experience and reflection of the researcher (Delamont, 2009). This is a shifting of practices, in terms of the earlier Chicago School ethnographies, which "studied face-to-face everyday interactions in specific locations. The descriptive narratives portrayed 'social worlds' experienced in everyday life within a modern, often urban, context" (Deegan, 2001, p. 11).

That researching of self remains ethnographic speaks to the fluidity of a bounded field. It also indicates that the field itself is somewhat diluted, in that 'ethnography' denotes a wide range of often unarticulated research methods and techniques (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I use participant observation as an ethnographic method, which is also disputed in terms of its reliability and validity (Gans, 1999).

Participant observation is ethically contentious and epistemologically contested. Bourdieu (1992) describes participant observation as "*participant objectivation* (and which is not to be mistaken for participant observation)" (p. 253, emphasis in original). In other words, by becoming a participant observer, I became an 'objectifier' by turning the campaigners into observable research *objects* (my emphasis). Bourdieu argues that participant observation is "the most difficult exercise of all because it requires a break with the deepest and most unconscious adherences" (p. 253). As a method, *participant objectivation*:

> Consists of a preconstructed space: the social composition of the group of participants is determined in advance … The journalist wields a form of

> domination (conjunctural, not structural) over a space of play that he has constructed and which he finds himself in the role of referee imposing norms of "objectivity" and "neutrality." (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 253)

One's methodological positioning on validity and reliability is based on one's approach to how knowledge and evidence is constituted, as knowledge and evidence. It is highly debatable whether objectivity is achievable or desirable (Denzin, 1999), especially in regards to participant observation (Becker, 1958; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010; Gans, 1999). Bourdieu (1992) expresses uneasiness towards claims of objectivity. All observers are dually playing the game (intricately involved in the *construction* of data) whilst observing the game, whether this is acknowledged or not.

This study draws on Denzin (1999) to articulate its positioning in relation to methodological principles of objectivity:

> An existential ethnography … understands that there can be no value-free, objective, dispassionate, value-neutral account of a culture and its ways. Taking a lead from midcentury African American cultural critics such as Ellison, it is understood that the ethnographic, the aesthetic, and the political can never be neatly separated. Ethnography like art is always political. (p. 512)

A value-free ethnography is a delineation of a “realist tale” (Van Maanen, 1988), one that is omniscient and written in third-person narrative. Whilst this study aims for comprehensive and accurate representations and depictions of data, all data are constructions (Bourdieu, 1992; Emerson, et al., 2001). It is my aim to represent interconnectedness and convolution through data, rather than one-dimensional or minimalistic responses.

3.4 Geo-identity as method

> Monsieur Leblond and Monsieur Amezziane live across from each other in Jonquil Street, a large treeless avenue lined by small houses with tiny gardens (four square meters) enclosed by a small wall and often strewn with paper refuse, broken toys and abandoned utensils… Jonquil Street is almost always empty. The word that springs to mind is “desert”—the term that local people often use to designate what has been done to their area since the factories were closed. (Bourdieu, 1999a, p. 6)

In this study, I am representing space via written and visual form, and these visual representations are implemented purposefully and meaningfully (they are not merely aids for field notes and interviews), rather they intend to fulfill a significant methodological purpose, being, place as participant. My methods are epistemologically underpinned by a theory of *geo-identity*, in that I consider the

place as participant within epistemological contributions. I see the visualisation of space and schooling that I offer in this dissertation as a key theoretical contribution of this study. It is my contention that, in order to understand the complexity of school choice, that one must attend to the matter of space.

In arguing for *geo-identity* as an epistemological underpinning, I look to Bourdieu's essay, 'Jonquil Street' (1999a), where he visits a home to conduct an interview. The description provides rich detailed imagery of where the research is occurring, but it also contains connotations of class. The description of space points to structural and symbolic markers of class. I look to do this, not precisely in the interview vignettes (see next chapter), but more so in how the epistemological contributions (of space, class and choice) are envisaged. My ethnography is influenced by Bourdieu, but also those ethnographers who argue for attentiveness to the senses of place (Atkinson, et al., 2008; Pink, 2001, 2009).

Using this as an overarching framework, this study contributes distinctive and original knowledge, by utilising purposefully selected methods which generate multiple data sets. The scope of my collected data—in that it is comprehensive and contrasting—will enable me to effectively explore complex themes. The various data sets explore three interconnected fields (school choice, educational geography and class identity), rather than only one field alone. The following chart (see Figure 15) demonstrates the flow between each component:

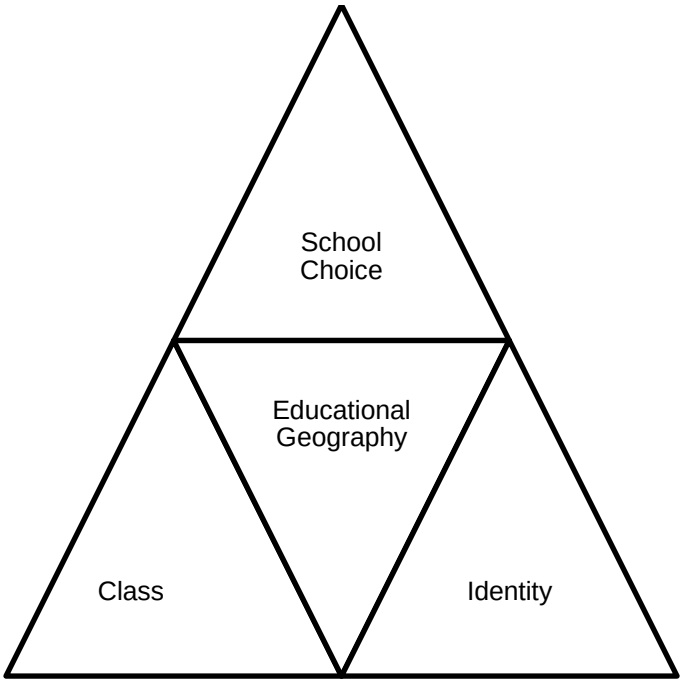


Figure 15 Theory triangle.

Even though class and identity are visually separate on this chart, they are co-functioning within the broader triangle and are theoretically connected. Arguably, a major missing component in this chart is 'race'. Scholars have effectively argued the value of whiteness for a middle-class identity (Gulson, 2011; Reay, et al., 2011). Even though I argue that race is beyond the scope of this study, it is more so a theoretical blind spot that reflects my own white privilege. Borrowing from Gulson (2011), I explore the (in)visibility of race from a participant observer's perspective in the following chapter.

I will use this chart as a visual starting point, in order to clearly outline how this study will draw on key theorists from each field and make original epistemological contributions to theories of school choice, class and geography.

3.4.1 Theorising educational geography, place and space

> The sociology of education is spatially rich in the metaphors used to name and understand social processes and relations, but analytically and theoretically weak in accounting for the difference that space makes. (Robertson, 2010, p. 22)

In this section, I will explore the adopted spatial terms (geography, place and space) that form an important epistemological foundation of this study. To be specific, I will consider the "space/place distinction" (Lingard & Gale, 2007, p. 17). I draw on Robertson (2010) to begin, to point out the slipperiness in employing these spatial metaphors, such as geography, place and space. Gulson (2008) effectively captures this slipperiness:

> There are clearly difficulties in applying concepts such as place in policy studies, not least as space and place are often conflated, used interchangeably or left as undefined and self evident; space is out there and dynamic, place is in here and static. (p. 155)

The concept of 'place' as static, fixed or permanent is widely debated by geographers (Casey, 1996; Gulson, 2008; Harvey, 2006a; Massey, 2005). Some theorists position 'place' as concrete establishments within geographical terrain, such as a city, a school, or a suburb (Casey, 1996), a theory that lends itself to phenomenological indictments of place as a perceptive environment or architectural

constructions that facilitate certain space (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Many theorists draw on both terms (place and space) in their discussions of space (Bourdieu, 1999b; Harvey, 1973, 2006a; Massey, 2005), but also in their explorations of ethnography (Atkinson, et al., 2008; Pink, 2009).

I look to Doreen Massey's (2005) text, *For Space*, to think about the place/space distinction. Massey uses 'place' as a means to talk about space, in that the notion of space surpasses place but the two are not distinct. She writes that, "places are not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*" (Massey, 2005, p. 130, emphasis in original). In this reading, Massey positions place and space as integrated concepts. This is reflected throughout the text, as she pushes against "space on the one hand and place on the other" (p. 6). Space is a "surface on which we are placed" (p. 7).

The term 'geography' is important within this study, because it is intended to carry two connotations: first, it is connected with *geo-identity* and second, geographic accentuates the *graphic*. Therefore, I purposely use this term to carry these arguments along and the term 'geography' acts as an overarching spatial motif, incorporating both place and space.

3.4.2 A spatial analysis of class

> Quantitative surveys premised on socio-economic categorisation need to be complemented by qualitative studies to explore what class means for individuals. (Reay, 1998, pp. 264, 265)

In the previous chapter, I outlined how my work positions itself within the literature. In this section, I will explain how my work contributes epistemologically to theories and understandings of class, by identifying how understandings of class are methodologically applied. This study uses multiple and interconnected sources of data, including qualitative and quantitative, visual and descriptive tools, and it does this in order to reflect its take-up of class. My central argument is that class consists of multiple levels and myriad factors, but it is inherently spatialised and actualised via identity. Herein, my primary analytical tool determines class by emphasising *geo-identity:* residential address and self-identifications with class.

The centrality of production and income levels in critiques of class has been widely debated in the literature, and I pointed to this in the previous chapter (see 2.4.2). In earlier work with Windle (Rowe & Windle, 2012), we defined the Australian middle-class by referring to the median disposable income of households. We utilised the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey data to determine the middle-class as those households with disposable incomes between the "30th and the 80th percentile" (Rowe & Windle, 2012, p. 139).

The amount of money an individual earns is indeed decisive in constructing class boundaries (and cannot be ignored in a sociological examination), but class analysis needs to develop fresh ways of incorporating income levels into class analysis. I refer to Reay (1998) who argues that "limiting class debates to the purely economic sphere results both in the marginalisation of women and a neglect of the

myriad ways in which social class differences contribute to social inequalities" (p. 259).

In this study, I endeavour to develop a spatial analysis of class, by mapping income levels to residential address. The participants were not asked to reveal their personal income levels but rather, I emphasise the income levels in the suburb in which they own a home. By mapping income earnings to the suburb in which the participants own a home, this enables a spatial reorientation of class.

In addition to income levels, this study maps how the demographic of each suburb corresponds with differing factors, such as race, religious affiliation, and school choices. These are all components of class and this method endeavours to *visually* portray class as the hierarchal "drawing of boundaries" (Ball, 2003, p. 158) and production of value within these boundaries. The campaigner's suburb aims to be a representational and metaphorical suburb, in order to highlight the importance of space in configuring class identity and influencing school choices. This space is underpinned by class histories, race and religion, contemporary political leanings and income classifications.

In Reay, et al.'s (2011) study, the authors precisely name the occupation of the participants, as an analytical tool in assessing middle-class categories. In Campbell, et al.'s (2009) study, the authors rely on census groupings of occupations, as "professional", "managerial", "semi-professional" or "clerical, sales and services" (p. 191). Even though this study borrows from Campbell, et al.'s (2009) broad groupings, I have not precisely listed the interview participant's profession for two reasons; first, in the interests of anonymity. As there are only ten interview

participants in this study, representing one campaign, the naming of precise occupations may arguably lead to the campaigners being able to identify one another. This would be unethical. In the data analysis and interview vignettes, I do point to occupation titles, but these rely on general descriptions (e.g. 'professional position'). In this description, I am looking to indicate that this position requires university qualifications. For those participants who do not have university qualifications, I specify this. Second, in this study I am endeavouring to conduct a class analysis via a spatial lens. I am looking to move away from understandings of the middle-class, as based on profession.

The participants in this study lend themselves to Reay, et al.'s (2011) "new middle-class" or Campbell, et al.'s (2009) "cosmopolitan middle class" (p. 32) in that many of the participants are employed in either professional or upper managerial positions, and are university educated. I specifically asked the interview participants about their levels of education (see Appendix B for interview topics). This is influenced by Pusey's (2003) study of *Middle Australia*, which argues that the middle-class is defined by their university qualifications. In summary, this study examines how the participants identify with class and construct understandings of class, whilst maintaining a spatial emphasis.

I will now explore the methods that I use (photographs, maps and statistics) and I explore these methods precisely to demonstrate how they contribute to a spatial analysis of class.

3.4.2.1 Photographs

> Photographs have a long and varied history in ethnography. Supported by different methodological paradigms, a camera has been an almost mandatory element of the 'tool kit' for research for several generations of ethnographers. (Pink, 2001, p. 49)

There are three types of photographs in this study: (1) the image acquired via the campaigners websites; (2) the image by the author and, 3) those created by a professional photographer[28]. These were taken on request and always in my presence. The photographer also captured campaigner's stickers, banners or signs that are posted around their suburb; however the majority was not included as they routinely revealed too many details about the campaigns' identity. All identifiable features on the photographic images have been blurred.

I asked a professional photographer to accompany me to each suburb on three different occasions (2012) and the process of image selection was considered and subjective. I 'briefed' the photographer about what I was looking for and what I was interested in—the clashing of the old and the new via gentrification, such as factories, warehouses and the sites of closed schools. I asked a professional photographer to generate these images because I believed she would better capture the aesthetics of place. Lemke (2002) argues that visual images can be both "constraining of the meanings a reader makes or more enabling of the reader as a co-

[28] Elisabeth Devereux. Images are cited appropriately and contact details are provided in the Appendix.

conspirator" (p. 299). A photograph can limit the reader's imagination about place, but it can also extend it. However, the combination of a visual image with text amplifies "meaning-resource capacity" (p. 303).

The photographs in this study centrally inquire into geography—the spaces that are generated through concrete surfaces—and these photographs aim to illustrate the battle of space, the architectural butting and jarring against the old and the new (Gulson, 2008). There is a physicality to the "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1979) that is portrayed through both the architecture and the empty spaces, a discomforting tangibility to the knocking up against one another.

I selected the images included in this study and these images subjectively represent the suburb and campaigners. Pink (2001) argues that there are:

> No fixed criteria that determine which photographs are ethnographic. Any photograph may have ethnographic interest, significance or meanings at a particular time or for a particular reason. The meanings of photographs are arbitrary and subjective; they depend on who is looking. (p. 51)

Photographs are selected for their contributory role in the construction of *geo-identity*, and in constructing the place as participatory in the research. I envisage the photographs as contributing to the central research questions. An example of a photograph is shown:

Figure 16 "High School not High Rise"- ballot box ticked.

This image (see Figure 16) captures an important space, and is relevant in thinking about class and identity. It was taken in the suburb of Smith by photographer Elisabeth Devereux in 2012. When this photograph was taken, the Smith High Campaigners were lobbying for State Government funds to build a new public high school on this block of land (which previously held the Smith public high school, before it was closed and demolished in the 1990s). There is graffiti scrawled across the front fence: “High School not High Rise” accompanied by a ticked box.

The ticked box represents a political ballot form, with the voters expressing their strong preference for educational provision against ongoing urban construction and high-rise development. This block of land is currently up for private sale and the high fence borders a dilapidated and neglected space. It is strongly padlocked, but fences have been lifted off and people continue to dump their rubbish there. These photographs (by author) taken on the same day show this:

Figure 17 The neglected space of Smith High.

These images speak to epistemological contributions that this study looks to make. First, there is a battle for space. This space has been closed up and blocked—it is padlocked and messy—but the campaigners want it back. The campaigners are asserting their claim on this space in order to reconfigure and *reclassify* this space. The campaigners are suggesting that they will use their powers as political voters in order to acquire their demands. The space itself becomes contentious. In the context of free market and privatisation reforms, this stands as quite a radical reclamation whilst also emphasising the politics of space (Lefebvre, 1976; Massey, 2005).

Second, these images accentuate how space can be *relational*. When a space is closed up, fenced and padlocked, it is a 'dead' space. There is little perceived value in this space, aside from its value in hoarding rubbish or discarded objects. It is effectively isolated and ceases to relate in a credible way—economically, socially or culturally. This is how relational space is structural, political and classed.

3.4.2.2 Maps: boundaries, margins and the city

This study uses professionally designed maps to conduct a spatial analysis of class[29]. I provide a series of detailed maps to indicate the campaign suburbs and the schools surrounding each suburb[30]. Below is an example (see Figure 18) of a map:

[29] All of the maps were created by a professional graphic designer (Melinda Holme from Oven Creative). I provided Melinda with the information (i.e. distances, schools and suburbs and so forth).
[30] There are larger versions of these maps (see Appendix C).

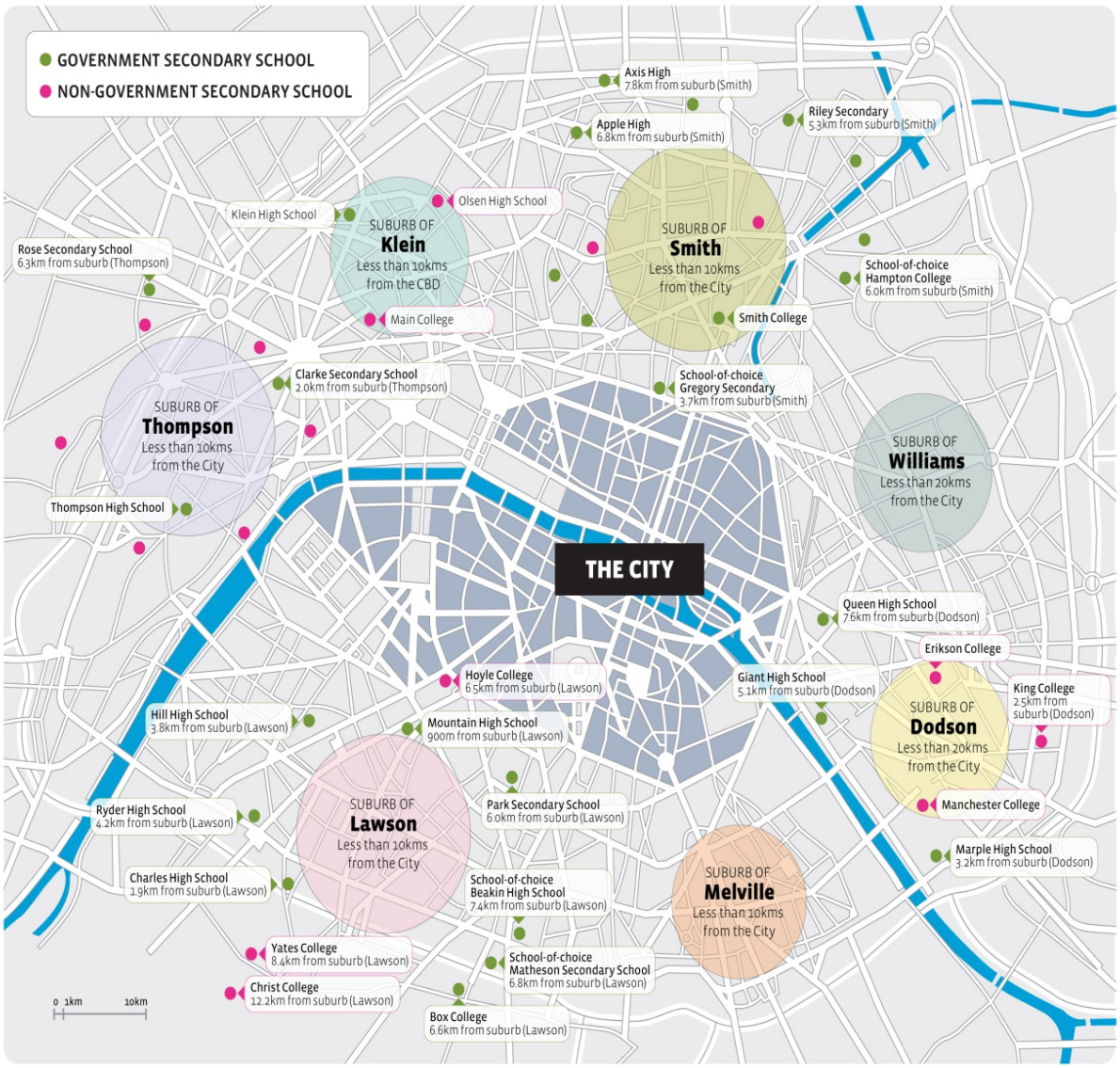


Figure 18 Map of the campaigns.

The large circles represent the suburbs in which past and present campaigns are located. The pink and green dots circling the suburbs represent government (public) and non-government (private) schools. Each school is reported with the

travelling time from the suburb to the school. This is a walking distance, measured in kilometres via Google Maps[31].

The maps aim to do significant conceptual work and impart a spatial imaginary of boundaries, margins and the city. It is important that I address two components of the map: first, the 'unnamed' schools and second, the placement of the city onto the map.

I did not name all of the surrounding schools, in order to highlight the invisibility of certain schools to certain choosers. For example, many of the surrounding schools in the Thompson area are unnamed. These unnamed schools were invisible in my data collection, as is the unnamed school in the Smith suburb. The 'unnamed' schools are intended to act as a metaphor for school choice mechanisms. However, some readers will not notice the unnamed schools on this map, whereas others will. This highlights that the map will be 'read' in different ways by different readers.

The placement of 'city' onto these maps is highly purposeful. Gentrification of a suburb, or how a suburb is classified and garners social power, is related to its proximity to the city centre. In order to conduct a spatial analysis of class, it is necessary to consider the 'city imaginary' within this analysis. Indeed, the city is formative in work by sociologists and geographers, and Lefebvre's (1996) formative work on "the right to the city" accentuates this[32].

[31] All statistical data is reported in Australian metric—kilometres (equal to 0.62 miles) and Australian dollars ($AUD). See Appendix A for methods used to calculate these distances.
[32] Lefebvre first coined this phrase in "Le Droit à la ville" *(1968).*

The series of maps are intended to impart a ‘city imaginary’, or in other words, a symbolic take-up of the city. The capital city represents the “site of capital” (Bourdieu, 1999b, p. 125), the neoliberal centre and location of capitalistic pursuits (Harvey, 2006b). Many geographers and sociologists focus on the city as the centre of urban battles (Gulson, 2011; Harvey, 1972, 1992, 2006b; Lefebvre, 1991, 1996; Soja, 1996), and I draw on Massey’s (2005) description of the city to emphasise this:

> ‘Cities’ may indeed pose the general ‘question of our living together’ in a manner more intense than many other places. However, the very fact that cities (like all places) are home to the weavings together, mutual indifferences and outright antagonisms of such a myriad of trajectories, and that this itself has a spatial form which will further mould those differentiations and relations, means that, within cities, the nature of that question—of our living together—will be very differentially articulated. *The challenge of the negotiation of place is shockingly unequal.* And the politics, economics and cultures of space—through white flight, through gated communities, through the class-polarising geographies of market relations—are actively used in the production of that inequality. (Massey, 2005, p. 169, my emphasis)

The city itself is a global place and regardless of where it is located geographically in the world, scores of cities share similar characteristics (Pile, 1999) and the city imaginary evokes commonality. This may be applied to ‘world’ cities,

such as New York, Tokyo, Shanghai or London, imagining a city is the envisioning of density—density of population and physical constructions. The architecture of cities is shared from culture to culture, frequently dominated by sky-scrapers, designed to incorporate the greatest number of persons within small spaces. This imparts a phenomenological uptake of architectural design for city places; these places are designed in such a way to foster a certain space, a space that renders high density of social and relational space.

3.4.2.3 Statistics

As part of this spatial analysis of class, I draw on quantitative statistics and these statistics are mapped to the suburb and presented visually. Rather than only portray these statistics descriptively (using written description and analysis alone), I construct visual graphs in order to strengthen the impact of my argument; and also, so that the spaces may be visualised. These graphs utilise colours and labels to highlight geographical differentiations.

In this study, statistical data relies on four main sources: (1) Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (hereby referred to as ABS), (2) school qualitative data from the *My School* website, (3) public transport travel times from Metlink Melbourne website and, (4) travel distances from Google Maps website. In relation to the graphs, I draw on ABS Census data and *My School* website.

I present graphs for each of the main suburbs (Lawson, Smith and Thompson) which demonstrate the key demographics in comparison to surrounding suburbs. For example, I demonstrate the percentage of persons who identify as Christian and

reside in the suburb of Lawson, and I compare this with the percentage that resides in the bordering suburb of Charles. I also contrast this with the State of Victoria median. The purpose is to construct a complex spatial analysis that incorporates the lived components of class.

The process for this analysis is as follows. First, I record the total number of persons living in the designated suburb. Second, I compare this number with a range of variables, including: median total household income, country of birth and religion[33]. Third, I calculate the percentage of each variable and present this percentage on a graph. For example, I divide the total number of persons who identify as Buddhists with the total number of persons who live in the suburb of Lawson. (See Appendix A2 for more detail in regards to how I calculate each variable). Fourth, I follow the same process for each surrounding suburb, in order to compare and contrast each variable according to the suburb. I gather this data by utilising a suburb profile, acquired from the current ABS Census (at time of writing)[34]. I review a total of fifteen suburbs, and compare and contrast each variable (three in total) with each suburb. For the final step, I compare each variable from each suburb, with data available from the State of Victoria profile and Year Book Australia, 2012: Income and Welfare (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a, 2012j). I consider this broader comparative analysis important, in order for the reader to acquire contextual perspective in relation to the provided data.

[33] I also look at the percentage of persons who speak English as a second language, in correspondence with each suburb. However, I do not list it here because I do not include this variable as a graph.
[34] For the detailed reference, refer to 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing (2012).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated how I am positioned, in relation to my epistemological and ontological groundings. I have argued for ethnography that attends to *geo-identity,* in this chapter. The place is participatory within research practices, and in this study I look to conduct a spatial analysis of class, by using multiple data sets. I will explicate this further in the next chapter.

4 An Ethnography of School Choice

4.1 Introduction

> Ethnographic fieldwork is founded on a commitment to understand everyday life in a given social world through a sustained engagement with that world. It is predicated on the recognition that local social organization and the conduct of everyday life are complex, in that they are enacted through multiple modes of social action and representation. (Atkinson, et al., 2008, pp. 31, 32)

The epigraph uses Atkinson, et al. (2008) to indicate the focus of this chapter—to narrate the participant observation experience—a "commitment to understand everyday life in a given social world". Drawing on Bourdieu's (1992) reflexive sociological lens, this chapter explores the methodological injunctions and embodied discomforts incurred by "participant objectivation" (p. 253).

In line with these aims, I practice reflexivity by reflecting on the knowledge that I bring to this research and how my epistemological and ontological positionality shapes and influences this study (Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Pillow, 2003). I continue to use first-person narrative in this chapter. First-person narrative is taken up deliberately, in order to take account of my role as researcher. To ignore this researcher role, is to ignore the central perspective through which data is generated.

Finally, this chapter discusses the interview process and briefly introduces the interview participants; data analysis and ethics.

4.2 The politics of perspective: positionality

> I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (Haraway, 2004, p. 92)

Haraway's (2004) citation may be interpreted as a postmodernist perspective; however, I draw on Haraway to draw attention to the body as a place of complexity and 'epistemologies of location'. In this study, I use participant observation and interviews to generate data, and therefore it is necessary to think about the politics of perspective and the epistemologies that I bring to the work. Grosz (1995) argues that "bodies are essential to accounts of power and critiques of knowledge" (p. 32). In this section, I engage with reflexivity as influenced by Pillow (2003) and the purpose of this is not to establish "ethnographic authority" (Britzman, 1995, p. 229), but rather to "make visible the ways in which reflexivity is used" (Pillow, 2003, p. 177).

Just like Vaughan's (2004) research journey was "coloured by [her] own prior ethnography" (p. 397), my perspective is influenced by my narrative and

embodied experiences. During observation, I visited the suburb of Lawson and walked the streets, took photographs and recorded my process of reflexivity in a research journal. In one journal entry, I consider the power of place, and how this intersects with constructs of race and educational privilege. I consider how 'place' has influenced my own personal narrative.

My earliest memories of place are of home, a 'nice' beach-side brick home in the suburbs, occupied by a Middle-Class, White, Christian family unit: one Father and one Mother. My second place is my primary school, operated by the local Christian Church, called 'Regent Christian Academy'. We prayed every morning, memorised bible verses, regularly attended bible study camps, church and meetings. I wore a uniform embedded with a Latin motto and received the cane for misbehaviour, such as swearing or not remembering the bible verse. I remember hour-long multiple bus trips to attend the school, despite a primary school being on my same street. I didn't have any desire to change schools though; when it came time to leave year 7, I wanted to transition to the Christian secondary school with my friends.

However, it is at this temporal point there is a dramatic change of 'place'—the family unit became a single mother, on acrimonious terms—and my place became a far different place. We moved from the beach-side to a suburb called "Illawong"[35], from the brick home to an asbestos fibro home that we were 'borrowing'. My new 'place' was far more inferior than the old 'place', and this was inferred to me in a number of ways, mostly from clues that are dispensed along the

[35] Pseudonym.

way: I heard my new suburb of “Illawong” was dangerous and Illawong High School a breeding ground for drug-dealers and would-be criminals. As place, Illawong was constructed as ‘notorious’ through a discourse of whiteness. I learnt very early on that it contained Indigenous people and poverty. The two were interconnected and undesirable. I became implicated with this undesirable social landscape and social identity. This was quite a memorable engagement with social exclusion, in that my childhood friends were disallowed from visiting, their parents citing the danger of Illawong, and the danger of socialising with ‘broken’ families.

I remember starting at my new school, Illawong High, and walking there in my colour-code attire. My new uniform—or lack thereof—seemed an outward symbol of this new classed representation; even though I was shunned at my new high school for being a ‘private school girl’, one of those types who wear ties and stockings and talk ‘all posh like’, my old private school friends wouldn’t associate with a ‘rough kid’ from Illawong High. In every way that counted to me, I felt like ‘outsider’, and was treated as such. I gained degrees of social acceptance within my peer group, only when they eventually discovered I lived in Illawong: it was like a membership card that granted me insider status.

As a school, Illawong High reminded me of a prison—violent, pointless and dilapidated. There was a strong sense of survival contained within those high barbed-wire fences and trying to escape was futile. Violent fist and knife fights broke out regularly. The facilities were non-existent, the grounds and classrooms seriously neglected. There were no heaters, chairs fell apart when you sat on them (so you would be forced to sit on the floor during the lesson, whilst your peers threw spit-

balls at your head), science laboratories consisted of two or three Bunsen-burners for ‘experiments’ and our recreational equipment was the one solitary (and broken) basketball ring on gravel. Teachers actively expounded their lack of concern, and walked out of classrooms during ‘lessons’. This is not because they were ‘bad’ teachers, nor were the pupils ‘bad’ students; rather, a physical place is the container for social identities, and thus, the construction of voice and social power.

The neglected state of the school, the impression of ‘locking them up and throwing away the key’ constructed a sense of futility and meaningless. For the people that filled that space, we were “the underclass, the excluded, the marginal” (Rose, 1996a, p. 345). A lack of individualistic hard work, or ability (meritocracy), is routinely attributed to the gross failures within schools ‘like these’, those that are filled with poverty. However, in my view, occupation in spaces of poverty and marginalisation constructs an internalised sense of failure and meaningless. It would seem difficult to achieve anything other than failure; even though I was a high achiever, academically speaking, I dropped out of high-school after year ten.

Admittedly, there is a personal sense of frustration when it comes to my own education. I often feel it was a grandly deficient education. I detested the year or more working in a basement of an insurance company, with the title of ‘office junior’—cold-calling unsuspecting victims, fetching cake for my boss and the never-ending filing of useless pieces of paper. It was only due to the degrees of cultural capital that I possessed, that enabled me to become a mature-aged high-school student and eventually access university.

This is a reflection on how I am positioned in relation to school choice, the degrees of differences between schools. Certainly, my perception is that differences are quite substantial. These experiences have shaped an interest in poverty; in terms of how poverty interacts with education, and how, in my view, educational sites interact conservatively with the unspoken place of poverty. This positionality affects my data collection and analysis in that, my focus and interest (and therefore, what I choose to select and narrate) pertains to this scope of equity, deficiency and disadvantage. I am not seeking out essentialised understandings or neat categorisations of these themes. It reflects a positioning that influences a sociological inquiry, regarding the nature of poverty and how it is rejected and externalised.

Indeed, this personal narrative affects a positioning, but the view from a body is always complex, positioned and situated (Haraway, 2004). On many levels I can relate to the individuals campaigning for a public school; I am a gentrifier, I am university-educated, and I am an active school chooser. My children are only pre-school aged, but my partner and I have already discussed secondary school options. Like many middle-class choosers, we are willing to relocate for a school-of-choice or employ a number of strategies to secure enrolment in a place that is considered compatible with our values. I disclose this because it is necessary to impart how I share in school choice behaviour—it is not a matter of looking down from above. Indeed, all research is positioned and that place of positioning lies within quite a fragmented and contradictory place.

4.3 Participant observer

> Participant observation—establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent social life and social processes that occur in that setting—comprises one core activity in ethnographic fieldwork. (Emerson, et al., 2001, p. 352)

For eighteen months (from September 2011 to March 2013), I observed the Lawson High Campaign as a participant observer (Emerson, et al., 2001). During this time, I conducted informal interviews and formal, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with campaigners. I selected the participant observer method for its ability to 'get inside' and *become* a campaigner, privy to their discourse, action and motivations. The act of participant observation is the act of becoming a "kind of member of the observed group" (Robson, 2002, p. 314), by sharing life experiences and learning the group's social conventions and habits.

Despite the contentious and contested nature of participant observation, it arguably yields more information in comparison to only conducting interviews (Tope, Chamberlain, Crowley, & Hodson, 2005, p. 471). However, if participant observation is the sole method of data collection, a researcher is unlikely to "report the negative aspects of their subjects' personalities and lives" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010, p. 95).

I attended seven Lawson High Campaign general meetings and community events, in which I conducted participant observation and recorded field notes. I attended two meetings in which I did not conduct observation or record field notes

for ethical reasons. The LHC general meetings are advertised on their website and usually held once every month. However, there were breaks of up to three months during busy times, such as holiday periods (e.g. Christmas). The general meetings are open to all members of the public, and they meet at a fixed point in the suburb of Lawson (in a public space, such as a pub or a library, rather than a person's private home). These 'public' meetings are distinguished from 'working party' (WP) meetings, which are not advertised and only working party members attend. The working party is established through a formal voting procedure every 12 months. Voting occurs during a public meeting and is pre-advertised on their website, and administered by a local Councillor (a political representative)[36]. The working party is made up of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two non-descript members (who are also voted in). The working party members are therefore formalised and official members, but when I interviewed Mark (the web designer for the campaign), he believed that he was "unofficially included" within the working party meetings. He said that he had gained their trust over an extended period of time (Mark, Interview August 23rd, 2012b). I was explicitly excluded from the working party, at the early stages of research.

4.3.1 Mapping the role of researcher-participant

Field notes from the Lawson High Campaign (General Meeting), October 8th 2012:

[36] The State of Victoria is divided into a number of local councils made up of the adjoining towns, cities or suburbs in regional and metropolitan areas. Local Councillors are those people who have been elected to represent the population of a local area. They are usually referred to as Councillors. The head of Local Government in a suburban region is known as the Mayor (State Government of Victoria, 2012).

> I sit in a circle of chairs at a Lawson High Campaign general meeting, led by Karen, the working party member. She hands around a document clearly marked **'Confidential'**. It is an official report from a study into whether the suburb of Lawson requires a public high school. The study was funded by the Department of Education and conducted by an independent research company. There are multiple copies of the report, and Karen encourages everyone to take a copy. I reach out to take a copy. Karen shifts in her seat uncomfortably. I say to her, "Do you mind if I take a look?"
>
> She pauses. "Well you can have a look (*nervous laugh)*… I do trust you Emma… but probably best not to take a copy." (Field notes - October 8, 2012, emphasis in original)

The above extract, recorded one year into observation, seeks to demonstrate the frequently troublesome relationship I experienced as participant observer. The title of this section is influenced closely by Vaughan's (2004) work, in which she negotiates "the position of the researcher" (p. 393). Vaughan describes a "fragile" and complicated role of participant observer, within an alternative school facing forced closure by the Department of Education. What she describes is an uncomfortable and disquieting experience, in which she struggles with conflicting pressures, demands and inner ethical conflicts, pertaining to the agenda or purpose of her research. The fundamental conflict that is evoked by Vaughan's study is: what is the purpose of my research? Vaughan's perception of purpose is very different to her participants and

she says that, “the imperative for me to produce a victory narrative about [the school] was quite strong” (Vaughan, 2004, p. 393).

Like Vaughan, I felt pressure to produce a victory narrative about the campaign, or at least help the campaign to achieve victory. Participant observation within the Lawson High Campaign agitated motifs of insider-outsider discourse, both from the perspective of researcher and from the perspective of participant. The filaments of tension as practiced inside and a clearly experienced tension from ‘outside’ intensifies the ethical dilemmas and “socio-emotional discomfort” (Li, 2008, p. 101) experienced by the researcher. I will narrate this tension as a four-stage process; (1) The beginning stages of research: selection, access and informed consent; (2) Insider/outsider; (3) Politics of perspective; and (4) Ethical politics of participant observation.

4.3.2 The beginning stages of research: selection, access and informed consent

There is an extensive volume of participant observation research that seeks to produce a type of victory narrative for disadvantaged persons (Vaughan, 2004), that which is posited within “an advocacy or emancipatory paradigm, to experience and represent social lives of the disadvantaged people” (Li, 2008, p. 101).

As part of this paradigm, danger sites are selected (Gans, 1999), such as participant observation of female gambling (Li, 2008), illegal gang activity (Patrick, 1973), protest action to police repression in post-apartheid South Africa (Dawson & Sinwell, 2012), or semi-permanent occupations against Government (Auyero, 2003).

In Dawson and Sinwell's (2012) study, Dawson conducted focus groups with individuals experiencing severe physical violence and incarceration at the hands of police. She writes:

> It struck me that I had a very different research agenda to that of the activists. They expected me to do something practical with the information I was gathering, while my motivation was to gather and analyse data in order to draw theoretical conclusions about the policing of protest… [During an interview, the activist said to Dawson]: 'What do you want to know? You researchers always come here asking questions but when we ask questions you give us theories. That's what you are doing. You are theorising the shit out of people's pain!' (Poni, Interview, 10 September 2009). (p. 182)

The campaigner's suburb is not a "danger" site, involved with "hard" action. However, Dawson and Sinwell's (2012) reflections pinpoint the troublesome advocacy paradigm for many participant researchers—to produce valuable information that will assist the collective action, and advocate for those requiring advocacy.

I selected this study for a number of reasons, but the single most dominant motivation was clearly posited within the advocacy or emancipatory framework (Li, 2008). It was at a point in time that I staunchly believed in 'public' education. There was a sense of insidious insider discourse at work, in that the campaigners and I occupied a similar space. While this shared space is performed and constituted within

geography—a concrete spatial landscape—it is composed of visible and invisible 'sameness': the language we speak, our faith in God or lack thereof, our layers of formal education, the way we dress and the colour of our skin.

One of the campaigns was brought to my attention when I lived in a near-by suburb and was teaching in a local public high school. Over the course of two years, prior to conducting this study, I heard about the campaign via newspaper reports, flyers and advertisements typically once a month. I was not involved with any of the campaigns, and nor was I acquainted with any of the individuals involved before this study. I was intrigued by the campaigners' long-term commitment to their cause and believed it contained multifaceted dimensions.

Upon beginning my dissertation, I approached the Smith High Campaign approximately eight months into my study. In order to initiate face-to-face communication, I attended a general meeting that was advertised on their website. At this meeting, a table was set up at the front of the room, and the working party (WP) members sat at this table. The working party comprised of approximately 10-12 members. Approximately 20 to 25 persons attended this meeting and all introduced themselves, first and foremost, as parents. Typically, the person started by saying their name and age(s) of their child(ren), before stating where they lived in the suburb of Smith. This was shared during LHC meetings, also.

Following the Smith High Campaign meeting, which lasted for more than 2 hours, I approached a member of the working party. I needed to wait, as the members were inundated with other persons. I introduced myself, said that I was interested in researching the campaign and asked whether I could contact the working party by

email. Verbal consent was given for me to do so, thus I sent an email introducing myself as a PhD student and “interested parent” (7/09/2011).

I received a prompt reply email granting permission for the “executive group” to receive the explanatory statement, and this was forwarded on. However, I did not hear back from the group following their working party meeting. I expected that this was not a positive response, in terms of my access to the group.

A week later, I called the group’s spokesperson (20/09/2011). This person’s phone number is freely available on the campaign website. The first question that the spokesperson asked me was whether I am a “concerned parent”. I perceived the question to be asking whether I am *genuinely* a concerned parent. Just as my introductory email demonstrates my eagerness to include notions of my parenting-status—my shared insider status—this tension was sustained within discussions and negotiations.

The spokesperson was hesitant in allowing me access to their campaign, due to concerns about how much time the research project would entail. I was told that the research project was discussed in great length during the last working party meeting, and while several members fully supported involvement, others passionately did not. Importantly, they felt the research would detract from the collective’s sole objective, being to successfully lobby for a government-funded high school in their locale. In addition, there were concerns about my motives, suggesting an issue of trust.

After conversing for quite some time over the phone, the spokesperson changed their position somewhat suddenly and invited me to attend a working party

meeting. The location and time was given (whereas this is not advertised or available to outsiders) and my presence would be expected, the following month. However, at the same time of these exchanges, I attended a Lawson High Campaign general meeting. At this meeting, the annual working party members were elected. I nominated myself for the lowest-tiered role within the working party, but did so with the expression that, “I may have a conflict of interest”. I was not able to expand on this, at the time, and I was voted in. At the end of this meeting, I approached the newly-elected President and had a similar conversation—I introduced myself, my role as researcher, and asked for permission to email LHC with an explanatory statement. Consent was given, and an email was sent the following day (20/09/2011). In this email, I wrote that “I would also like to help out with your campaign, in whatever way that I can – whether that is admin or writing letters –whatever helps. My year will be devoted to your campaign, so I will have the time!”. I also emphasise full anonymity and processes of informed consent. The rebuff by Smith High Campaign had possibly lifted my tension, as to whether or not I would be granted access. I considered access and the obtainment of informed consent as crucial to my study and my individual interests. Evident in my email is an introduction to the trade of knowledge and skills between activists and scholar. Gillan and Pickerill (2012) refer to this trade as the “complexity of reciprocation”, one that is fraught with “ethical dilemmas” (p. 135).

Following my email, I received a long list of questions by the Lawson working party members, in order to respond via email. Questions were related to my alignment with the campaign goals and issues of confidentiality. After responding to

these questions, I was asked to attend a working party meeting, in which members would interview me (or have a discussion with me, depending on one's perspective). I felt quite nervous going into that meeting. There were four to five members there and a series of questions were asked, mainly relating to confidentiality, privacy of information and campaign strategies. My perception was that the campaigners needed full assurance—of my absolutist support, my trustworthiness and authenticity, and my ability to actively contribute to their goals, rather than deduct from their goals. There was a sense of secrecy within the collective itself (Mitchell, 1993). Information needed to be exclusively contained within and by the campaign, and wasn't to be delivered to any external sources, such as surrounding schools, political members (those who were not already working party members), media outlets, alternative campaign groups or non-campaigners, meaning, those that did not support the campaign goals. I received informed consent to conduct participant observation during this meeting with the Lawson working group and on a superficial level at least, became 'insider'. I was also formally asked to resign from the working party and I needed to put this resignation into writing, by sending a written letter or email to the President.

I excluded myself from the Smith High Campaign when their next meeting directly clashed with the LHC meeting, and evidently would continue to do so. As I had since established contact with LHC and gained informed consent, I made the decision to attend LHC instead of Smith High Campaign. I contacted the Smith leader, regarding my inability to attend.

I made this decision due to my ethical approach to collecting data; I believed that failure to attend after an initial face-to-face relationship (and agreement) had been established with Lawson would have been lacking in engaged principles of research (Pillow, 2003). The consequence of this was a break or rupture in the establishment of a link with Smith High Campaign. Communications were never continued, despite my efforts to continue dialogue through email correspondence.

4.3.3 Insider/outsider

> Traditional ideals of *community* express a desire for the fusion of subjects which, in practice, operates to exclude those with whom the group does not identify. The ideal of a universal *citizenry* and civic public exemplifies the same logic of identity, in that it conceives of the polity as universal and unified. As a result, citizens are expected to leave behind particularity and differences. (Vincent, 1997, p. 279, emphasis in original)

To be an 'insider' denotes shared goals, the idea of being unified and cohesive. The individuals to be observed are members within an open group; however, to become an 'insider' is to verbally support the campaign's set goals and motives. It speaks to a shared collective identity. There are multiple layers of representation that facilitate the movement towards 'insider', and these are accentuated in the way campaigners introduce themselves at public meetings.

Individuals introduce themselves first and foremost as parents, including the age and gender of their child(ren). This is followed by a description of where they

live. Individuals typically describe exactly where they live in the suburb of Lawson and when they moved to the suburb of Lawson (usually within the last five years). I did not observe any of the campaigners introduce themselves in the way of their occupation or profession.

Observed differences are palpable; in her first introduction to the group, participant Michelle announces that she is a "single mother" (with a nervous laugh). She is the only person to do so during observation (Field notes - November 7, 2011). Participants usually reference a husband or a wife. Interview participant Adam is the only campaigner I met who actually grew up in the suburb of Lawson. I met Adam for the first time at a general meeting. He seemed keen to speak to me and approached me after the meeting:

> "You're looking into this campaign, are ya?" He says to me, and he sits down on the seat next to me. "Adam," he says warmly, shaking my hand. I shake his hand and tell him my own name.
>
> "You know it's all bloody politics." He says, "we would have had a school years ago, if we weren't a safe seat. Those bloody politicians would never invest in a safe seat, it's all about bang for buck."
>
> I ask, "Is this a safe Labor seat?"
>
> Adam nods, "Shit yeah. We're more likely to vote Greens, then Liberal… Bloody politicians. It's all about a bunch of bloody bullshitters just bullshitting about how much money they can make."

> "So, you reckon if Lawson was a marginal seat, then you'd have a school?" I ask.
>
> Adam speaks in a raised voice, "We'd have a school last bloody election… It's bloody obvious! Marginal seats have more votes, more say! *Why do you think this whole area is neglected so much—no planning, no infrastructure…nothing."* (Field notes, November 7th, 2011)

In referring to the 'Greens', Adam is referring to the Greens Party, a left-of-centre political party; and in referring to 'Liberal', this means the Liberal Party or Coalition, a right-of-centre party. Australia is a two-party preferred political system, which means that the Liberal Party (or Coalition) is traditionally opposed by the other major political party, the left-of-centre Labor Party. The suburb of Lawson is strongly held by the left-of-centre Labor Party and Adam believes that the demographic is far more likely to sway more to the left side of politics, than the right (by voting for the Greens).

At LHC meetings, people tend to arrive by bicycle or foot. They dress in neat business attire, or neat casual attire. For at least the first ten minutes of each meeting, the campaigners discuss external social activities that are not connected to the campaign. It was my perception that the campaigners regularly 'bumped into each other', through schooling activities, school drop offs and pickups, sporting activities, community events or arranged social activities. Many of the members organised social activities with one another and their families. I was invited to attend a social

occasion at one point—a ‘Eurovision’ night with many of the other campaigners, complete with the television event and costume. I did not attend.

The campaigners regular socialising seemed to exacerbate my own sense of being outsider. I did not reside in the geographical area and could not experience the same regular face-to-face contact.

It was approximately six months into my observation, that I realised we were all white. I felt embarrassed by my ignorance, or possibly, the ease in which I shared in the construction of salient privilege (Rivière, 2008). It was all too comfortable. Gillan and Pickerill (2012) argue that the participant observer selects “social movements” that are aligned with their political left-leanings and thus, the process of complex reciprocation is comfortable and compatible with the scholar’s self identity (p. 136). The “ugly movement” tends to be avoided, such as pro-life campaigns or those associated with fundamental religion (p. 136).

What struck me most was the unstated nature, or tacitly operated, silence of whiteness. As researcher-participant, I implicitly took part in the silence and indeed, the ignorance of my own privilege. Rivière (2008) speaks about silence as a part of the production of privilege or social power. She draws on Giroux (1997) to contend that, “whiteness is a … lived but rarely recognised component of white racial identity and domination” (p. 380).

An interruption to my own comfort increased my sense of discomfort and, over time, transpired into quite a heavy feeling of tension. I realised that my advocacy/emancipatory paradigm had shifted during the course of the research process, and whilst I was *operating* as an ‘insider’ (by attending their meetings and

helping out), I was *thinking* like ‘outsider’. There were conflicting feelings at work; on one hand, I felt extremely apprehensive in writing critically about the campaigners or drawing negative conclusions in relation to the campaign and their goals. I felt uncomfortable with an interpretation that my critical positioning would be judgmental (and indeed, hypocritical). I often needed to remind myself that the purpose was to analyse and critique, and not to form conclusions about whether they required a school or not. Borrowing from Rivière (2008), I wanted to avoid setting up static dichotomies or labelling the campaigners, such as “‘privileged vs. marginalised’, ‘oppressor vs. oppressed’ dichotomies” (p. 358). In the same way, it is not my intention to establish such dichotomies. Applying simplistic labels negates complexity and abbreviates processes of careful consideration. However, a dissertation is a critical piece of work and requires a critical position; if I were to not engage in critical thought or write critically—in a way that provokes personal discomfort—it would be a further collusion with silence.

In part, reasons for my discomfort are the bonds of friendship that I formed with the campaigners. They welcomed me to meetings; they agreed to interviews during their own time and in their own spaces; I met their children and their partners, and at times, I was exposed to personal information about private lives; I was invited to social gatherings, outside of ‘official’ campaign meetings; campaigners inquired into my personal life, and I inquired into theirs.

These are the shades of ethical complexities that participant observation—and the process of reflexivity (Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Pillow, 2003)—produces. Participant observation imposes a personal, bodied intrusion onto both the researcher

and the researched. Vaughan (2004) describes it, “that dominion or field of play took a thoroughly embodied form in me—a heavy feeling in my stomach, a sense of unrelenting boredom, and physical discomfort throughout the day” (p. 397).

The participant observer produces and acquires knowledge by physically inhabiting an inquiry space, rather than existing as a separate and detached observer. This is contentious, as the researcher is fundamentally involved in the *construction* of data (Emerson, et al., 2001) which they are collecting:

> The field is produced (not discovered) through the social transactions engaged in by the ethnographer. The boundaries of the field are not ‘given’. They are the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass in his or her gaze; what he or she may negotiate with hosts and informants; and what the ethnographer omits and overlooks as much as what the ethnographer *writes.* (Atkinson, 1992, p. 9)

The researcher’s perspective becomes central to the selection of data (which notes have been recorded in the field and how they have been recorded); the analysis of data; and, how data is compiled, selected and constructed into narrative. Fundamentally, the meaning is constructed and produced *by* the researcher. The process of note-taking during observation highlights the physicality of insider/outsider politics. I attended all public meetings, armed with a notepad and pen. During their conversations, I was very conscious of my ‘note-taking’ activities that physically accentuated a differing objective to those of the campaigners. At

many times, particularly during conversations that were potentially contentious, controversial or secretive, I with-held note-taking and notes were recorded subsequently (Emerson, et al., 2001). This opens up many ethical dilemmas in itself and I engage with this further, in the next section.

The field notes were written in short-hand and first-person point of view, and coded[37]. I endeavoured to record verbal language as accurately as possibly. My interpretation is acknowledged as not the only interpretation to draw from the presented discourse, and for this reason, I have sought to represent data accurately for the reader, in terms of speech and accompanied body language or tone. I always recorded verbal language as accompanied by tone and context, in order to augment and clarify the meaning. For example, if a person is being sarcastic, or appearing to be tense or angry, verbal language on the page alone will not represent the 'meaning'.

Note-taking often subtracted from my actual observation and submersion into the event; during particular meetings, when I didn't write down much at all, I was able to listen to more of the conversation, participate actively in conversation, and watch for visual cues to supplement my understanding. Field notes were rewritten directly following the meeting into a narrative account, less than two hours following the event (Robson, 2002). On the drive home from meetings, I recorded my perceptions and interpretation of events with an audio recorder and listened to these notes, before writing a narrative account. This assisted with the recording of more subtle contents, rather than just the overt.

[37] I used pseudonyms for all names, schools and suburbs when taking field notes.

4.3.4 Ethical politics of participant observation

> University institutional review boards … in recent years [have] made it increasingly difficult for projects based on participant observation to receive human subjects clearance. Our conclusions caution against bureaucratic and legalistic curtailments of embedded field observation. (Tope, et al., 2005, p. 471)

Participant observation is contentious within the academy, for its means of producing knowledge, and for the ethical dilemmas that it evokes (Becker, 1958; Crano & Brewer, 2002; Gillan & Pickerill, 2012; Li, 2008; Tope, et al., 2005). Participant observation is political, in terms of the ethical restraints it is placed within (Becker, 2004; Haggerty, 2004; Tope, et al., 2005). In my study, the restraints were evident during data collection but also when I endeavoured to publish. The strong expectation of participant observation in contemporary scholarly work is that it will be entirely anonymous for participants, overt (rather than covert) and obtain informed consent (Haggerty, 2004).

Covert participant observation is highly contentious (Bulmer, 1980; Homan, 1980; Li, 2008), yet it has arguably enabled rich findings in the past. Sociologist James Patrick (pseudonym) produced the first covert ethnographic study, when he secretly infiltrated and observed a Glasgow gang in the 1960s (Patrick, 1973). It is questionable though, whether observing and recording persons without their consent, is ethical.

I was required to obtain informed consent by all persons attending campaign meetings, before recording their speech. At first, this requirement was announced by the working party leader at a meeting and attendees were given a moment to read the consent form, and have it explained to them before signing. However, at following meetings, new people often arrived who I had not previously met. In order to achieve their consent, I arrived early at meetings and attempted to ask their permission. Unfortunately, this was mostly unproductive, as people usually arrived late to meetings. It was impossible to obtain consent during a meeting, without interrupting the speaker or disturbing the meeting. At one particular meeting, there were over twenty-five people in attendance (many who came late) and many of whom I'd never met before. The meeting lasted for more than two hours, and at the conclusion of the meeting, several persons left quickly before I could talk to them. At the very least, I was able to gain consent from three individuals following this meeting (Field notes - August 26, 2012) and contacted two more via email, the following day. This requirement was sometimes experienced as inflexible and difficult. These are ethical issues that produce "ethical uncertainties" as discussed by Cordner, et al. (2012):

> While ethical uncertainty undoubtedly exists in all types of social science research, we have found that uncertainty is especially pervasive and salient during research that engages directly with communities and social movements ... We have found that these uncertainties are not fully addressed by formal ethical guidelines, and are not necessarily resolved by adhering to them. Indeed, ethical considerations are highly connected to uncertainty,

> because if there was certainty about the nature of situations, we would likely not have ethical issues. (p. 162)

Another moment of uncertainty occurred during a 'Community Festival', an event that takes place annually in the suburb of Lawson. I attended to assist with the running of a LHC stall (Field notes - February 11, 2012). Upon arriving at the festival, I received a complimentary bag (one that was environmentally friendly) and inside the bag contained promotional material for community centres and community living, organic food, meditation and yoga. At the LHC stall, a petition was set up for people passing by to sign. LHC had printed a large map of the area to highlight the lack of public high schools in the suburb. I was privy to commentary of individuals walking past, but also the commentary of participant Robert, who was running the stall—who I had not yet properly met, and whom I did not have informed consent to observe.

> I ask Robert about his involvement with the campaign.
>
> Robert says, "This is the longest running pressure group that comes to my mind… we've been running for eight years now… our first meeting was in… our first meeting was in 2006."
>
> I ask, "And were you a group before then?"
>
> Robert says, "No, no not really. I mean the issue was there. When I did my door-knocking that's what everyone was telling me, that's what the issue was you know. They all wanted a local high school."

> A couple arrives at the stall and Robert leaves our conversation to speak with them. He introduces himself, using his full name. (Field notes - February 11, 2012)

There are several ethical dilemmas contained within this excerpt. I obtained Robert's informed consent *following* this conversation, in that I asked him whether I could record his dialogue. Therefore, my observation operated covertly, at the time. Field notes were not taken on the spot, and error is more likely when dialogue is recorded several hours following the incident.

Neither did I have informed consent to observe the constant flow of passer-by's engaging with the campaign, when they wandered in to sign the petition. The majority of individuals, who approached the stall, introduced themselves by their residential location and proximity to the suburb of Lawson. One particular person introduced herself as a resident of neighbouring suburb Charles (which has a public high school) and a mother to several children, before signing the petition. Another passer-by loudly condemned the Lawson High Campaign and when I asked a working party member about this, he shrugged and said, "It happens. Some people feel... threatened" (Field notes - February 11, 2012).

These ethical dilemmas are heightened in a participant observation study, due to the embodied immersion in the site of research itself. Arguably, by entering into an ongoing collective action as a participant observer, the researcher is entering into a space of uncertainty. The researcher "must participate in this uncertainty, testing the limits of their instruments and of their ethical values" (Melucci, 1996, p. 395).

I perceived a few of the campaigners (working party members) to be hesitant, in regards to my involvement with this stall. I initially offered to help out with the running of the stall when they were asking for volunteers at a meeting (Field notes-February 6, 2012). I was keen to involve myself and be helpful. However, even though I put up my hand and offered to help, my name wasn't recorded. It wasn't until I said for a second time that I was available to help, and what time should I arrive (thinking that it had just been forgotten), when I received quite a doubtful response, "Do you really want to help?" In retrospect, I believe that my name was eventually recorded in a time-slot only to avoid an uncomfortable situation.

Tope, et al. (2005) write that "participation is also invaluable for achieving 'insider status' as someone who is trustworthy" (p. 473). The issue of whether I was trustworthy—with a focus squarely on whether I was 'for' or 'against' the campaign—were arguably strongly related to the affronts Lawson High Campaigners received from residents living in neighbouring suburbs. There was a distinct impression of stark juxtapositions, in terms of whether you were an *ally* of the Lawson High Campaign, or whether you were *against* the campaign. To augment this point, I refer to online responses to a local newspaper report that promoted LHC. The online forum was open for any individuals to make a statement, about LHC:

> I am a non-Lawson person writing to the Lawson campaigners: I hope [your reasons for a school in Lawson] do not include socio-economic measures. That would make you a rather ugly elitist of a certain variety given the demographics. If you feel that way, shell out for private schooling & leave

> local government schools to we unbigotted [sic] people. We wouldn't want your sort at our egalitarian schools.
>
> Mahony writes: There are some "pinch points" for public school provision in the wider Lawson region - but Lawson is not one of them. [But] Let's not let the facts get in the way of a good fear campaign from people who just want a culturaly [sic] and socio-economicaly [sic] insular education for their children. (Twining, 2012)

These responses express a fair degree of emotion, in how language is utilised as an affront towards those involved; Lawson campaigners are called ugly elitists, bigoted and lacking in principles of egalitarianism. Certainly, these are difficult labels to wear. I had this in mind throughout my observations and interviews, and was explicitly sensitive to how I framed or worded my questions, so they would be perceived as non-threatening. It was my view that had the campaigners felt I was challenging their goals and not supporting them, by being judgmental or labelling their behaviour, I would not be privy to as much information. Rivière (2008) talks about this in her own ethnographic work:

> Had I made different choices during my work with Mr M (e.g. overtly challenging his discriminatory attitudes and behaviour), it is quite possible that he would have begun to censor himself in my presence, thereby denying

> me the opportunity to witness such concrete examples of how Whiteness operates in schools, as I have described here. (p. 364)

It is necessary to stipulate that by drawing on Rivière in this instance, I am not seeking to conclusively label the campaigners, as having 'discriminatory attitudes and behaviours'. Rather, it is to point out that the campaigners may be wary of criticism and participant observation needs to be sensitive to this.

Even though I made every attempt to be friendly, genuine and trustworthy, I frequently observed campaigners self-censoring themselves, in my presence. I wasn't sure if they were self-censoring at all times; however, I perceived certain topics as particularly sensitive and worthy of self-censoring. Sentences were abruptly stopped, ambiguous, or if I asked *why* participants felt a particular way, responses were hurried, unclear or even, slightly nervous. There is a fear of being judged for holding particular views, or being pigeon-holed as a certain *type* of individual. This is not an unreasonable fear to hold. Participants are not naïve to the critical nature of research, but rather savvy in the way they are reading the interaction.

4.4 Interviews

Interviews consisted of informal conversations during participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010) and formal semi-structured face-to-face interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990, 1995). In this section, I will discuss the formal interviews.

Interview requests were limited to those campaigners who had attended at least one public meeting, or signed one petition or completed one survey. After participating within LHC for two months, I requested interviews from individuals I had met, via email. Their contact details were included in LHC group emails that I received. When I contacted the potential participant, I advised them of interview subjects that may be sensitive, such as religion or political affiliations, how long the interview may take (between 60-120 minutes) and that they were permitted to leave the interview at any point in time. The interview would be digitally recorded and a transcript would be emailed to the participant (see Appendix B, explanatory forms and interview topics).

Once interview times were established, I travelled to a location of the participant's choice, at a time of their choosing. My interview style aimed to facilitate a level of comfort and ease between myself and the participant through "attentive listening... showing interest, understanding, and respect" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 128).

Just as my methodology emphasises the importance of spatiality, I also recognise that the interview occurs in a pre-constructed social space (Bourdieu, 1992). This social space contains "codes of representations", that is signs and symbols (Hall, 1997, p. 25). These signs and symbols must be received by an individual knowing of the code, in order for the constructed code of representation to make meaning (Hall, 1997). This relates to the concept of class; even though the concept of class was not included in interview questions (as noted previously, see 3.4.2). I consider myself implicit in meaning-making and codes of representations.

As a white, university-educated ‘gentrifier’, I inhabit a similar relational space as the participants.

Interviews consisted of pre-considered wording of open-ended questions (Minichiello, et al., 1990, 1995). Questions aimed to be flexible and responsive to the interviewee. Questions sought to be sensitive to the threat of a ‘good participant’ or self-censoring, and did not directly ask participants how they perceived surrounding schools. Rather, participants were asked where they would send their children, if the desired local high school is not yet established. Body language reflected this approach, in that I consciously aimed to be positively engaged, attentive and focused by sitting upright, utilising eye contact, positive body language and nodding regularly.

Interviews typically lasted between one and two hours. Directly following the interview, I immediately recorded an entry into a reflective research journal, as influenced by Kvale and Brinkmann (2008):

> It may be worthwhile for the interviewer to set aside 10 minutes or more of quiet time after each interview to reflect on what has been learned from the particular interview. These immediate impressions, based on the interviewer’s empathetic access to the meanings communicated in the live interview interaction, may—in the form of notes or simply recorded onto the sound recorder—provide a valuable context for the later analysis of transcripts. (pp. 129, 130)

Subsequently, I transcribed all interviews. Undertaking transcription considerably enhanced this study in a number of ways; it enabled greater comprehension and immersion into the interview data, and secondly, created a space for my own reflexivity. Interview questions improved during the course of the study, in terms of how they were crafted and scripted. This process perceptively lessened my inclination to 'disrupt silences' and interrupt the participant during long pauses, at future interviews. Transcripts were emailed to participants, unless they explicitly requested against this.

In terms of transcription conventions, italics indicate a vocal emphasis, rather than inserting *(vocal emphasis).* The purpose of this is not to disrupt the readers' immersion into dialogue. An exception to this is *(significant vocal emphasis)* to convey degrees of differences or emphasis, within this broad category. A *(laugh)* indicates that the participant laughed. An ellipsis […] indicates a pause, by the person speaking. A *(long pause)* indicates a longer pause, by the participant. Grammar has not been corrected within interview dialogue. To indicate a question that I have asked, the letter 'E' is used as it signifies my first name. The whole first name of the interview participant is used (however, these are all pseudonyms).

4.4.1 Interview participants

A total of ten individuals participated in the face-to-face interviews. There were more male participants (60%) than female (40%). All of the interviews were with one participant, except for Harry and Naomi, a married couple. The majority of participants are married (60%) and only participant Michelle identifies as a "single

mother". The majority of participants have children who are pre-school aged or in primary school.

The majority of interview participants moved to the suburb of Lawson (60%), from another inner-city location (60%) in the period 2001-2006. During my observation, I met only one campaigner (Adam) who grew up in the suburb of Lawson. He is also the only participant who was raised in a home speaking English as a second language.

All participants are employed in professional positions or upper managerial positions. The majority of participants are university educated (80%), with almost half (40%) having postgraduate qualifications. Steven and Adam are the only participants who are not university educated. Steven tells me early in the interview, in almost a confessional-like tone:

> Steven: I'm the only one in my family who didn't… who didn't get tertiary qualifications. (Interview January 24th, 2012)

The strong majority of interview participants (90%) are paying a mortgage, rather than leasing their home. Michelle, the self-described "single mother", is the only participant leasing her home. Participants were not asked directly whether they were paying a mortgage or leasing their home. However, the majority of participants are renovating their home (80%) or spoke of previous renovations they had done to their home, and this was used to infer a mortgage rather than a lease. Also, many participants said they had purchased their home when they had moved to the suburb

of Lawson. Adam owns several properties in Lawson. These characteristics are demonstrated visually on the following graph, titled “characteristics of gentrifiers”:

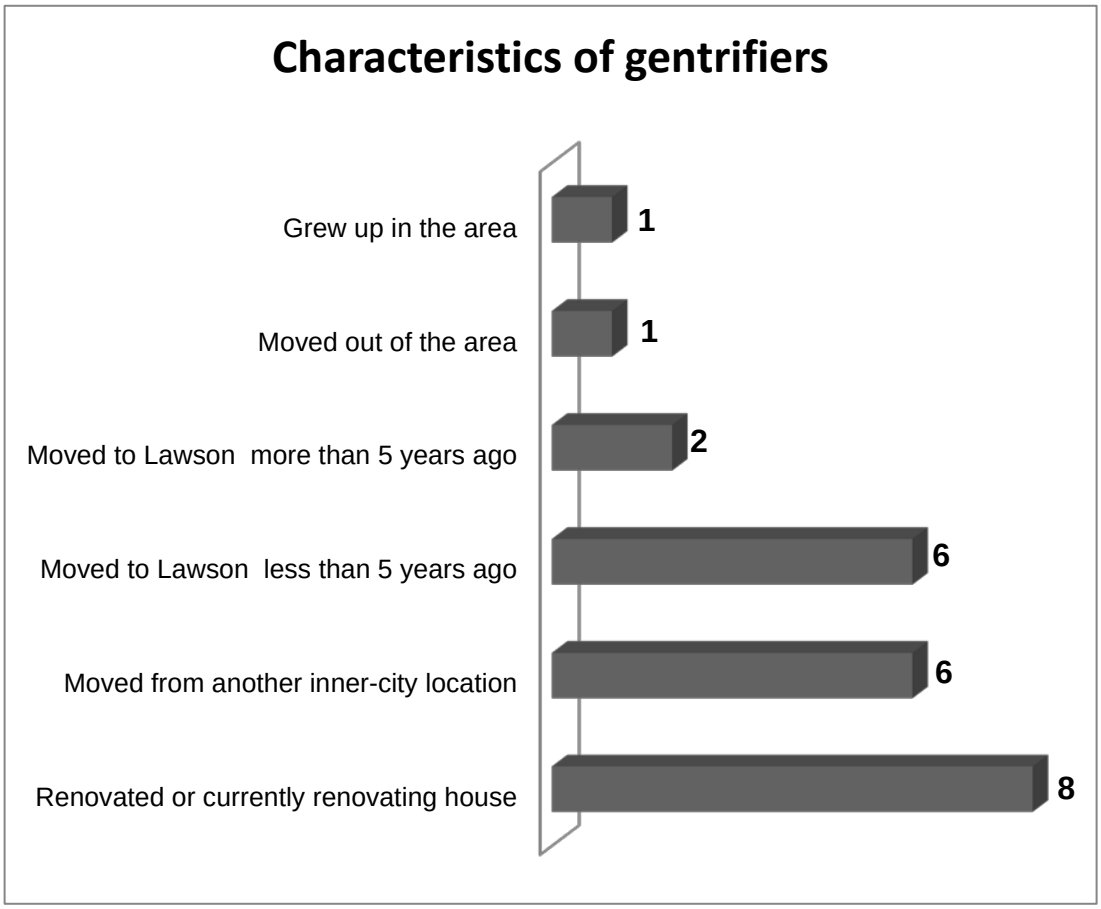


Figure 19 Characteristics of gentrifiers.

The majority of interview participants identify as atheists (60%) while the remaining participants identify with a traditional religion (40%). However, these participants are largely non-practising, in that they do not attend church.

When asked about their motivations for campaigning, all participants introduced their personal narrative of schooling or expressed commitment to the idea

of public education. Their personal experience of schooling was consistently grounded in a place, with many naming the school's locality. For example, Harry and Adele grew up in rural locations and this affected their schooling experiences in different ways, albeit with similar outcomes. Harry had to travel for many hours on a bus, whereas Adele was able to walk to school. They both attribute these experiences to their desire to send their children to a local high school. Matthew, Robert and Michelle reflect on negative religious experiences in their childhood to explain their ideological commitment to public schooling and passionate objections to religious schooling. Many participants (such as Harry and Naomi, Adele, Steven) connect their concept of 'public education' to their parents' occupation or value system.

Matthew and Robert refer to the location of the school, when referencing a schooling experience that was "disadvantaged" or "working-class". As the interviewer, I was complicit in meaning-making from these coded references to place. I was aware of the place-stigma that these locations carried. This is only a brief discussion and these themes will be elaborated upon within the subsequent data analysis chapters.

4.5 Data analysis

> Clarity on process and practice of method is vital. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80)

This study adopted thematic analysis, in order to identify dominant patterns and arguments. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that this method is "poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged" (p. 77) and therefore, is commonly criticised for its 'anything goes' approach. In response to this, I recognise that it is important to be consistent, rigorous and transparent in my analysis of data, but it is also essential to retain "flexibility in relation to how [thematic analysis] is used, so that it does not become limited and constrained" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

Themes did not emerge passively during data analysis, rather it is acknowledged that I selected and constructed these themes (Bazeley, 2009). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that:

> An account of themes 'emerging' or being 'discovered' is a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the active role the researcher always plays identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers. (p. 80)

Arguably, the selection of themes is strongly influenced by epistemology and ontology. Themes that I construct and select to explore, and patterns I am attentive to, are shaped by a sociological inquiry but also, my interest in matters of poverty and class, and the generation of identity via school-of-choice. In this, I am not suggesting that theoretical discussions (or 'findings') generated by presented data are purely rhetorical. Or, in other words, selecting, organising and presenting data so that it persuades and influences the reader to wholly support the researcher's position.

Instead, the goal is to present themes in such a manner that it enables readers' to critically interpret and formulate independent responses.

Due to the large quantity of data (see 4.2 for data sets), it was impossible to include the total data corpus in the final publication. I selected data on the basis of how it reflects the entire data corpus (whether it is a consistency or a dominant outlier) and also how the data corresponds to major themes. The data that I have selected seeks to portray complexity and contradictory conditions. I discuss the process of thematic analysis and coding for this study in-depth (see Appendix A3).

One of the purposes of using thematic analysis for this study is that it enables flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Flexibility is, arguably, a necessary component for collecting and analysing data from ongoing collective campaigns (except for Thompson). The sources of data are far from stagnant; the campaign groups are continuing and constantly changing. Therefore the data itself is temporal and data analysis was ongoing throughout the study. Analysis began during data generation activities, rather than in a fixed time period, and continued until the very end stages of the study.

The central research questions of this study were flexible; they were developed and modified over the course of data analysis. They were not pre-fixed prior to data analysis; rather they responded to and were *shaped* by data analysis. For the purpose of precision and transparency, the table below (see Figure 21) demonstrates the time frame for the collection of each data set and the major themes identified in each:

Participant observation	**Interviews**	**Visual data (photographs and maps)**	**Statistical data**	**Campaigners material/newspaper reports**
Collected September 2011 to March 2013	Collected November 2011 to August 2012	Photographs taken in March 2012, with professional photographer. Maps designed by a graphic designer- August 2012 to May 2014. They were modified during this time period.	Statistical data collected from *My School*, *ABS*, *Metlink*, *Google Maps*- ongoing throughout study. However, a majority of data is collected following the interviews (2012).	Surveys, published working party reports, campaigners paraphernalia collected from January 2011 to September 2012, approximately. The same time frame regarding newspaper reports.
Dominant themes identified: matters of proximity to school, means of access and involvement with the school, choice of school (child-matching and strategies).	Dominant themes identified: Location, class, school choice.	Dominant themes identified: gentrification, school closures (privatisation) and matters of accessibility (proximity).	Following on from participant obs. and interviews, statistical data sought to identify the demographic components of the suburb—the chooser's suburb and the suburbs in which the schools were located.	In the early stages of research, campaigner's material and newspaper reports was the primary source. Preliminary data analysis considered public/private juxtapositions, funding and privatisation.

Figure 20 Stages of data collection and analysis.

It is my intention to present and organise the data in a chronological narrative-type account, as grouped under particular themes, for purposes of enhanced readability and to make key contentions. I am utilising the word 'narrative' for two reasons; first, to reflect the process of data construction (Barone, 2007; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and second, it is methodologically essential to situate this study

within time and space—one that is descriptive and attentive to detail. The word 'narrative' attends to this goal, but it is not a narrative analysis, in that it does not incorporate fictional, poetic or dramatic techniques (Barone, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995).

4.6 Conclusion

This study is a school choice ethnography that uses multiple methods in order to generate multiple data sets. However, this is a small scale study overall. In addition to the statistics from fifteen suburbs, detailed maps, images and website material, I draw on nine interviews with ten individuals and nine field notes from meetings, as a participant observer. There are possible limitations that arise from this sample size, and in the following data analysis chapters I make suggestions based on the participants in this study.

Participant observation within a collective campaign evokes ethical uncertainties and dilemmas. The process of becoming an 'insider', whilst also straddling a researcher's 'outsider' perspective, is a process of engaging with discomfort and issues of positionality. It requires ongoing researcher reflexivity. This chapter engaged with these questions and also outlined the methods of data collection and data analysis.

The subsequent data analysis chapters are logically and systematically mapped out vis-à-vis central contributions and research questions. I am exploring how collective campaigning for a locale-specific school is motivated and influenced

by geography, class and identity. The chapters consider (a) characteristics of the chooser, (b) characteristics of the school-of-choice and, (c) the strategies. The data analysis seeks to demonstrate how certain choosers may be identified and map these choosers to distinct choice patterns and strategies. The spaces are inherently important within this analysis.

First, I concentrate on how the campaigners identify by drawing on topographies of class. I connect these patterns of identification with motivations for campaigning, and their conceptualisation of a local-specific school. I consider how the public school acquires market value for this chooser and the strategies they implement to acquire school-of-choice. The chapters are grouped together under four central arguments: *geo-identity*; the *pseudo-private* school; the symbolism of public schooling; and the weight of choice.

5 Geo-identity

5.1 Introduction

> One's residence is a crucial, possibly *the* crucial, identifier of who you are. The sorting process by which people choose to live in certain places and others leave is at the heart of contemporary battles over social distinction. Rather than seeing wider social identities as arising out of the field of employment it would be more promising to examine their relationship to residential location. (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2005a, p. 207, emphasis in original)

This chapter draws on Harvey's (1973) theory of relational, relative and absolute space in order to critique geographically-bound school choices of the middle-class campaigners. It argues that geography is a means of producing and distributing class identity, with the school posited at the centre of this production. This chapter theorises *geo-identity*, in consideration of school-of-choice, geography and class. I draw upon geo-identity in place of class identity, but I do this in order to supplement and enhance a theoretical framework of class identity. The two concepts are intended to interact with each other. Geo-identity enables me to signal the central tenets of school choice and emphasise the weight of geography in school choice and class identity analysis.

Just as an identity contains narratives and rich genealogies—narratives that are fictional and symbolic—so too does geography. Our "relationship to residential location" is illuminating in terms of how we compose our identity and also, how we situate ourselves within social hierarchies, social separations and social divisions. School-of-choice is a fundamental component within this transaction.

This chapter contributes to theories of class and class analysis; it begins by narrating the campaigner's story of place, before considering how an identity is instructed and informed via this lens. Subsequently, the chapter joins these contributions together by scrutinising the campaigner's objective—their school-of-choice—which is effectively, the purchase of *geo-identity*. This is a tripartite analysis of space (the chooser, the residence, the school).

5.2 Topographies of class: Birmingham of the South

E: You were saying the population has shifted?

Steven: Well yeah… the biggest change is simply tertiary educated… for the first time really. 'Cause it's always been… a... a factory fodder population around here…

E: And you've been here since 1995?

Steven: Yeah I've sort of… I saw the end of it yeah yeah… because I know even these factories along the river all cut their work forces hugely and you know… because this was… I mean (*laughs*) [the wider Lawson region] used to be called… what was it... in the 30s it was called the ah, *Birmingham of*

> *the south*, they really pride themselves on being this sort of manufacturing industrial centre you know, they were the Midlands of Australia, of Melbourne type thing you know… so um… and that's why it's always attracted the migrant population because um … there's always a place to get a job if you can speak the language. (Interview January 24th, 2012)

The suburb of Lawson has its own narrative, one that is both fictional and symbolic, and this narrative is composed of history and class topographies. The suburb of Lawson is far more complex than a neutral geographical territory. Steven's temporally located description of Lawson, as the "Birmingham of the South", is a historical and sociological reference to the metropolitan region of Birmingham, in the West Midlands of England. Birmingham is 'known' for its working-class history and key-role within the Industrial Revolution. Birmingham was described as industrial and impoverished, factory-ridden, with almost half of the population employed in the manufacturing industry (Harrison, 2010; Klein, 2005; Watson, 1993). It is a place that is associated with crime, factories, unemployment and poverty (Anyon, 1997; Deleon, 2012).

Steven describes the pre-gentrification population as "factory fodder", whereas he describes the gentrifiers as tertiary educated. The word 'fodder' literally means food for domestic animals, or an inferior or readily made product (Oxford Dictionary, 2012). 'Fodder' draws derogatory connotations with terms such as 'cannon fodder'. It is clear that Steven defines the "factory fodder" population within

a certain class grouping, when later in the interview he asserts several times that Lawson was certainly, "such a working-class area" (Interview January 24th, 2012).

When I ask Steven if he's been in the area since 1995, he agrees and says, "I saw the end of it" (Interview January 24th, 2012). By describing the population shift as having an 'end' point in time, he provides a description of a fixed and permanent space; an environment that has conclusively become something *other* than what it was. Therefore, "in this manner distinction is to be equated with exclusiveness... [The gentrifer] succeeds only to the extent that it can distance itself from the immediate past—that of working-class industrial "slums"' (Jager, 1986, p. 83). The alteration of the relational space has been substantial, causing changes to the physical constructions within absolute space:

> Steven: It's certainly you know I mean… like about sixty per cent turnover of population in the last ten years relatively… it's been massive… something like that, it's been *really* huge.
>
> E: So who's moving out then? Or are people moving in?
>
> Steven: Um no a lot of people are *moving out*. When I came it was something like thirty per cent over sixty so… that was a big sway… which is why the school closed down really, there were *very* few families here then… but there were a lot of big Greek communities that had sort of moved… they'd built a big Greek church here and now they have trouble getting people… I mean it's all people from outside coming to the church rather than locals… so yeah

> it's been interesting seeing how that has sort of happened… (Interview January 24th, 2012)

Steven describes the significant population changes in the suburb of Lawson over the last ten years. For Steven, the churches, factories and local school are physical constructions, but so too are they emblematic of relational space. The relational space is 'known' as working-class, and this flows into how the absolute space is constructed, via symbolic institutions, such as churches, factories and abattoirs. In other words, the institutions symbolise a certain subset of class. This is accentuated by campaigner Karen, a newer arrival to the suburb:

> Karen: Yeah… I think down in Lawson a couple of years ago, my husband and I counted fifteen to sixteen cafes and there are still more going! (*Laughs*)… and they're always full… What's that demographer's name, Bernard Salt? He talks about the latte movement (*laughs*) I'm the latte line! (*Both laugh*) (Interview August 23rd, 2012)

Karen identifies as the "Latte Line", which is a reference to the gentrifying middle-class. Demographer Bernard Salt highlights the exponential growth of cafés in gentrified suburbs and connects this to the middle-class (Salt, 2012). There is a tendency for the participants to associate certain pursuits or consumer points with particular class groupings, such as the number of cafés and restaurants, or in other words, specific leisure and cultural pursuits (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999b). This

substantiates work by Reay (1998) who argues that "class relations are increasingly constructed through patterns of consumption and their associated technologies of desire (Kenway, 1995)" (p. 262). Religious emblems such as churches, but also factories and abattoirs are associated with the working-class. There is a material, physical component to gentrification—the 'gentry' do not only renovate their house but the physical matter of the suburb becomes renovated, too:

> Adam: It's [Lawson] *completely different*… the generation that was here was an ethnic mix… there was blue collar… Foley street was all lined up with factories, so when the ethnics, or the wogs, we all came here in the sixties, they went to where the blue collar operations were, so they ended up [in other inner-city suburbs] and some ended up here in Lawson to work in all the James street factories and all those factories down the road… you had… the abattoirs… the Riley street abattoirs, a lot of Maso's [people from Macedonia], Greeks all ended up there… 'cause that's what they knew, they were all farmers… so that's what the culture was here once, but it's not here anymore, it's *different*... It's a more professional, more organised, more… cultured, educated, bunch of people… You couldn't give these houses away thirty years ago, now you cannot buy into the area unless you are professional or a high earner. (Interview January 19th, 2012)

For Adam, the suburb of Lawson has distinctly changed and this is on account of *who* and *what* fills the space. There is a disjunction in how Adam

identifies. In this short narrative, Adam associates himself with a 'blue collar' classification on two separate occasions ("we all came here"). Blue collar refers to the manual working-class, as differentiated to the non-manual (white-collar) middle-class (Butler & Watt, 2007). Adam describes a shift in power structures in the relational space—"educated, cultured professionals"—but also a visual, aesthetic transformation of absolute space. The abattoirs and the factories are "not here anymore".

Whilst the suburb of Lawson merely represents a geographical suburb, it is *absolute* in terms of what is defined as outside/inside Lawson, its proximity to the city and size of land. This absolute space evokes imaginaries of the social. *'Birmingham of the South'* bears a name and it bears an identity, one that is grounded in socio-historical narratives. The space is constrained and produced by its class-based identities, comprised of an enabling or disabling relational network (Bourdieu, 1986).

Gentrification of a suburb is an example of how absolute and relational space interacts with one another. There is a tangibility and physical jarring together in absolute space. As the class composition of a suburb changes (the relational space), the absolute space changes and distorts. The physical constructions (schools, factories, footpaths) are modified within the absolute space. For example, factories and warehouses are turned into contemporary apartments as a suburb is *reclassified* via "class aesthetics" (Bridge, 2001, p. 91). There is a physicality to the rebranding of taste (Bourdieu, 1984).

This is demonstrated in the following image of suburb Lawson (see Figure 22), taken in mid-2012 (post-gentrification, see 1.2.1) (photograph by Elisabeth Devereux). It is titled the 'physical tension of gentrification' because it demonstrates the tangible jutting together of the old and the new, bounded by a railway line:

Figure 21 The physical tension of gentrification.

There is a symbolic violence to class, but it is also material and physical (Bourdieu, 1979). There is unevenness to gentrification, played out in chaotic material form. Whilst the 'old' building is seemingly abandoned—the windows are broken and it is covered in graffiti—the people of Lawson are trying to save this old

building from demolishment. But, only the façade. This is the paradox of gentrification; despite the welcoming of the new and distinct, there is a desire to associate oneself with the aesthetic facades of working-class history (Jager, 1986). Gulson (2008) writes that these are “the spatial imaginaries and the politics of place that make up the inner city”, as the “lifestyle experiences of exclusive retreats” are rammed against “dangerous, evocative edges of public housing” (p. 153). This clashing and conflict of space is demonstrated in the following image (again, taken in mid-2012, photograph by author):

Figure 22 City juxtapositions.

This image shows several notable features: glimpses of the city, cranes and machinery in the background, and an 'Open for Inspection' flag bordering empty (yet fenced up) land. Both of these images look to visualise the juxtapositions of space—the historical building butting against the contemporary; the empty 'up for sale' block of land; the industrialisation of cranes and the (sub)urban, side by side. These juxtapositions occur within the urban space of the city.

The majority of participants note the proximity to the city as an important reason for buying a home in Lawson, a suburb that was previously ill-considered in Melbourne. The city space speaks to *geo-identity*. The majority of participants have moved to Lawson from another inner-city suburb and this informs and instructs how they wish to identify: middle-class, cosmopolitan and politically green (left-of-centre). This is accentuated by participant Steven, who purchased a home in the suburb of Lawson in 1995, far earlier than all other participants (except for Adam). He tells me in the interview that he was touring and living overseas as an artist, before returning to Melbourne. He didn't have much money but he wanted to live close to the city:

> E: So what attracted you to this area?
>
> Steven: Ah… I was told it was pretty cheap! I didn't know this place very well. But I always wanted the inner city… I mean I lived in Oceanside [another inner city suburb] when it was cheap and nasty, before the upper-classes moved in… for two years I lived [in Oceanside], like it went from

being wharfies[38] and stuff like that, to barristers… it was quite… woah! (*Laughs*) So… I bought here in Lawson… it was really cheap here [in Lawson] and close to the city.

E: So… good price and close to the city?

Steven: Yeah exactly. I mean I paid 105 [thousand] for [the house] in 1995… and all the neighbours said oh gee you paid too much you know (*laughs*).

E: You paid 105… wow!

Steven: Yeah I know its wild… and it's probably four times[39] that now… I mean that's seventeen years ago now. It was very cheap. Cause you know… No one wanted to know about Lawson really. (Interview January 24th, 2012)

Steven presents his own 'class story' within this narrative of the inner-city space. For Steven, the inner-city space is significant in how he wishes to identify, but also in how he thinks about class. Steven lived in another inner-city suburb, describing it as "cheap and nasty" and filled with "wharfies", members of the working class. He moved out once the "barristers" moved in. Steven is not overly aspirational to distinguish himself from the working-class or blue-collar category, in the same manner of other participants. Rather, throughout the interview he often aligns himself in a positive sense with the working-class. However, he does seek to distinguish himself through his artistic and cultural pursuits. He says, "because I'm an artist, it's best that I'm close to the city" (Interview January 24th, 2012). He

[38] The term 'wharfies' is Australian slang to describe a person who works on the wharfs or docks. It is traditionally an occupation tied to the 'working-class'.

[39] According to the median house price listed for suburb Lawson, Steven's house would now be nine times this price (rather than four times).

regards certain spaces as more suitable for certain artistic pursuits. The city space is important for class production and identity. This is aligned with Gulson (2011), who argues for a rethinking of the city "as more than an empty abstract notion to be filled by actors and objects. This is to engage with the material and discursive power of the city in shaping economic, cultural, political, and social relations" (p. 11).

The following section extends on these arguments; first, the concept of class is tied to geography, namely residential positioning (class + geography = *geo*-); and second, *geo*- constructs *identity*. I contend that geo-identity—and indeed, the encompassed fear of the 'other'—fuels the school choices of participants, including their desire for a new school in their immediate suburb.

5.2.1 Owning and disowning class

> Robert: A lot of people from the [surrounding suburbs of] Park and Box have… a view of the world that is… tantamount to… what's best described as the law of accident. Things happen to them. They're like a cork in many ways. They see themselves as corks on an ocean. And where ever they wind up, that's where they wind up. The value systems of people in Lawson [suburb] are more in line with the laws of cause and effect. They believe that if you put in then you'll get out. Now it may not be what you want, but you'll get a lot better than thinking of leaving it to chance. So… that's a fundamental difference in terms of values and understandings. Some people believe that there's nothing they can do, some people think there's not much that can be done. (Interview February 27th, 2012)

Robert asserts there is a “fundamental difference” between individuals, and this difference is bound to residential address. Robert believes in a causal relationship between residential address and identity—an identity is distributed by and bound to geography—and this encapsulates *geo-identity*. Clearly, this identity speaks to matters of class.

Their inability to self-govern and be ‘active’ citizens, merely “corks on an ocean”, is a failure of sorts. There are strong associations between an individual’s residential location and their neoliberal aptitude, which Rose (1996a) describes as, “choice, personal responsibility, control over one’s own fate, self-promotion and self-government” (p. 335).

Even though this is just one campaigner’s view, it is theorised that geo-identity—and indeed, the encompassed fear of the ‘other’—fuels the campaign for a locale-specific high school. The campaigner separates themselves from the ‘other’ via processes of detachment. For example, Robert speaks about Park and Box residents in third-person, using words such as, ‘them’ and ‘they’. However, when discussing Lawson inhabitants, Robert speaks in second-person narrative. There is a stronger sense of self-association in this. His terminology reinforces the active ‘Other-ing’ that is occurring, an ‘Other-ing’ that explicitly declares difference and discord. The ‘difference’ is symbolised and marked by residential address.

The surrounding suburbs of Park and Box both have public high schools, but these are undesirable choices. For the school chooser in this study, their relationship to residential address is markedly significant for the ways in which they identify and

coalesce. The public school—that is, a school that is tied to geography in terms of inclusion and exclusion—is fundamental within this transmission. The local school is the purchase of collective *geo-identity* for the gentrifiers, "the similarities or shared attributes around which group members coalesce" (Cerulo, 1997, p. 386). This is well-demonstrated by Matthew:

> E: The idea of community is raised all the time, why do you think community is so important to this campaign?
>
> Matthew: The particular area here… a lot of families have come over here in the past ten years, or even more recently, and they are at a similar stage of, um, their lives… they've got young kids… and they're all, in a sort of, a like-mind… they've got, I suppose, a similar profile, um, they tend to be middle-class, similar values… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

For Matthew, it is the residential location that operates as the anchor of a shared class positioning (middle-class) and this corresponds to a shared meaning system (or, "similar values"). Thus, the agitation for a local community school operates as an important expression of these "similar values", acting as the core component of an identity that is anchored in geography and entrenched in class.

Considering both Matthew and Robert's interview extract, I will draw out three more arguments that I will focus upon. These contribute to understandings of class. First, concepts of class are used spontaneously during interviews, without evocation from the interviewer; secondly, participants detach from self-associations

with class but tend to identify in distancing ways (mostly with the middle-class). There are distinct patterns in terms of how individuals discuss class. Thirdly, class is mapped to certain traits or characteristics, and this is evident when participants are discussing their school-of-choice. The school-of-choice is effectively the purchase of geo-identity and is a crucial driver of the campaign.

To focus on the first argument, I did not ask Matthew about class or use class-related concepts throughout the interview. Matthew's class citation occurs in relation to a question about the 'community'. This process of class citation is reflected in research by Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2001) from the United Kingdom:

> Around a third of respondents spontaneously use the term 'class' in the interview before they are asked about it, nearly always in response to an early question 'What kind of people live around here?'…. People have little difficulty in talking about class 'out there', but do not like to think about class closer to home, with respect to their own sense of identity. (pp. 879, 880)

Matthew's description of the middle-class is autobiographical, albeit in distancing ways. Matthew moved to Lawson in "the last ten years" and has "young kids" with his partner. He is well educated and both he and his partner have post-graduate university qualifications. However, Matthew employs a third-person perspective (he uses the word 'they' six times) when he talks about the middle-class. This is repeated through the interview:

> Matthew: Ah… the profile of the electorate in Lawson, um, most of the parents are well educated, they're middle-class… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

A personalised application of class is threatening and incurs modes of displacement and disassociation (Bourdieu, 1984; Savage, et al., 2001; Skeggs, 1997, 2003). This is an act of 'dis-identification' in order to see class as something outside of ourselves (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 884). This is evident in Matthew's description of his own schooling experiences, as he shifts from first to third-person point of view as he speaks about class. But what is also evident is a mapping of certain traits and characteristics with class:

> Matthew: I went through the whole Catholic education system, from primary to secondary, secondary I went to an all-boys school… the school I went to was [the name and suburb]… it was like a holding pen for wild boys… I suppose the dominant profile was working-class boys and ah, um, it seemed like, um, it seemed… there was a big sports focus and it seemed like that this was perhaps the most important thing… I mean they'd educate them a little bit but sport was the big thing… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

In this excerpt, Matthew associates the working-class with sport as curriculum and traditional religion (Catholicism). Arguably, he thinks about both

sport and religion as anti-intellectual, as opposed to a curriculum based on math and science. He extends on this further:

> Matthew: I wouldn't send them to Hill High. Their focus is sports… something… I just don't like, *I don't like (significant vocal emphasis, laughs).* Sport is a *very* limited thing… I would like [the school] to have a science and math focus … (Interview January 16th, 2012)

This is a mapping of curriculum with class (Windle, 2008) but it is different to how previous studies have connected particular sporting pursuits with the middle and upper classes (Proctor, 2011). Rugby, cricket and rowing are common in elite Australian schools. As Proctor (2011) argues, these are routinely gendered and classed. Here, Matthew draws on his childhood experiences to associate 'sport' with the working-class, and he doesn't specify any particular sport in this summation (whereas Karen specifies rowing when she speaks about elite schools).

Traditional religion or symbols of traditional religion, such as churches, are frequently introduced by participants when discussing the working-class. Even though Matthew has a Catholic background, he is overtly critical of Catholicism to such an extent that he excludes Catholic schools: "I wouldn't send them to a Catholic school" (Interview January 16th, 2012). Matthew distinguishes himself from a working-class grouping by actively rejecting traditional religion and sport—he identifies as an atheist and for his children, wants a secular school with a math or science focus.

It is apparent that class is primarily assessed by the participants in reference to residential address, but this is consistently followed by education levels. Frequently, the participants summarise the "Lawson community" as middle-class and "well educated" (Matthew, Interview January 16th, 2012) or "educated professionals" (Adam, Interview January 19th, 2012). Steven believes they are "tertiary educated" (Interview January 24th, 2012).

Arguably, the reference to 'education' represents university education. This substantiates Pusey's (2003) study, which argues that "for the 'working-class' [education] is the barrier that most clearly marks their own position of relative disadvantage" (p. 55). University education tends to be taken for granted and is the distinguishing feature of the "broad middle" (Pusey, 2003, p. 3). This is accentuated by Robert and Steven, who believe that the increase of educational levels is the most significant space changer, and connects these alterations to class:

> Steven: It was *such* a working-class area [Lawson] and… and it's quite the opposite now I'd say… probably the majority would be tertiary educated now and that's probably the biggest change, the education level. (Interview January 24th, 2012)

> Robert: Yes (the people in this area are) well educated. Education continues to flow through… it's because we keep importing people who are, you know… highly educated. Why wouldn't you. Cheap land, fantastic sized

> blocks, close to the city. The neighbours have got your value system. (Interview February 27th, 2012)

The majority of interview participants express a causal-like connection between the middle-class and 'education'. This influences how participants self-identify also. Steven and Adam are the only participants who do not indirectly identify as middle-class, and they are also the only participants who are not university educated. Early in the interview, Steven leans in closely and lowers his voice in a confessional-like way, "I am the only one in my family who didn't go to university" (Interview January 24th, 2012). Adam describes himself as "not educated" (Adam, Interview January 19th, 2012).

Adam's contrary class identification illuminates several points relevant in thinking about class. First, there is a sense of displacement for Adam when he discusses the suburb of Lawson. As the only participant who has grown up in the suburb and attended the local school, his description of community is far removed from other participants:

> Adam: I take my son to oz-kick, um… if you had a-caught me twenty, twenty-five years ago, I woulda known 95% of the people that went there, now I go there and I'm the only person I recognise (*laughs*)… I don't recognise anyone! *There's no-one left*! (Interview January 19th, 2012)

Adam's evocation of community is juxtaposed to other participants who are enthusiastic about the concept of community, and talk about regular meet-ups in the local neighbourhood. Karen says that, "after school drop off, every day of the week I could go down there and have a coffee with different mums". She regularly organises social get-togethers such as book-swaps and sculpture (Interview August 23rd, 2012a). There is also a difference in how Adam measures class—he refers to direct economic capital, whilst others do not:

> E: How would you describe the dominant profile of people moving in?
>
> Adam: Educated professionals. Because, umm, if I look at the neighbours today, you look at the… you look at the cars in the driveway and see the car is a higher calibre, you're more looking at… you're looking at more BMW's, more Mercedes, you're… in 1980 to 1990 if there was a Mercedes in the area, it was stolen. (*Both laugh*) (Interview January 19th, 2012)

Even though Adam self-associates with the 'criminality' of the working-class, he demonstrates what Savage et al., (2001) refer to as "inverted class pride" in coming from a working-class background:

> It is also possible to find some individuals, mostly men, who identified themselves as members of the working-class. Of the minority of respondents who were not ambivalent about their class membership, a significant number

highlighted their ‘working-classness’ as something to be proud of, as a badge of eliciting respect. (pp. 884, 885)

Adam distinguishes himself from the new arrivals, mainly through his commitment to pragmatism and business savvy. Whereas he perceives the new arrivals as overly concerned with university qualifications, the blue-collar gains distinction through pragmatic choices:

> Adam: I’ve got a cousin… this is a person who started off as a mechanic, biggest bludger on earth… and he says, I got my education at Charles high school and he quit school… got an apprenticeship… and he says, I’ve got five houses now… I’ve got another friend—same age group—went to medical school, a doctor today, *hasn’t got one house, got a mortgage to the hilt, and no matter what his wage is*, will *never* catch this guy that *dropped out of school early in 1988*! So my cousin says, look at him, look at me! I’m earning as much as him, through, just… going through things… Uneducated, no degree, no marketing, *he just talks shit all day*! (*Laughs*) But see he is a person, with no education, and he is ahead of the game than some who have gone through ten, fifteen years of education… so you know, it is where you want to be… it’s all through luck, the right people… and these people can take you places… you know I see people every day, the people I employ, I see them go to uni [university] to waste their time… (Interview January 19th, 2012)

Rather than feeling 'lesser than' or occupying an 'under-class', Adam distinguishes himself through a sense of worldly intelligence, know-how and common sense. His derision of university education is far opposed to other interview participants. Arguably, Adam's "working classness" is not "an entirely stigmatised identity" and is "something to be proud of ... a badge of eliciting respect" (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 884). Adam demonstrates a sense of agency within his own 'class story' and clearly, class is taken up differently for each individual. However, there are certain collective understandings when it comes to class, such as the notion of 'education' that is continually negotiated via one's identity. This calls attention to the importance of identity, within an analysis of class. Class needs to be assessed and measured in terms of the ideological markers that it *produces* and gains traction within. These ideological markers are emphasised in the differing ways individuals conceptualise their own identity within a structure of relations.

Even though Steven and Adam both self-identify with something *other* than the middle-class, with Adam drawing connections with working-class, they operate within a middle-class network. They own class capital—both are home-owners, and Adam is a multiple home-owner—and are employed within middle-class positions. Adam is a business manager whilst Steven is employed as an artist and as a teacher[40]. For these reasons, all of the participants will be referred to as middle-class. This holds ramifications for how they maneuver school choice and how they operate as

[40] Steven has other professional positions but the full details are not disclosed, for reasons of anonymity.

choosers. The following section examines the campaign objectives—to obtain a school-of-choice.

5.3 The local school: the construction of absolute space

> E: What are the purposes of the campaign, in your own words?
>
> Matthew: The purposes really are… to get a local high school. (Interview January 16th, 2012)

> We want a local school for local kids. (Smith High Campaign Website, 2008)

The purpose of the Lawson campaign is to "ask for a local high-school" (Harry, Interview January 26th, 2012), a request that is reflected in the Smith High Campaign, who claim that a "lack of a local high school leads to a breakdown in community" (Kaczorek & Bolton, 2010). This emphasis on locality is mainly packaged via accessibility. The 'local' is defined by means of access, as demonstrated by Harry:

> Harry: You know [our purpose] is to ask for a local high school, umm… and local means, close enough that, you know, people can walk or cycle there… you know, get there easily, as part of their own community. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

The ‘local’ is constituted by means of access and proximity from home. Over the many years of campaigning, the means to which the school is accessed is negotiated as an important marker of choice and described on the LHC website as the “main problem”. The children residing in the suburb of Lawson “cannot access a public high school on foot or by bike as they are too distant” and this is “the main problem” (Lawson High Working Group, No date).

This main problem is presented in a variety of ways for the LHC and Smith High Campaigners. Despite the campaigns being vehemently opposed to commonality or shared tactics between themselves (Field notes - November 7, 2011; Field notes - August 26, 2012), both campaigns hold an annual ‘Walk to No School Day’, in which campaigners walk through the main streets of their suburb, holding protest signs. This routinely involves their children:

Figure 23 "Walking to school is cool" (2012).

‘Walking to School is cool’ is a dominant theme for all campaigns. In the background are blue balloons, reading ‘a local high school for Lawson’. The shared themes are evident in the following image from a Smith High Campaign event (‘walk to no school day’):

Figure 24 Walk to no school day (2012).

The emphasis is on locality and community—the word 'local' is mentioned in all visible signs, except for two. The campaigners are asking for a 'local school for local kids' and a 'school for our community'. They argue that 'local schools build communities'. The campaigners consistently express a desire to access their school via walking or cycling. This is mentioned during *all* the interviews with Lawson High campaigners. Matthew and Adam are only two examples:

E: Do you have a preference for how your child gets to school?

Matthew: *Yes, yes* (*significant vocal emphasis*). Either walking or cycling. (Interview January 16th, 2012)

E: Your preference would be for a school in this immediate area?

Adam: Yes, it would be somewhere… where the kids can either walk or ride. That's the priority. (Interview January 19th, 2012)

The participants expressed desire to access their school via foot or bike is connected to geo-identity. Analysis of Australian Bureau Census data by Legare (2008) found consistent patterns of correlation between walking and cycling, levels of education, occupation and income. The greatest increase in walking and cycling in Melbourne [from 1996 to 2006] have occurred among those people with "the highest educational attainment, white collar workers and those people on high or very high incomes" (p. 38).

Whilst a 'local' school is defined in terms of how it is accessed, the campaigners have also defined territorial boundaries of 'local'. This was illustrated by a survey that LHC conducted in 2007. A total of 1, 173 surveys were sent out to the Lawson area and they received 249 responses. These were published and made available in 2009, in the LHC Working Group Report[41]. Respondents were asked to define and describe their meaning of 'local': "53% (129) of families described a local

[41] These survey results were reiterated during the interview with campaigner Karen (Interview August 23rd, 2012a)

secondary college as being between 1km [kilometre] and 2km [kilometre] from their current place of residence" (Lawson High Working Group, 2009, p. 30).

While the campaign has defined the meaning of 'local' for itself, this position conflicts with the view of the Department of Education, with whom the campaigners regularly meet. This is indicated during a general meeting:

> The campaigners are discussing local schools. Elizabeth asks, "What is local, how do you define local anyway?"
>
> "Does the Department stipulate a definite proximity of local?" asks Greg.
>
> Steven responds, "No, no, no… they don't unfortunately… they don't say what a reasonable distance is." (Field notes - August 26, 2012)

The *My School* website defines a 'local' school—one that is accessible from your place of residence—as a school that is located within 80 kilometres of your home (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). Thus, according to government policy, if a school is located within 80 kilometres of your place of residence, it is reasonably accessible. As a result, residents living in Australian rural areas retain far fewer options when it comes to 'local' secondary schools[42] (Angus, 2013). When considering this information, the options available for Lawson residents may appear abundant.

[42] For an important study pertaining to school choice in Australian rural/city areas and the impact of geography within these spaces, see Doherty, Rissman and Browning (2013).

The primary purpose of lobbying, to acquire a public high school, is intricately bound to and wrapped up within geography. In order to achieve their purpose, the campaigners have sought to define something that was previously ill-defined or undefined by the Government, utilising two stipulations. First, quantifiable figures are outlined (1 kilometre and 2 kilometres from residence) and supported via a survey of residents, to construct geographical measurements of 'the local'. Secondly, the school is deemed as local if it can be accessed by a distinct method, walking or cycling. For the campaigners, the public school is only validated as desirable if it meets these two set criteria—geographical proximity and means of access, whether it is accessible by foot or bike.

For the choosers in this study, the location of the school becomes the measurement of desirability and the purchase of geo-identity. This is strongly demonstrated by Harry:

> Harry: I think [in school-of-choice] if there's a good mix of the kids born to the parents of this area, then that would be fantastic because I think they would be good kids and good people. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Harry believes that the quality of a school would be assured, on the basis of where the student cohort and their families live. This suggests a knowability of person (and also the local public school), as dependent upon its geographical positioning. An essentialist identity of place is reflected in Gulson (2008), '…thus to know place is to know identity' (p. 160). Arguably, this is how absolute space

becomes *operative* as a commodity: even though boundaries are nebulous and changeable, the suburb grid (and the people who fill this suburb grid) is defined as knowable and largely absolute.

For the participants, the school-of-choice is located within a spatially specific territory that affords a level of knowability. This is suggested in the following extended excerpt with husband and wife Harry and Naomi:

> E: Where will you send your kids if you haven't got a school yet?
>
> Naomi: Yeah we'd definitely research Beakin Secondary… Charles High…
>
> Harry: Beakin wouldn't be an option as it stands today… because it would be zoned.
>
> E: Charles High would be your second [option]?
>
> Naomi: Probably not…
>
> Harry: Charles High and Park Secondary are the two other local-ish schools that we'd have to look at…
>
> Naomi: Where's Park [secondary school]? (*Looks quizzically to Harry)*
>
> Harry: It's the one on the way to [surrounding suburb]… *(Naomi continues to look quizzically at Harry. She turns to me again.)*
>
> Naomi:—and there's Matheson Secondary.
>
> E: Matheson Secondary, you like Matheson Secondary?
>
> Naomi: I like the concept of what I know about Matheson Secondary, I don't know much (*laughs)* (Interview, January 26th 2012)

There are three points to highlight, regarding this excerpt. First, Harry and Naomi clearly distance themselves from precisely stipulating their reasons for not choosing Charles High, even though it is initially referenced. In this, there are implicit emotions that are concealed and contained within the unsaid. There is a sense of guilt or shame, in terms of relaying what is precisely unlikeable about Charles High, but this sense of guilt operates in equal measures with a desired moral identity and set of principles. In other words, there is no reason for Harry and Naomi to experience emotions of guilt regarding their rejection of a particular school; this rejection only becomes critiqued and questionable within a certain set of moral judgments, codes and cultural standards.

Second, it is the *concept* or feeling of the school, rather than tangible facts and data about a school that influence preferences (Ball, et al., 1996). Whilst Naomi denigrates her self-knowledge of Matheson, it is specifically mentioned as a conceptual preference. The sentence is abruptly ended and the subject is changed, without further verification of what Naomi specifically likes about Matheson. Other participants, such as Michelle and Robert, also mention Matheson Secondary as a preference. Michelle admits that she visited and considered Matheson, but was "put off by the elitist academics and it seems to be half Asian" (Interview January 23rd, 2012b). Thus, it is evident that desires of shared ethnicity pervade the choice process, particularly for Michelle.

Third, there is a considerable unfamiliarity with the spatial location of Park Secondary School and it stands juxtaposed with a certain level of desirability for Beakin High. Despite the relative closeness of Park suburb (five kilometres)—and it

stands closer than suburbs Beakin or Matheson—the territory of Park is strange and unfamiliar. This absolute space is unknown but effectively 'known' as foreign and alien:

> Where people feel comfortable in places, they tend to populate such places, either through permanent residence or through revisiting, but where they do not, they tend to avoid them. Hence a complex process of sorting of people's habitus to certain kinds of zones allows a social *which is also a spatial* structure to be defined. (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2005b, p. 101, emphasis in original)

The performance and functioning of geo-identity is very much constituted in absolute space—measured in terms of 'real' distance from the unknown and the unfamiliar—and the school is integral within this process. For the campaigners, the locale-specific school is the purchase of geo-identity. A school is known and therefore, a person is known, via their geographical location.

The Lawson High campaigners are disconnected from Charles High, as a possible choice. The reasons for this disconnection are ill-articulated. Despite the offers of free transportation and the relative closeness of the public Charles High School, it is not considered 'local' and indeed, warrants further travel or active choice making. This is accentuated by Karen:

> Karen: The department thinks [Charles High] should be [a choice for us]… It should be… well… Charles High is deemed to be our local secondary college… Other options… or even options have been said that we should go to Park Secondary or Box College… and that's just the wrong direction again, *totally the wrong direction, not even close*. (Interview August 23rd, 2012a)

Karen's emphasis on "not even close" is more about cultural distance than physical distance. It also relays the importance of space in school preferences. Many of the participants express similar sentiments—that if they are forced to travel (to Park, Box or Charles High), therefore a wider subset of schools must be considered as viable choices. This is a predilection of the skilled chooser. However, it is questionable why Charles High is *not* considered the local school. Ball, Bowe and Gerwitz (1996) argue that "skilled/privileged choosers… will deliberately not consider all the schools they could. Questions of distance, travel and safety are all important here" (p. 94). For the middle-class chooser in this study, matters of capacity and proximity function as a smoke-screen for a multitude of motives. It necessitates the question as to why these choosers believe a smoke-screen is necessary and this will be further explored in the following chapters.

5.4 Conclusion

Prior to gentrification, Lawson was knowable as the 'Birmingham of the South'—like a character within a working-class narrative—symbolised by factories, abattoirs and churches. The place of Lawson may merely represent a suburb within a larger city environment, but it is actually a part of a far richer narrative, an essential component of the individual's 'class story'. The landscape itself shapes the social relations, separations and hierarchies of power within place. The participant's relationship to place informs and instructs their identity in various ways, and the differences are evident when comparing the gentrifiers class story with Adam, the only interview participant who grew up in the suburb of Lawson.

Many campaigners express a belief in shared class status and meaning system, as based on their residential address. This is the driver for a locale-specific school. The campaigner's objective (to acquire a locale-specific public school) is constituted by quantifiable measurements (one or two kilometres from home) and means of access. However, I have argued that these measurements are a choice smoke-screen and rather, the locale-specific school is the purchase of *geo-identity*. It is the purchase of a relational space, one that is knowable and essentialised, inside of absolute space. There is a consistent flow between relational and absolute space.

This chapter contributes to theories of class. The majority of participants referenced class, mainly when asked about the community. The majority identified as middle-class, albeit in distancing and dissociative ways, except for Adam and Steven who indirectly associated with working-class. There are distinct patterns in terms of how individuals discuss class, in that second or third-person devices are used to

construct disassociations. For the participants, the middle-class is equated with ‘education’. The working-class is connected with certain curriculum choices within a school, such as sport and religion.

By reviewing this data, it is suggested that rather than ‘class’ existing as an outmoded concept, participants reference to class is “a resource, a device, with which to construct identity and … as a means of ‘telling their story’” (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 888). A self-applied *classification* is constructed in relation to where we live, and whom we live near. Even though class does not equate to the full story of an individual’s narrative, it is a crucial benchmark for how and where individuals position themselves within a hierarchy or division.

The following chapter continues to explore the theory of geo-identity but builds on, and extends upon this, by arguing for the *pseudo-private* school.

6 The pseudo-private school

6.1 Introduction

> One's communities are nothing more—or less—than those networks of allegiance with which one identifies existentially, traditionally, emotionally or spontaneously, seemingly beyond and above any calculated assessment of self-interest … Each assertion of community refers itself to something that already exists and has a claim on us: … as residents in a village or a suburb … Yet our allegiance … is something that we have to be made aware of, requiring the work of educators, campaigns, activists, manipulators of symbols, narratives and identifications. Within such a style of thought, community exists and is to be achieved, yet the achievement is nothing more than the birth-to-presence of a form of being which pre-exists. (Rose, 1996a, p. 334)

I draw on Rose's (1996a) paper, titled *The death of the social? Refiguring the territory of government* to indicate the tensions I am looking to draw out in this chapter. A community is *pre-existing*, and our allegiance to community is something we have to be made aware of (Rose, 1996a). Herein, I scrutinise the concept of community and community schooling. The campaigners are appealing for a local 'community' school, and I envisage this school as the *pseudo-private* school, one that

contains the branding of public but the characteristics of private. This forms the central argument of the chapter. In order to strengthen this analysis, I conduct a class-spatial analysis of each campaigning suburb and the surrounding suburbs, by considering levels of income, religion and race.

This chapter asks, what are the concepts, discourses and assumptions that underline the imagined community school for the campaigners? What does the community school look like and sound like? How does this imagined school become operative as the school-of-choice and how is it operative within a classed network? What are the key sociological characteristics of suburbs that contain a pseudo-private school? I begin by focusing on the campaigner's emphasis on 'the local' and 'the community'.

6.2 A community school for the community: the pseudo-private

> E: And what's the attraction of the local school?
>
> Adele: Community… (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

> E: So the local school is about quality at the end of the day, isn't it?
>
> Matthew: It is about quality, but again, it's about having the local community… schools are very critical to creating and… sustaining a sense of community. (Interview January 16th, 2012)

Adele and Matthew are just two examples of the campaigner's requests for a 'local' and 'community' school. This is a repeat phrase used by the campaigners and the notion of a 'community' school operates as an *axiom of choice*. It is an adage that is repeatedly relied upon to express a marker of choice, but it is under-defined. The 'local' is consistently conflated with stories of the community, in such a way that the terms are freely interchanged and become inseparable from one another. For the Lawson High Campaigners, the local high school is essential for enabling and facilitating *community*.

This is a pattern that is evident in the Smith High Campaign also. In campaign publications—including their website, interviews with journalists or campaign-authored reports—the notion of 'community' is repeatedly used, when discussing their campaign objective. Neighbouring schools are "just too far away and… not part of our community" (Smith High Campaigner, 2012a). The current selective-entry high school in Smith is "anti-community" (Smith High Campaigner, 2012b).

The Lawson High Working Group Report (2009) is replete with references to community. The secondary school would serve as a "community hub", a "learning community", "reduce the fragmentation of our community" and act as a "social meeting point for our communities" (p. 14) amongst many others. In total, the word community or communities is mentioned 77 times in this 25 page document (excluding the references and appendix).

When inquiring into the meaning of 'community' and what this actually embodies for various LHC campaigners, Adam understands it as "people around

you" (Interview January 19th, 2012), whereas Karen describes it as activities or social engagements with her neighbours (Interview August 23rd, 2012a). Despite their differences, it is clear that the campaigners are wedded to the notion of 'the local' and the 'community' in terms of their imagined school. However, there is evidently a need to trouble these ideas. Reay, et al.'s (2011) study, which shares similar empirical concerns, captures this effectively:

> In the twenty-first century we still have powerful imagined communities, but there is scant empirical evidence that communities, rooted in the local and with the power to read across class and ethnic boundaries, actually exist. (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 57)

As these authors argue, the concept of community is pragmatic and has "instrumental orientations" (p. 74). At this point, I draw on an extended narrative, written from a Lawson High Campaign general meeting (Field notes - August 26, 2012). I start with this narrative in order to highlight the complexities and tensions that surround collective campaigning for a local community school. These tensions will assist in framing the chapter.

6.2.1 How community orientated are we?

As per usual, I arrive early at the monthly Lawson High Campaign general meeting. I sit in the lobby with a few other regulars. A man in a dark suit, who I have not met before, arrives and moves around the small group shaking people's hands. He's

rather overdressed in my opinion. He politely and warmly shakes my hand and, as we stand at the bar, he insists on buying my drink. As we walk into the meeting room, he tells me that he is a political member in the area of Lawson—a local Councillor bidding for election.

The group settles at the meeting table. More and more people arrive and I count twenty-five people in attendance. There are many people who I have never met before, which is unusual at this stage of my observation. It is the largest meeting I've attended since beginning observation almost one year ago. It also coincides with the State election, in that the local representatives are vying for election.

A woman walks in—another face I've never seen before—and before she sits down, she clears her throat and announces, "Look I just have something to say." Everyone turns and the group goes quiet. She says, "I have to be up front. I am here because I am representing the parents from Charles High School. My kid goes to Charles High."

She doesn't sit down but continues to stand. Karen, the working party member who is leading the meeting, nods and enthusiastically replies. "Okay, great. It is really good to have you here."

The lady continues to address the large group. "Yes, we live over in [neighbouring suburb] and she goes to Charles High and we really like it."

Karen responds, "How far is that [to travel]? It must be a bit of a trek."

"*Oh no, it's not far at all*." She says emphatically. "Only five k's [kilometres] or so, really no big deal."

She finally sits down. There is a marked alteration in the atmosphere. Karen welcomes her warmly, but there is a tension that settles over the group. I feel less inclined to reach for my pen.

She is 'different' to other attendees—not only is she dressed differently, in her casual tracksuit attire—but she announces herself as a representative of (an)other geography. She lives elsewhere. She doesn't share the same concerns as the campaigners and immediately (and rather confidently) disregards Karen's concern of travel distance, from home to school.

I overhear a campaigner ask, "How did your child go? …With changing schools I mean… and making new friends?"

"Oh she was fine!" She responds. "They complain about it, but they're fine!"

The conversation stops and the meeting begins. Karen welcomes everyone and pays "recognition to the traditional land-owners who are the custodians of this land" before clearly stating the values of Lawson High Campaign.

She says, "We are a community group working towards an all-inclusive community, public secondary school and we want to form collegial relationships with all schools in the [region]. We are an inclusive community and want to work together with neighbouring community schools".

In my notes, I jot down: 'the word *inclusive* x multiple' (however, the emphasis on all-inclusive is paired with the emphasis on community).

Karen announces that Lawson High Campaign has recently received a negative response from the Department of Education, in regards to the provision of a high school. She tells the group that "we're moving beyond the numbers now",

before discussing the need to “mount pressure” on the current political party and develop core strategies to do so.

Karen’s remark about the “numbers” is in reference to the figure of 1,100 students that the Lawson High Campaign must reportedly prove to the current State Government, in order to acquire a public high school in their suburb (Field notes - February 11, 2012; Field notes - November 7, 2011). The Lawson High Campaign claims that, in order to obtain a high school, the Department of Education and State Government must be convinced that the school would achieve a minimum of 1,100 students. This is what the Lawson campaigners are told during their meetings with the Department. This figure is repeatedly referred to as a “magic number” (Field notes - May 7, 2012) even though campaigner Mark said during an earlier meeting, “isn’t this a politically decided number?” (Field notes - November 7, 2011).

The need to mount pressure and build a political campaign evokes a heated debate during this particular meeting and the ‘unknown speaker’ (let’s call her Jane) is the first to address the group.

“Look,” Jane says firmly, “I will tell you our main concerns about this campaign. What I hear is that people are scared that we will lose students to this new school—you know, once it’s established and everything—and that means we will lose funding. We’re worried that the campaign will stop parents from sending their kids to Charles High, that they’ll think Charles High is no good… and when Lawson High is established, people will think it is better so they won’t send their kids to Charles…” She pauses for a moment. “The bottom line is *we’ll lose funding*… Charles High has space for 200 to 300 kids more, that’s what our principal says. And

there's even talk of another campus, maybe… it's not zoned yet, and that's really good, everyone can still go there… and neither is Park Secondary. I guess what I'm saying is, you should fill up your local schools, and then ask for another. It makes your case stronger."

Jane argues that local schools are not full and maintain a very high standard. She expresses eagerness for the Lawson residents to attend Charles High. Jane's promotion of Charles High elicits a strong debate amongst the individuals in attendance. This debate is notable and rare, as throughout observation no-one has ever spoken badly about the surrounding schools. There is very much a silence when it comes to the surrounding schools—I haven't even met a campaigner who lives outside the Lawson suburb and it is almost a year into observation. The conversation continues with an individual who identifies herself as a teacher and a mother. She has a child at Lawson Primary school.

"The strong sentiment with the mums in the playground is that schools around [Lawson] are no good, not good enough. You know what I hear is that kids from Charles High smoke bongs on the oval."

Jane expresses shock at this and vigorously denies it. She passionately says what a good school Charles High is.

The teacher continues, "I'm not saying that's true, but that's the sentiment we hear."

Another person speaks up. Let's call her Maggie. "I have to agree with you… that's what I hear too. Everyone around here, the strong word I get is that all the

schools *around* Lawson are no good. Charles High has a bad rep. I hear bad things about it."

Evidently, there is a truth-telling discourse that has developed in regards to Charles High. The school is associated with criminality and unlikeable characteristics. The social network gains considerable importance here; within the Lawson social network, Charles High is associated with poor social behaviour, such as the use of drugs.

Maggie continues to speak. "It's funny you know, when I tell the other mums in my mother's group that I'm going out that night, and I'm going into the Charles suburb, they all gasp with shock! (*Laughs)* I mean, it's odd, it's our next suburb and it seems to me that no-one sets foot in it 'cause it's seen as dodgy or seedy… or something like that! We're all on about community you know but we exclude these suburbs that are just outside of Lawson. *So how community orientated are we*?"

Maggie asks an important question, a question that inquires into the genuine breadth of community. Maggie suggests that notions of community are quite subjective and rather, there are imagined boundaries and borders that exist between defined territories that constitute 'community'. The suburbs surrounding Lawson are considered apart and socially distant.

Nobody answers Maggie's question but a campaigner does suggest, "Maybe Charles… I mean Charles High School… maybe it should change its name, you know? Anything that has the name 'Charles' in it… just sounds dodgy."

It is a superficial marker, but it is a marker nonetheless; participants want to disassociate themselves from the *label* of Charles High—the label that speaks to *geo-identity*—and therefore, the people who inhabit the absolute space.

After Maggie's comment (and the following suggestion that Charles High should change its name), Karen quickly interjects. She recommends that the Lawson High Campaigners maintain a focus on collegiality with the surrounding schools and parents. She says, "school communities need to band together to pressure the government [for a new school in Lawson]." Jane scoffs loudly from the other side of the room, as does another person (let's call her Helen). Helen tells the group that she is a teacher at a surrounding public high school. I've never met her before. She speaks forcefully. "*Band together?! It's so competitive out there! It's extremely competitive… and you want people to band together?!* (*Significant vocal emphasis*)"

Jane vigorously shakes her head, "It's so competitive that Charles [High] buses kids in each week from [a local primary] for a free lunch—every Friday! They're trying to get all these kids to come to their school so they're handing out free lunches... It's that competitive!"

Helen nods, "It's all about bums on seats. That's what it's all about. Bums on seats equal money. It's so hard. *And you're talking about getting these schools banding together*! (*Laughs contemptuously*)."

Helen describes the current funding situation as dire and a "dog eat dog world". She is evidently perturbed. By no means, is Helen describing a 'community' environment—rather she depicts a hostile situation, in which schools are permanently teetering on the brink of closure. Karen nods diplomatically, as Helen

continues. “It is a vicious cycle. If we don’t get the kids, then we don’t get the money. There’s no way any schools are going to work together. If they don’t get the money, that’s our school… *done, dusted*.”

At this point, the local Councillor who warmly shook my hand at the beginning introduces himself. At this meeting, there are four local Councillors in attendance, and each is aligned with the left-of-centre Labor Party. Each Councillor introduces themselves, by their affiliation or position within a political party. Labor MP ‘John’ says, “I’m keen to support a community solution. I think the best outcome is a solution made by a parental-led community.” He looks over at the dissenters such as Helen and Jane, “You can be assured that I don’t want to support anything that the entire community doesn’t want. We all have to be together on this.”

His diplomatic speech doesn’t stir Jane or Helen to respond. John has publically supported LHC for many years, as evident on his web-site. It is one of his major political platforms, as it is too for Labor MP ‘Sarah’, who also introduces herself. “I’m here because I have supported the Lawson High Campaign from the very beginning. I care about public education. That’s why I got into politics in the first place. I believe in public education and I want to give back to the community.”

Karen hurriedly interjects. “But we do invite all local members to attend our meetings… it’s just that only the Labor reps have supported it so far. *We are not aligned with a political party*. Sarah and John have attended meetings and supported LHC over the years and we are very grateful… but we do invite all the members.”

Twice, Karen stipulates that LHC invites all political representatives to attend. LHC is firmly bipartisan, and consistently stipulate their lack of association or

alignment with a political party (as do all other campaigns) (Dodson Local Secondary School Website, 2012; Lawson High Working Group, No date; Smith High Campaign Website, 2008). However, it is clear that whilst LHC does not associate themselves outwardly with a political party, local members associate themselves with LHC for political gain, and they *exclusively* represent the left-side of politics.

This narrative frames the tensions surrounding the agitation for a community school. Reflecting on the work of Rose (1996a), the notion of 'community' is a pre-existing entity but gains traction through ways we organise, identify and separate ourselves. Rose refers to this as "identification projects" (p. 334). This is a production of class, and constructs who or what is defined as community. However,

> …this does not make 'communities' in some sense false. But it should alert us to the work entailed in the construction of community, and the implications of this logic of inclusion and exclusion, of responsibilization and autonomization, that they inescapably entail. We can thus be governed *through* our allegiance to particular communities of morality and identity. (Rose, 1996a, p. 336)

If a 'local community' is indeed composed of a fixed spatial proximity of residential location from one to another, 'local community' is thus a pre-existing entity, one that we belong to regardless. However, the act of 'belonging' to place is multi-dimensional, complex and conscious (Savage, et al., 2005a). This is the point

that I am looking to accentuate; belonging is a mindful and active application of lifestyle and cultural values, as located in real geographical place, and requires the deployment of economic resources. This is the making of territory that is socially ordered and organised via class-based hierarchies, and expressed by agitation for a community school. The celebration of 'community' is a pattern of gentrification (see 2.4.3) and what it is actually celebrating is *geo-identity*, or 'people like us'.

6.3 Government through community

> No doubt a whole range of other local shifts in vocabulary in diverse sites contributed to the emergence of community as a valorized alternative, antidote or even cure to the ills that the social had not been able to address – or even to the ills of the social itself. But what began to take shape here was a new way of demarcating a sector for government, a sector whose vectors and forces could be mobilized, enrolled, deployed in novel programmes and techniques which operated through the instrumentalization of personal allegiances and active responsibilities: *government through community.* (Rose, 1996a, p. 332, emphasis in original)

In this section, I argue that the campaigners imagined school is a method of "*government through community*". In this case, "community is not simply the territory of government, but a *means of government*" (Rose, 1996a, p. 332, emphasis in original). This is important, in terms of theorising the pseudo-private school and

deconstructing the notion of community. Government through community is accentuated primarily via the campaigner's desire for involvement and ownership of their imagined school. Across the data, there is a repeat emphasis on parental ownership and control. Robert, who is a long-standing campaigner, talks about this:

> E: So it's very important they [the campaigners] have a school where they can have an input?
>
> Robert: *Call their own*. And when they call it their own, it's not just a case of its physically local, from an inputs perspective… it has *very very clear*… contributions by parents and friends who come from a community of commonality, a community of interest… that will have an input into the secondary school and again… the tone and tenor, the culture, the direction, the strategic direction… (Interview February 27th, 2012)

There are important threads to pull out of Robert's excerpt. First, the parents' want a school they can "call their own" and govern, to some extent. But, Robert also hints at the complexities surrounding space and locality, when he says, "it's not just a case of physically local". In the previous chapter, I explored the importance of proximity, from home to school. For the campaigners, it is necessary for the imagined school to be less than two kilometres from their home. Even though the campaigners argue that this is a matter of convenience, and a matter of *community*, this is a selective and ordered imagination of community. The campaigners school

produces a ‘common identity’, but this is instrumental in that it works to secure and purchase capital.

In ‘Distinction’ (1984), Bourdieu argues that geographical proximity to certain assets or goods is of vital significance for matters of class, because the geographical proximity affects the ability for groups of people to influence and appropriate the “assets in question” (p. 124). For the campaigners, proximity to the school matters because it affects the level of participation within place, feelings of belonging and connection to social capital. But it also concerns the imposition of moral conditions, the construction of class, order and control.

In their agitations for a community school, the campaigners “reveal painful contradictions” like those participants in Reay, et al.’s (2011) study (p. 161). The authors describe the parents as “caught within impossible tensions between being ‘good neoliberal individualists’ and their communitarian impulses” (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 161). Their desire to own or be involved in the school is a “means of surveillance as well as a means of [support]” (p. 156). Even though the campaigners celebrate a self-governing community, it is uniformly welcomed and rejected, as shown by Matthew:

> Matthew: As a group, we’ve done some work on identifying potential sites, um, again, with the Department [of Education]… as a pressure group we’ve led the process with the Education Department, and again we’re leading the process with identifying sites… work they should have done, but they haven’t so we’ve led the process… we actually have a document identifying

about twenty-five sites… of those about five to seven are probably, um, good options for a site… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

Matthew explains how, at the regular meetings with the Department of Education, the campaigners "lead the process" and clearly specify their expectations. He expresses this is something "they should have done", but a sense of inevitability is conveyed by Matthew. This is an example of government through community; the campaign group is overseeing the placement of a State Government school. Crucially, they *perceive* themselves as overseeing the operation and being active participants in the process.

This is a contradiction that campaigners find themselves within, and is the inevitable paradox of the reinforced individualistic and competitive tenets of neoliberal economics; whilst wanting the 'public' school, one that is essentially part of the governmental system, the campaigners dually aspire for a school that is local and to some extent, 'owned' by the community. This inconsistency between agitations for a public school and forms of quasi-privatisation is perhaps most sharply demonstrated by proposed funding mechanisms:

Matthew: It's just unfortunate that the public system can't actually, somehow… leverage off that and maybe, perhaps, create their own trusts through parental donations to start that off, um…

E: So private trusts… set up through the community, or…?

> Matthew: Through the Education Department, so, um… past parents and students could, perhaps, donate to their old school to improve the facilities, like the private system does… there has been some initiative, some movement… to move the public system to where… to grab aspects of the private system that actually feed into these amazing facilities and try to replicate it at the public system… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

There are a number of tensions within Matthew's proposed system of funding. This method suggests "parental donations" to the imagined school, but this sounds similar to how a private school operates. A private school imposes fees onto parents, in order to prop up existing government contributions. The only difference with Matthew's proposed system is that it is presented as an optional donation. Effectively, it would stand as the same mechanism—additional funding to prop up existing government funding. Matthew dually demonstrates a desire to partly own the school through financial contributions. This encapsulates the *pseudo-private school,* a school that bears the 'public' label and branding but retains private school characteristics.

Notably, the emphasis on parental involvement and partial funding is shared by the Smith High Campaign. The working group set up a civic fund in order to attract donations. The working group (made up of the campaigners) also donated money ($1000) to fund their proposed school (Smith High Campaign Website, 2008). The purpose of funding their own school, as stipulated by SHC, is to increase the "sense of community ownership", thus leading to greater "community

partnerships with the school", and raise the profile of the imagined school (Smith High Campaign Website, 2008). Effectively, they are taking on part-responsibility for their school, even to the point of funding and marketing.

Both the Lawson and Smith High Campaign attract monetary donations. During one meeting, LHC discusses how to effectively use $1000 grant money, as awarded to them by a local community bank, to improve their campaigning efforts (Field notes - October 8, 2012). In one year alone, the Smith High Campaign received $8,300 via donations from a range of local business owners (which are all listed on their website). These include a real estate agent ($2,000) and a chemist ($2,500). They originally received $10,000 from a property development group but this grant was retracted, and the business named as "no longer a partner" on the Smith High Campaign website (2008).

There is a strong shift of responsibility for the government-owned school. This discourse pushes for parental-involvement and parental control but it begs the question: which 'type' of community is imagined within this discourse? The imagined community is one that desires to participate in their secondary school. There is an underlying assumption that the 'community' desires to participate and has the necessary resources (for example, time) and expertise to participate.

6.3.1 Constructing community, constructing class

It is essential to think about class, in theorising the campaigner's community school. The act of lobbying and attempting to exert influence over governmental processes is the use of class power and resources. The campaigning is made possible by drawing

on economic, cultural and social capital. But it also relates to the end-product, the school itself. The pseudo-private school distinguishes itself via communitarianism (Reay, et al., 2011), and the 'community' school is the assemblage of class. In this section, I will focus first on the resources that the campaigners use to acquire their pseudo-private school; and second, how the community school lends itself to theorising class-spaces.

The campaigners evidently feel on equal ground within the professional environment. A select group of the campaigners reportedly meet on a monthly basis with the Department of Education (Interview with Steven, Harry, Karen, Adele), and have met with the State Minister for Education and the Shadow Minister (the Opposition political party). The campaigners exude confidence in expressing their demands:

> Adele: I suppose it's probably not a wish-list but when we went and sat down and did a workshop with the department… one of the key findings or key points that we wanted… location was a big one, being central to Lawson, I think all inclusive, that was the other… they were probably the two key factors umm… (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

The extent of influence an individual can "exert on practices" is the extent of social capital ownership (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 106). It is also an important marker of class division. Crozier's (1997) research contends that "working-class parents" were less likely to voice their dissatisfaction with the system or involve themselves in their

child's schooling. This research is supported extensively elsewhere (Mills & Gale, 2010; OECD, 2006), and further, it is well argued that education best serves the middle-class (Bernstein, 2003; Connell, et al., 1982; Forsey, 2010). The middle-class parent feels on professionally equal ground in the school setting and therefore, is able to make demands on the school; whereas working-class parents may perceive themselves to be on a lesser or unequal class footing to the teacher, or lacking in knowledge and skills. In order to be proactive in terms of your children's education, "you need to have a confidence based on educational knowledge. You need to know what you want from the educational system and you need to have the skills to get it for your children" (Crozier, 1997, p. 195).

The Lawson and Smith campaigns have relatively high levels of social capital, through a wide number of influential contacts. This is demonstrated via their media impact. Campaigner Karen says during a meeting that, "we know all of the local journalists. I met with one just this week, actually" (Field notes - October 8, 2012) and this is evident through their regular presence in newspaper reports. During my interview with Karen, a journalist called, and she paused the interview to speak to the journalist for fifteen to twenty minutes (Interview August 23rd, 2012a). Afterwards, she told me that there would be an immediate story running in the local paper, one that is supportive of LHC.

The Lawson High Campaigners regularly speak about strategy during general meetings, and they discuss how to increase the strength and volume of their voice; how to increase pressure on politicians and encourage more local political members to align themselves with their campaign (Field notes- February 6, 2012; Field notes -

October 8, 2012). Steven expresses that he is confident they can do so, by utilising their numerous contacts (Field notes - October 8, 2012). Many members of the LHC retain contacts (or are employed within) high-level professional and managerial positions, citing the power to utilise these contacts if need be (Field notes - October 8, 2012).

Whilst the community school is a type of social and cultural capital, it is also the assurance of class security. By campaigning for a locale-specific school, the lobbyists' are not seeking to jump the fence—in terms of class advancement—but rather, they are seeking to *erect* the fence between divisions of class. In this, the community becomes a hyper-positive and knowable space. Adele is just one example of how this is communicated:

> Adele: I suppose the influences or issues that could be along the way if you're having to travel on public transport [to an outside school] and the people you can come across if you're travelling on your own and you're only 11 or 12… that's the thing for me… um yeah it's a bit of fear factor there … it's definitely about community. (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

Adele expresses feelings of fear if her children had to travel through unknown territory, which is not an entirely strange or unreasonable fear for parents' to hold. However, the community is invoked as an entirely safe and risk-free environment. A community school guarantees a perceived sense of safety. For Adam, a community school would keep his kids out of trouble (Interview January 19th, 2012) and for

Karen, it would provide her kids with important role models and keep them close to home (Interview August 23rd, 2012). A community school provides a physical and social hiding place from those that do not share similar values. This is more of an imaginary than a knowable truth.

The travelling of geography is one that opens up spaces of risks, for the campaigners. For their children to be spatially separated from their 'community' is the embodiment within a divergent terrain. There is a desired 'bubble' sentiment, in terms of fearing the external communities, or possibly a sense of the unknown (Butler, 2003). But, this does not relate to all of the surrounding communities, such as the suburb of Beakin or Matheson.

The imagined school acquires merit and quality via the act of community governance. Whilst the axiom of choice may be for a community school, the underlining belief is that this community school is one that is first, composed of a knowable community and second, governed by this knowable community. Participants express a core and strong belief that the school will operate more successfully and be of greater benefit, if it is governed through community:

> Matthew: I would *definitely* hope to always have a hand in how the school is ran… and be involved… local involvement just works better, you know, for the kids… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

> Robert is speaking to people at the stall. "What we want is a local school, that's all we want. A local school is better, it means it's the people from this

> area, it's made up of the community, and we can all have a hand in how the school is run." (Field notes - February 11, 2012)

Whilst quasi-privatisation via community is promoted by campaigners, it stands as an inconsistency and a tension in their agitations for a public and inclusive school. The appeal for a community school is generated within a classed network and the imagined school operates as a classed construction. The campaigner's school is contained within specific territory that is quantifiably measured, and this measurement is used to constitute a community. The following section (see 6.4) will address how this 'community' compares and contrasts to the communities that surround it, by considering dominant sociological characteristics.

6.4 Demographic analysis: the pseudo-private

> These days, referring to a "problem suburb" or "ghetto" almost automatically brings to mind, not "realities"—largely unknown in any case to the people who rush to talk about them—but phantasms, which feed on emotional experiences stimulated by more or less uncontrolled words and images …. Nothing demonstrates this better than the American ghettos, those abandoned sites that are fundamentally defined by an *absence*—basically that of the state and of everything that comes with it, police, schools … etc. (Bourdieu, 1999b, p. 123, emphasis in original)

In this section, I consider how absolute space is demographically composed by examining dominant sociological characteristics of suburbs that contain the pseudo-private school and non-preferred schools for the campaigners. There is a juxtaposition at work here between the preferred and the non-preferred, or the "demonized" and "idealized" schools (Reay & Lucey, 2004, p. 35). In the Australian context, Teese (2000) refers to under-funded schools as a "sink school" or "residualised school" (p. 189) in that they compound multiple forms of disadvantage, and are routinely located in high-poverty suburbs (Teese, 2007). In similarity, I argue that there is a correlation between an undesirable school and its geographical location, and there are certain sociological characteristics that may be identified within the 'desirable' spaces.

In the following graphs, suburbs are labelled as 'desirable' to reflect a locality that contains a public school considered to be a preferred choice for the campaigners. This is their preferred choice, if they do not receive a public high school in their immediate suburb. The campaigner's suburb is referred to as 'home' to convey the central location that drives comparative analyses. The graphs also show the 'state median' which is the State of Victoria median[43].

I start by considering median levels of household income, according to residential suburb (see Figure 26). This reflects boundaries and separations vis-à-vis economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986):

[43] See Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f, 2012g, 2012h, 2012j).

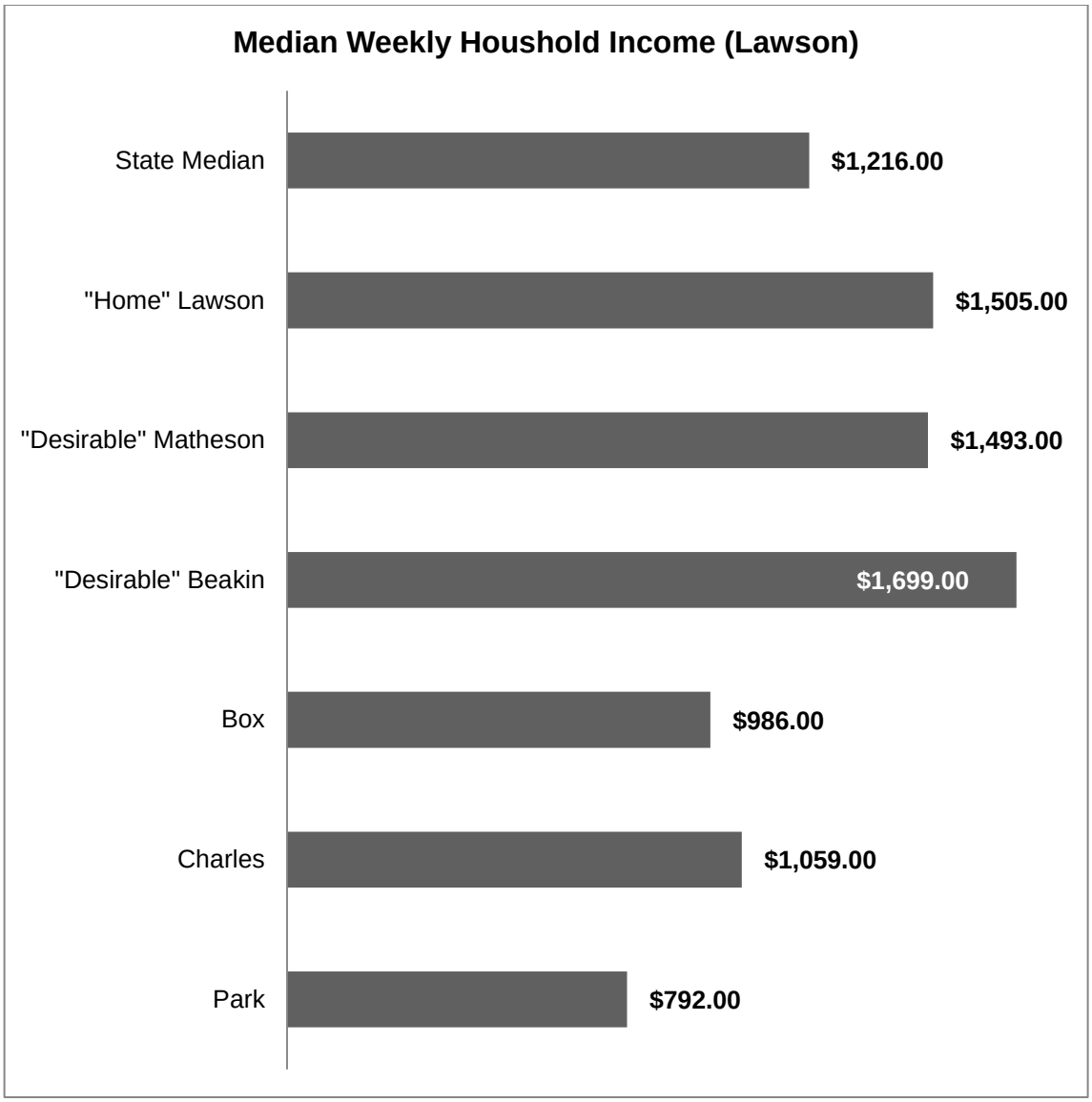


Figure 25 Median weekly household income (Lawson suburb and surrounds).

There is a strong pattern that immediately emerges, when considering the campaigning suburb of Lawson. There is a distinct correlation between school-of-choice and a higher income bracket, in the suburb in which the school is located. The 'desirable' public high school is located in a suburb that records a higher income in

comparison to the ‘undesirables’ and the state median. In order to demonstrate this shared pattern, similar data is provided for the suburb of Smith:

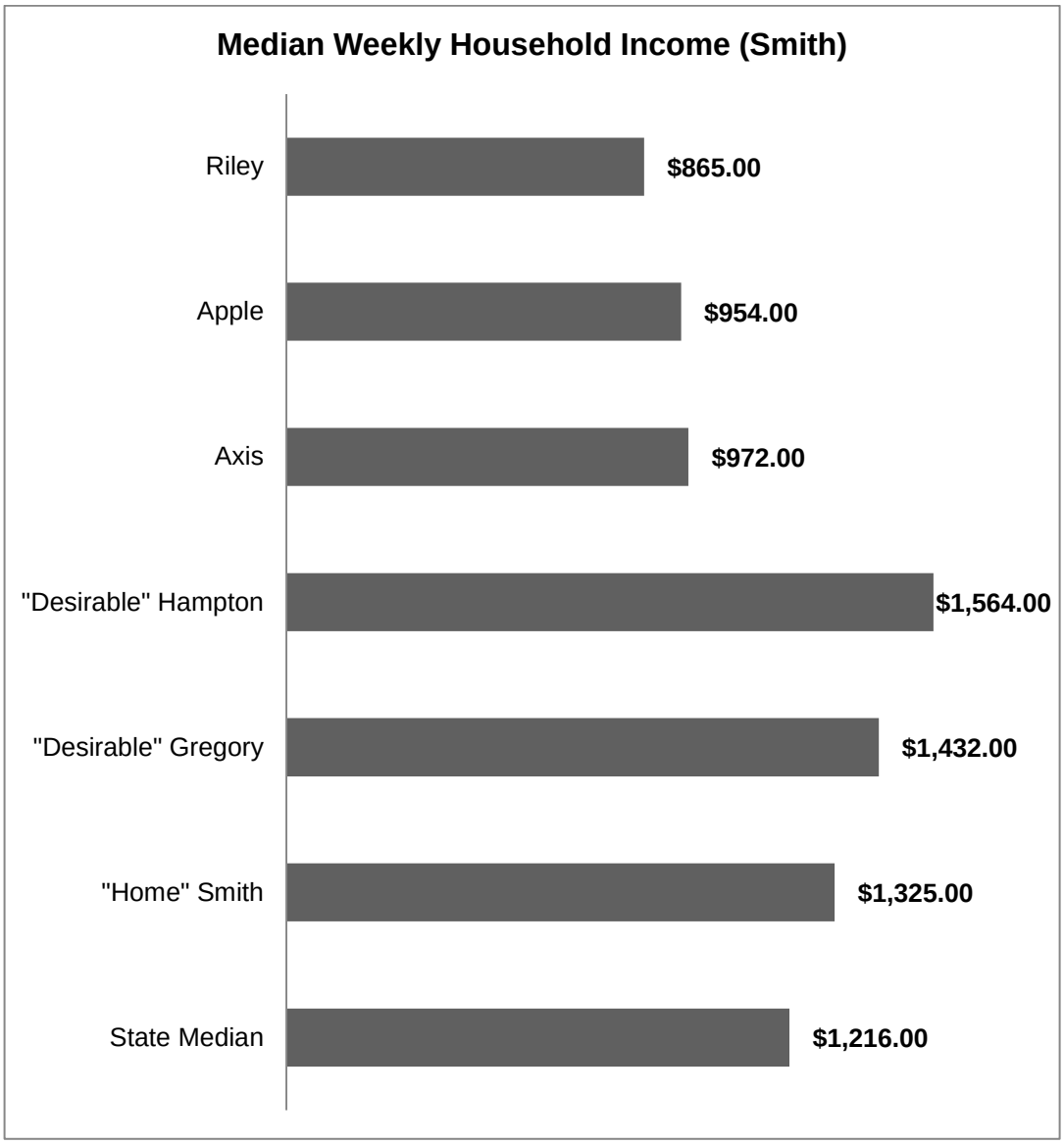


Figure 26 Median weekly household income (Smith and surrounds).

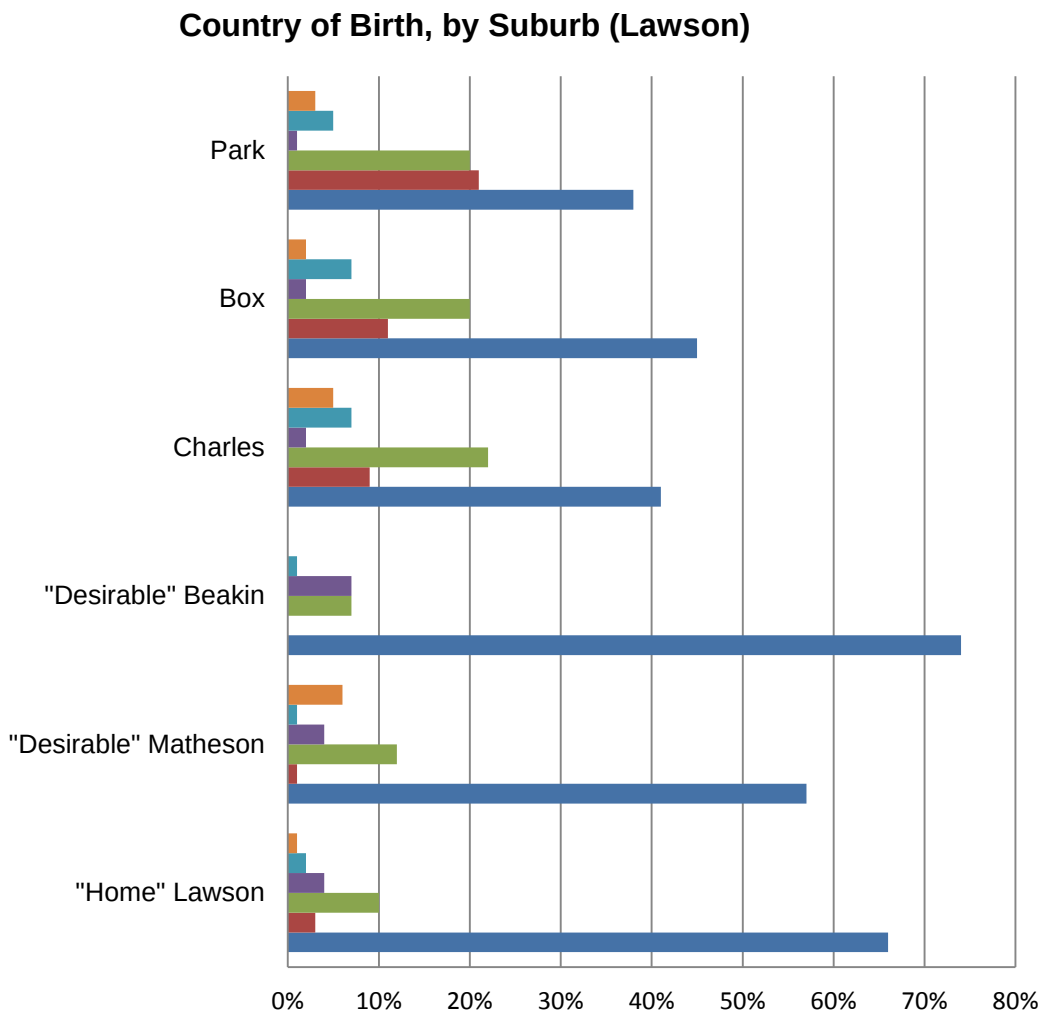
There are strong similarities when considering the suburbs of Lawson and Smith. The choosers in this study desire a public high school that is located in a

suburb with higher levels of median income. Considering these levels of income, house prices in the desirable suburbs as contrasted to undesirables are noticeably higher. Individuals are effectively excluded from territorial ownership within the desirable suburbs, according to the levels of economic capital they possess. The difference in capital required to secure occupation and embodiment within the geographical locales is substantial—the median house price in suburb Matheson is $1.4 million compared to Park's $440,000 (Domain Website, 2012b, 2012c). The purchase point constructs a barrier for those looking to occupy these suburbs. These steep differences are occurring within a relatively small geographical space—the suburb of Park is less than 10 walking distance kilometres from the suburb of Matheson.

It is also pronounced in the surrounding suburbs of Smith. The median house price in the Riley suburb is listed as $395,000 (2012d) whilst suburb Hampton's median house price is $743,000 (2012a). For suburbs that are less than 10 kilometres apart, this is quite divisive. A price point for territorial ownership, in addition to the levels of median income, accentuates the degrees of social exclusion from one place to another. Madanipour, et al., (1998) define social exclusion as:

> A multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: …access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods. (p. 22)

Whilst it is relatively unsurprising that middle-class choosers desire a public high school that is located in a higher-income suburb, quantifying and analysing this in a comparative context, is useful. It is also useful to consider the multi-levels of this composition, such as race and religion. Importantly, this analysis is tied to the suburb and this is significant in terms of method. Methodologically and epistemologically, spatial class analysis thinks about the suburb as a critical space for class production and class identity. This is a space that can be quantifiably measured, but also characterised using qualitative means. I extend on this quantifiable measurement by considering country of birth, according to residential suburb:



	"Home" Lawson	"Desirable " Matheson	"Desirable " Beakin	Charles	Box	Park
China	1%	6%	0%	5%	2%	3%
India	2%	1%	1%	7%	7%	5%
United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man(d)	4%	4%	7%	2%	2%	1%
Born Elsewhere/ Country of Birth not stated	10%	12%	7%	22%	20%	20%
Vietnam	3%	1%	0%	9%	11%	21%
Australia	66%	57%	74%	41%	45%	38%

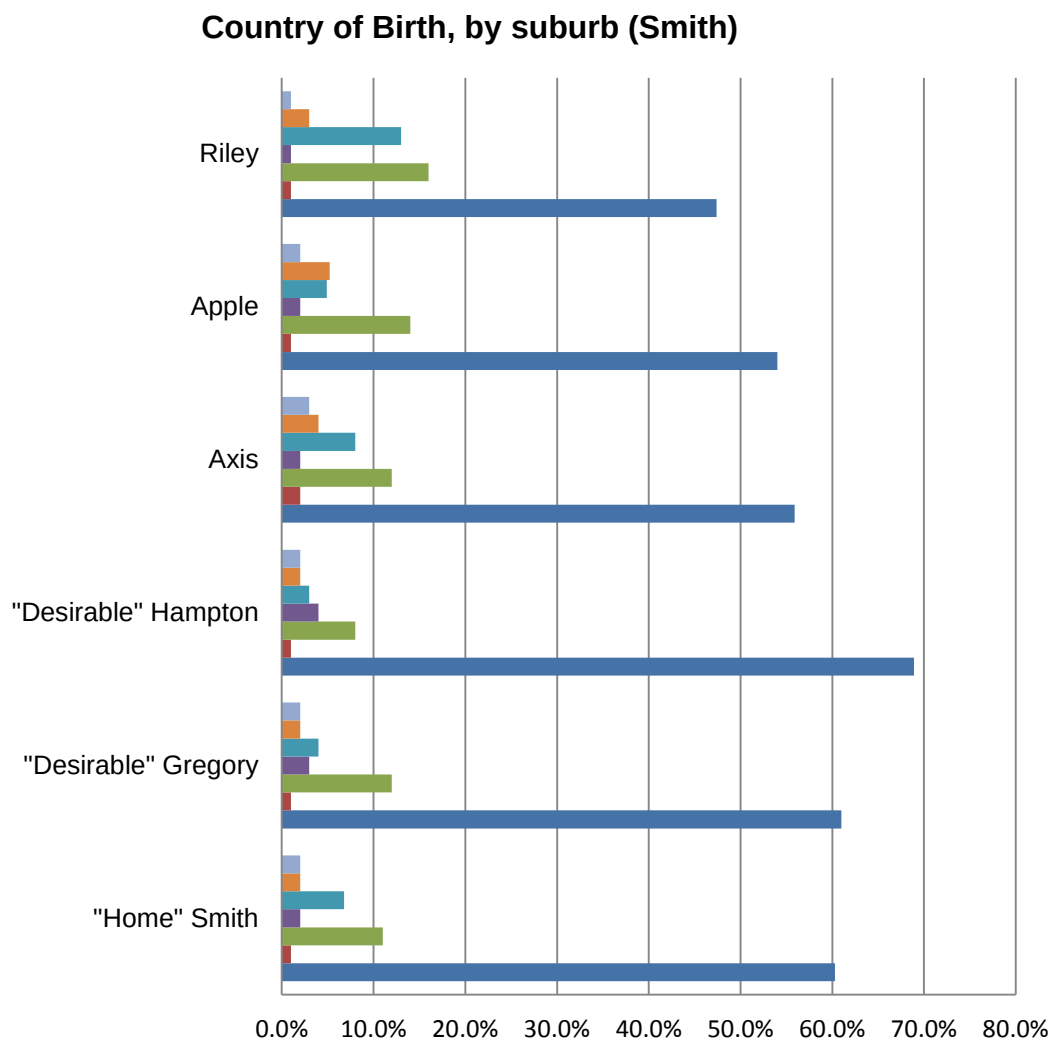
Figure 27 Country of birth, by suburb (Lawson and surrounds).

In this study, a desirable public high school is located in a suburb with increased proportions of Australian and United Kingdom-born residents, and they also contain lower percentages of individuals born in Vietnam, India or 'Country of Birth not stated'. There are quite stark differences between the desirables and non-desirables. For example, the suburb of Beakin only contains 1% of individuals born in India, whereas the suburb of Box and Charles contain 7%. The suburb of Beakin is exceedingly white. In this suburb, 74% of the population is Australian born. This is in comparison to the State of Victoria—only 69% of the population is Australian born.

There is robust segmentation according to one's country of birth, and this is exemplified via residential address. The Vietnamese-born population comprises only 1% of the total State population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012j), however, 21% of the total population in the suburb of Park is Vietnamese-born. In comparing this percentage (21%) to Beakin (0%), there is a substantial difference.

This segmentation is played out through the '*suburb*'—an absolute space that is quantifiably measured. In other words, there is no relativity or fluidity when it comes to whether or not a person resides in a suburb—you are either in or out. The school becomes branded via this absolute space which it occupies, and it would seem that whiteness becomes a valuable choice marker. For example, the suburb of Park contains the lowest proportion of individuals born in Australia (38%), and the highest proportion of individuals born in Vietnam (21%). In correlation, their school is also poorly regarded by campaigners, or the middle-class chooser in this study.

Although there is a similar pattern in the suburb of Smith, it is weaker:



	"Home" Smith	"Desirable " Gregory	"Desirable " Hampton	Axis	Apple	Riley
China	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	1.0%
India	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%	5.2%	3.0%
Italy	6.8%	4.0%	3.0%	8.0%	4.9%	13.0%
United Kingdom	2.0%	3.0%	4.0%	2.0%	2.0%	1.0%
Born Elsewhere/Country of Birth not stated	11.0%	12.0%	8.0%	12.0%	14.0%	16.0%
Vietnam	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Australia	60.3%	61.0%	68.9%	55.9%	54.0%	47.4%

Figure 28 Country of birth, by suburb (Smith and surrounds).

Evidently, when considering the school choosers from Lawson and Smith, the public high school that is desirable is located in a ‘white’ suburb—one that retains higher percentages of United Kingdom or Australian-born residents.

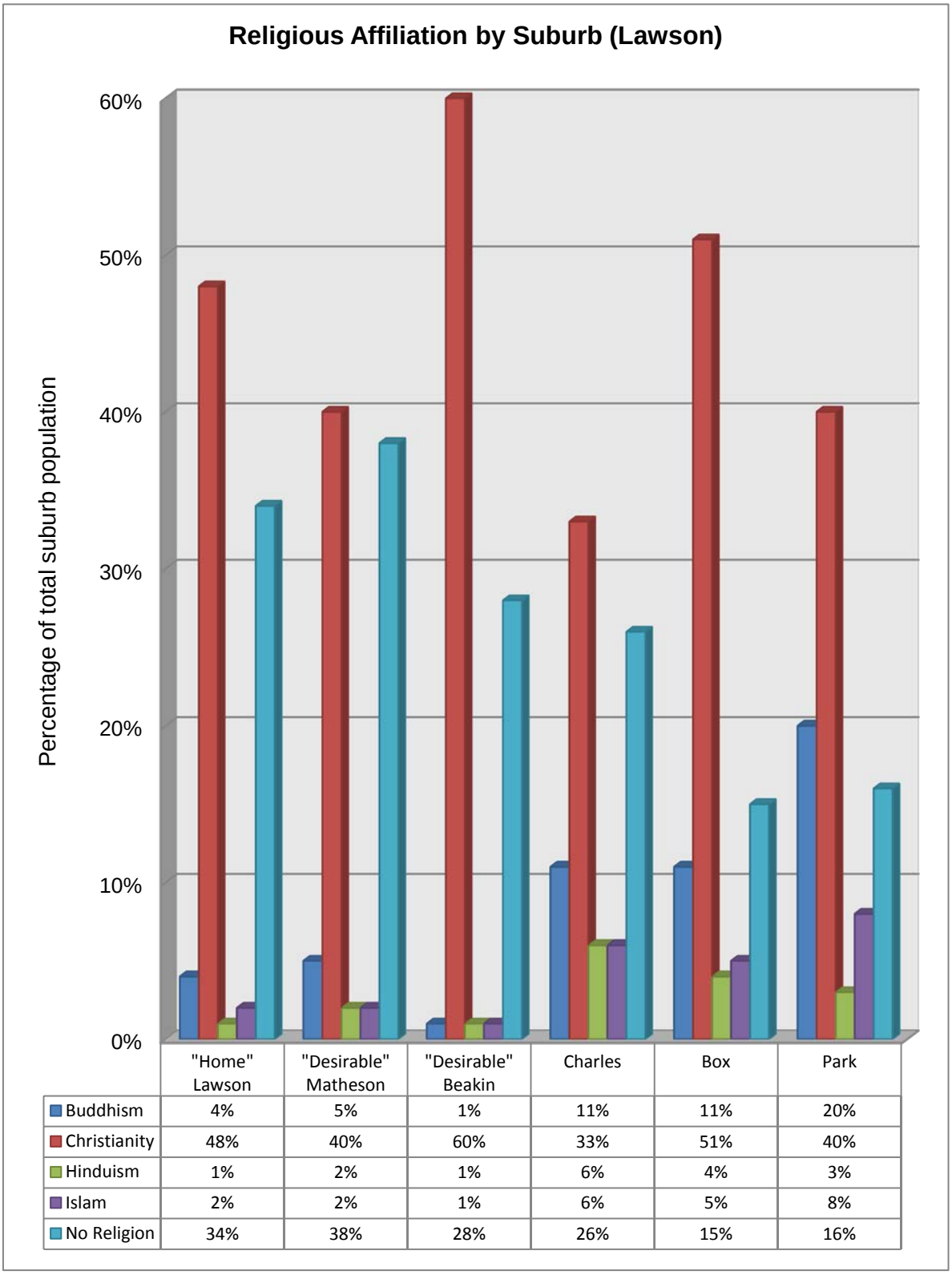
The schools that are non-preferred by campaigners, such as Apple High or Charles High, are located in suburbs with a higher proportion of individuals who identify as ‘born elsewhere’ or ‘country of birth not stated’ on the Census. This operates in converse for the desired suburb and school-of-choice. A country of birth (or, ethnicity) may be theorised as cultural capital that acquires value in social networks (Bourdieu, 1986). This research reflects that of Butler (2003), regarding gentrification by the London middle-class:

> London’s middle-classes share a common relationship to each other which is largely exclusive of those who are not ‘people like us’—most strikingly perhaps in relation to their ethnicity. In a city which is massively multiethnic, its middle-classes, despite long rhetorical flushes in favour of multiculturalism huddle together into essentially White settlements in the inner city. (p. 2469)

A country of birth is a core part of the ‘aesthetic’ package within school-of-choice; for the consumer, a predominant white ethnicity in the preferred school constructs a perception—one that is largely measured in aesthetics—of ‘people like us’. A country of birth also influences first language spoken, and in all of the

‘desirables’, there is a higher percentage of individuals with “linguistic capital” (Koh, 2004, p. 337), individuals who speak English as the first language. However, whilst English may not dominate as the first language in the ‘undesirable’ suburbs, there is a far higher percentage of individuals who retain multi-lingual abilities.

A country of birth may influence a religious identification, or how an individual personally affiliates with a religion. A strong pattern is demonstrated by assessing the ‘desirables’ and the ‘undesirables’. The following graph considers religious affiliation by suburb:



	"Home" Lawson	"Desirable" Matheson	"Desirable" Beakin	Charles	Box	Park
Buddhism	4%	5%	1%	11%	11%	20%
Christianity	48%	40%	60%	33%	51%	40%
Hinduism	1%	2%	1%	6%	4%	3%
Islam	2%	2%	1%	6%	5%	8%
No Religion	34%	38%	28%	26%	15%	16%

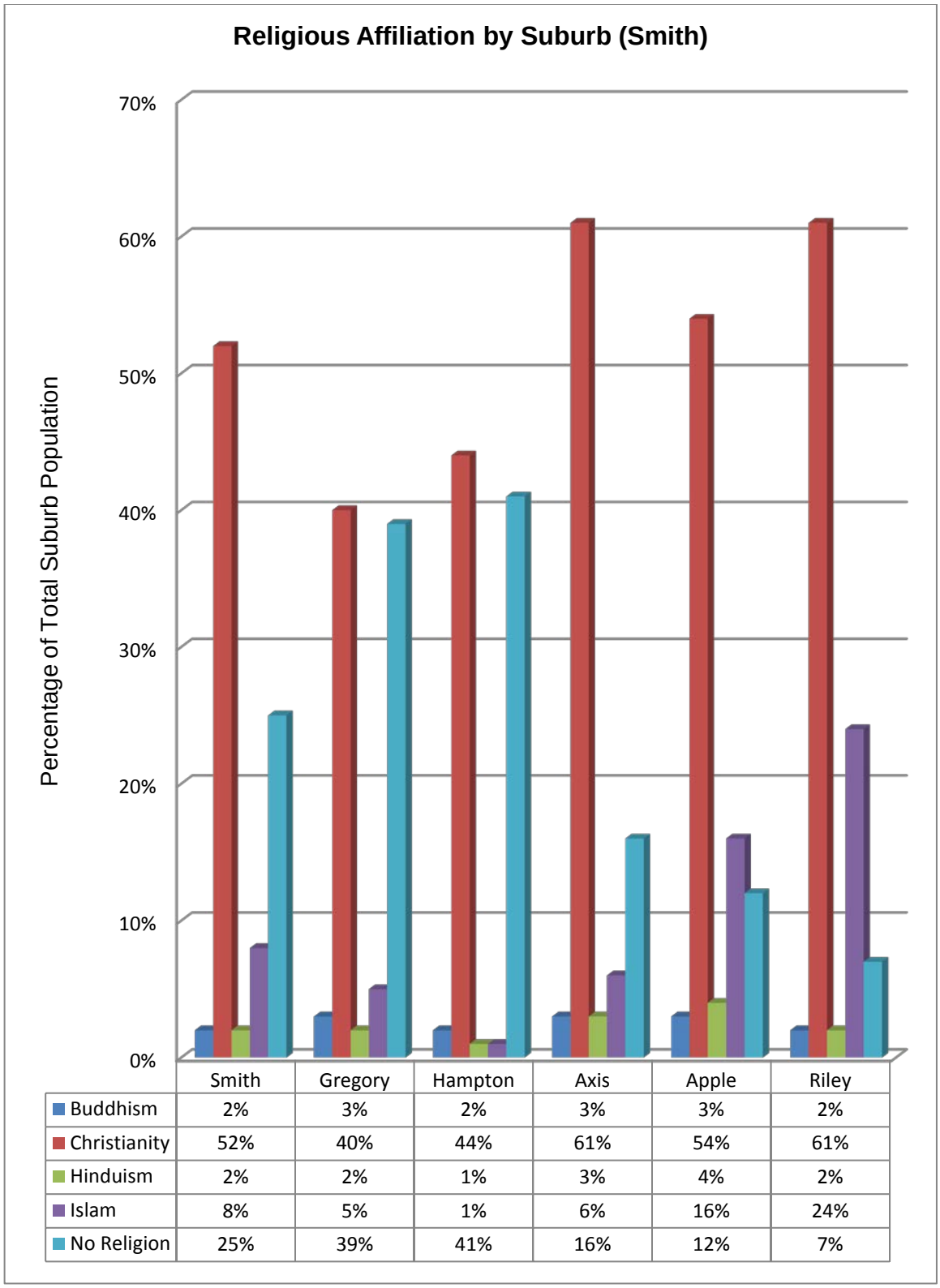
Figure 29 Religious affiliation by suburb (Lawson and surrounds).

This statistical representation illustrates a clear divide, according to religious beliefs. The desirable public high school is located in a suburb with higher percentages of individuals identifying with 'No Religion' and lower percentages of affiliations with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. To place this in perspective, these religions are minorities and under-represented in the State of Victoria. Buddhism comprises only 3% of the total population, but it represents 20% of the Park population; only 2% of the total population in the State of Victoria identifies with Hinduism, and yet it is three times this percentage in Charles (6%); and Islam, which represents 3% of the State population, stands at 8% in Park[44]. The highest affiliation in the State of Victoria is Christianity (57% of the total State population) and this includes its nineteen umbrella religions[45].

A desirable public high school is located in a suburb that retains higher proportions of individuals affiliating with 'no religion'. This is a consistent marker of desirability, as also demonstrated when considering the suburb of Smith and surrounds:

[44] These percentages were calculated using the same formula as previously stipulated, but applied to the total population of Victoria and the total number of persons identifying with a religion on the Census.

[45] See Appendix A2 for a list of the nineteen religions that are grouped into this category, 'Christianity'.



	Smith	Gregory	Hampton	Axis	Apple	Riley
Buddhism	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Christianity	52%	40%	44%	61%	54%	61%
Hinduism	2%	2%	1%	3%	4%	2%
Islam	8%	5%	1%	6%	16%	24%
No Religion	25%	39%	41%	16%	12%	7%

Figure 30 Religious affiliation by suburb (Smith and surrounds).

Contextually, ‘no religion’ makes up 24% of the total population in Victoria. The campaigning suburbs of Smith (25%) and Lawson (34%) contain higher than average percentages of individuals identifying with ‘no religion’. The suburb of Lawson is particularly concentrated. In addition, each of the suburbs that have a desirable public high school for the campaigners also has a higher than average proportion of individuals identifying with ‘no religion’ (the Matheson suburb: 38%, Beakin: 34%, Gregory: 38% and Hampton: 41%). The only exception is the suburb of Charles (26%) and this may indicate a pattern of gentrification currently occurring in this locale.

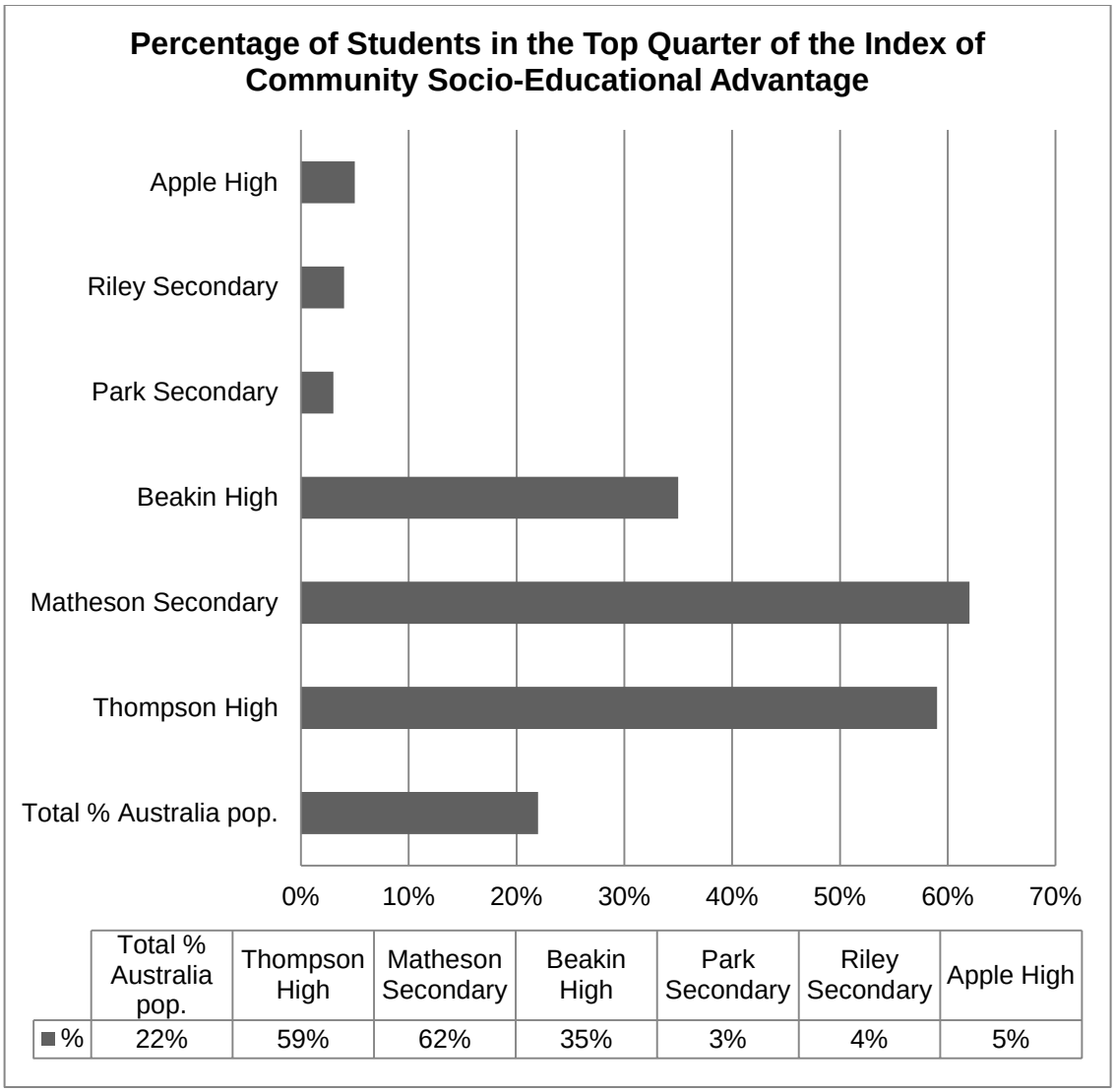
The second consistent geographical marker—when considering the location of a desirable public high school—is a lower proportion of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism affiliations; however, this is less evident in the site of Smith. The suburbs of Beakin and Hampton have the predominant school-of-choice for the campaigners in this study, and the demographics of these suburbs are telling. These suburbs are on opposite sides of the city, but in spite of this, they share relatively similar demographics when it comes to the ‘minority’ religions. The suburb of Beakin contains the highest percentage of Christianity (60%), and the lowest percentage of Hinduism (1%), Buddhism (1%) and Islam (1%). This is similar to Hampton: Buddhism (2%), Hinduism (1%) and Islam (1%). The only difference is the lower percentage of persons identifying as Christian (44%).

These geographical markers, when it comes to identifying the pseudo-private school, need to be considered in the context of the socio-educational make up of the

specific schools. I am looking to emphasise class stratification, by geographical locale and also the school. To do this, I will draw on data available from *My School* website[46]. This website measures the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (hereby referred to as ICSEA) and shows the measurement in the form of a numerical score. The higher the score indicates the more advantaged the school is, and vice versa. ICSEA is calculated using direct data (students' family backgrounds) and indirect data (school-level factors). The students' family background includes parents' occupation, parental levels of school education and non-school education. The school-level factors include a school's geographical location (i.e. remoteness) and the proportion of Indigenous students (see Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010).

To explore advantage and disadvantage in specific schools, as measured by ICSEA, I have chosen a mix of schools that surround the Lawson and Smith suburbs—Apple High and Riley Secondary (from Smith); Park Secondary, Beakin High and Matheson Secondary (from Lawson); and Thompson High. I compare these figures with the total percentage of students who attend government schools in Australia, who are positioned in the top quarter of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage. The following graph shows the percentage of students in the top quarter, as measured by ICSEA:

[46] This website is authored and published by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and is available from www.myschool.edu.au



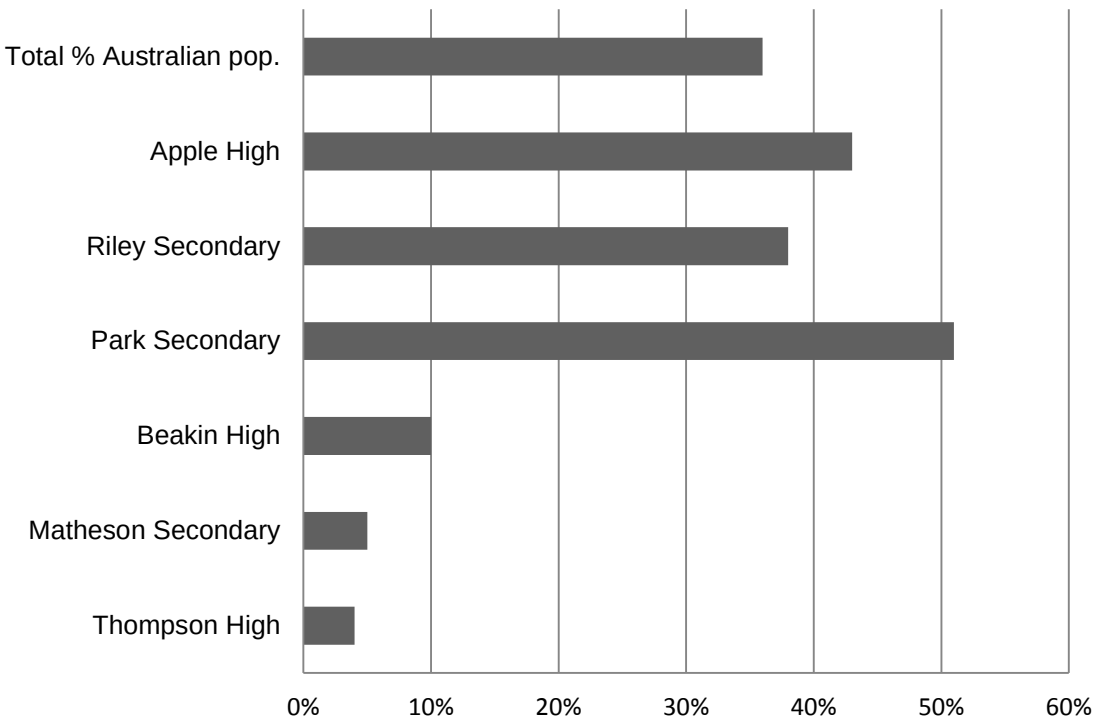
	Total % Australia pop.	Thompson High	Matheson Secondary	Beakin High	Park Secondary	Riley Secondary	Apple High
%	22%	59%	62%	35%	3%	4%	5%

Figure 31 Percentage of students in top quarter of socio-educational advantage.

This graph shows the percentage of students in the top quarter of socio-educational advantage, according to school. There is a disproportionately high distribution of students from the top quarter in schools-of-choice, namely Thompson, Matheson and Beakin. Adversely, the undesirable schools contain very low percentages of students in the top quarter of socio-educational advantage. In this graph, I indicate that 22% of the total Australian population who attend public

schools are positioned in the top quarter of socio-educational advantage (see Gonski, et al., 2011). Therefore, the preferable public schools contain a highly concentrated level of advantage (for Matheson and Thompson, it is close to three times the average).

These results are inverted when considering the distribution of students in the bottom quarter:



	Thompson High	Matheson Secondary	Beakin High	Park Secondary	Riley Secondary	Apple High	Total % Australian pop.
%	4%	5%	10%	51%	38%	43%	36%

Figure 32 Percentage of students in bottom quarter of socio-educational advantage.

The undesirable schools contain increased levels of educational disadvantage. The levels of disadvantage are *significantly higher* in comparison to the desirable schools, but they are also higher than the Australian mean. For those who attend public schools in Australia, 36% are positioned in the bottom quarter of socio-educational advantage (see Gonski, et al., 2011).

For the middle-class chooser, it is evident that the public school-of-choice is not only located in a wealthier suburb, but it also contains higher numbers of students within the top quarter of socio-educational advantage, and conversely, a low number within the bottom quarter. Indeed, these are markers of class that contribute to notions of exclusivity within the school.

6.5 Conclusion

If we consider the schooling preferences of the middle-class campaigners and the socio-economic composition of the suburbs in which the desirable schools are located, there are evidently patterns of choice. There are strong geographical correlations when considering the pseudo-private and the 'other' public school. The pseudo-private (or desirable choice) is located in a suburb that records a higher income than the state median; higher number of Australian-born residents, in comparison to surrounding suburbs (and therefore, higher number of English as first language speakers); higher number of individuals whom identify as 'not religious' (in comparison to the State median and surrounding suburbs); and, lower number of

minority religions, such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. This is a multi-level spatial analysis of class.

Stratification is visibly occurring across geographical boundaries and schools perform a fundamental part of this process. If we think about a school as a microcosm of society, what we can see is dramatic segmentation occurring and the center-point of this segmentation—in terms of where it becomes visible, apparent and performs a role in production—is the school. Within this analysis and context, the campaigner's agitation for a local community school takes on renewed meaning. Whilst they rely on arguments of proximity and axioms of choice, the local community school is fundamentally involved in the formation of *distance*. The distance comprises far more than physical distance, rather it concerns "material and cultural distance" (Reay, 2007, p. 1192). The school constructs modes of inclusion and exclusion within an absolute space.

In this study, the public high school achieves market value for a middle-class chooser principally via its geographical location. However, this involves complexities and requires caveats. Choice is navigated by a consideration of *who* and *what* fill the geographical terrain, and this substantiates earlier studies regarding middle-class choice. Earlier studies have shown that middle-class suburban compositions relate to over-subscription in a public high school (Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011). I have looked to build on these contributions methodologically, by mapping class spatial analyses to suburbs and schools.

It is the neoliberal policy environment that set up these tensions and it must be emphasised that the valuing and agitation for a local community school is not a

mechanism of social exclusion in itself. Rather, inequitable funding policies reinforce distributional disparities between schools. Unregulated competition and unregulated choice contributes to increased segmentation and division between schools, but also, between geographical locales.

7 Politics, God and Morals: The symbolism of the public school for a middle-class identity

7.1 Introduction

> Absent is a further defining characteristic of the middle-classes, namely their values. Perhaps above all the distinguishing feature of the middle-classes is a particular set of values, commitments and moral stances. Yet, while these have inevitably shifted and changed over time, certain attitudes have remained constant. (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 12)

Reay, et al. (2011) argues that a distinguishing feature of the middle-classes is a particular set of values, commitments and moral stances. Borrowing from this, I contend in this chapter that the public school denotes an important set of values, commitments and moral stances for the participants in this study. It is symbolic, nostalgic, political and secular. For the participants, the public school acts as a "loaded moral signifier" (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 875). Like Reay, et al.'s (2011) study, I understand these values and commitments as identity signifiers for the participants and I interrogate how these operate within the frame of this study.

This chapter purposefully follows the *pseudo-private* school, in which I explored the campaigner's desire for a community school and its associations,

including significant parental involvement and partial funding of the imagined school. This chapter continues to draw out the tensions with the *pseudo-private school*, by highlighting the symbolism that the public school garners in the campaigners imagination.

7.2 The conscious buy: the public school

> Naomi: The conscious decision is if we have a public school option that we're comfortable with, we'd much rather support the public education system.
>
> Harry: It's a conscious thing, the conscious buy…
>
> E: The public school?
>
> Harry: Yeah. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

For Naomi and Harry, the public school option is a 'conscious decision' and synonymous with 'conscious' is mindfulness, deliberate or intentional. This enables an important argument to be made—the public high school facilitates a deliberate production of a social, cultural and political identity for the participants. However, this is problematic and troubled. The public school must be an option "that we're comfortable with". Thus, the public school choice is purposeful and meaningful but it is also limited.

I am arguing that, in their descriptions of how they are choosing a school and their affiliations with the public school, the participants present their choices as going

“against-the-grain” (Reay, et al., 2011). In other words, the participants are aware of their abilities to choose private schooling and pay fees, but they have a specific preference for a public school because of the values they attach to it. It must be noted that this awareness (for their capacity to choose private schooling) is also reaffirmed by officials from the Department of Education, when the campaigners meet with them. Steven says that “the Department keeps sayin’ to us that we should just go to private schools you know… Because we can… we have the choice…” (Field notes - November 7, 2011). This is reiterated during many interviews, such as Matthew who says, “and there are attitudes that if you earn a particular amount, then yeah, you shouldn’t use the public system” (Interview January 16th, 2012).

But, the campaigner’s pursuit of ‘public’ education represents far more than a hesitancy to part with monetary fees. A particular notion of the public school is critical for how their identity is shaped and expressed. To expand on this argument, I refer to Harry and Naomi. The couple makes it clear to me during the interview that they have the potential and capacity to choose a private school and pay fees:

> Harry: I mean the bottom line is, we could probably afford to put our kids through private school, all the way through, if we wanted to… (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Harry and Naomi also allude to the cost of their house during the interview and that it equals prices in prestigious suburbs. Harry references his postgraduate qualifications from a prestigious university. Arguably, Harry and Naomi want to

make it blatantly clear that they are quite purposefully agitating for a public school, and their choices are not borne from necessity. For them, it is not a "safety net" (Campbell, et al., 2009, p. 5), and it is their conscious preference to choose a public school. However, these preferences are bookended by their awareness of individuals for whom the public school *is* a safety net. This is highlighted by Naomi when she is speaking about school excursions and extra costs:

> Naomi: My view of public education is that… the basic education should be free, but I think… I think excursions are extra and… sadly that probably means lower socio-economic groups wind up in a predicament around that and maybe there should be some sort of system to deal with that but… I would like my kids to go to a school where excursions are part of it and they are an important learning thing… But there's a cost in that, to me. So I don't mind… we're in a position that we're able too, so therefore I don't mind.
>
> E: So, you wouldn't mind the extra costs?
>
> Naomi: Not at all, for me. But I know my sister desperately would mind and it's completely unfair that her children should get a different education to my children because they've chosen different careers to what we have…
>
> E: Does [your sister] choose public schooling?
>
> Naomi: Oh yeah, but she probably doesn't even have the choice. I don't think private would even be an option for those guys. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Naomi is aware of certain individuals for whom the public school is the 'default' choice. Even though Naomi recognises the unfairness of the situation, she also accepts it. The barriers to choice and also the barriers of exclusions are attributed to choice of career ("they've chosen different careers to what we have"). This reflects strands of meritocracy, in that education inequality is justified via natural abilities, skills or individual choices (Kennedy & Power, 2010).

Naomi argues that school excursions "are extra", meaning that—in her view—excursions should impose additional costs onto parents. But if school excursions are "an important learning thing", why are they not accessible for all of the parents? There is an acceptance of disadvantage and advantage. Naomi accepts the extra costs of school excursions, because her family has the ability to meet these costs, but she also accepts the hardships or "predicament" that lower-income earners may be met with, due to these extra costs. This reflects work by Skeggs (1997), who argues that class structures and separations tend to be ignored or not accounted for, by those who have the privilege to ignore the barriers that class constructs.

It is important to contrast Naomi's acceptance of hardship, or an acceptance of the barriers imposed on lower income-earners, with the values they attach to the public school:

> Harry: I mean, my parents are school teachers, they're both passionate about public education and access to education for everyone… you know, not being elitist in terms of education, so… that I suppose, definitely, rubs off on me.
>
> Naomi: Yes… we'd much rather support the public education system.

E: And what sort of values do you attach—what do you… sort of… think of…?

Naomi: Fairness.

Harry: Fairness and the egalitarian piece I think… and I suppose values wise that the… the… the equality of the rights of human beings… you know, a moneyed school where you can afford to assume that everyone else is somehow lesser than you… (Interview January 26th 2012)

There are definite values that are identified here and associated with "public schooling"—fairness and egalitarianism, the equality of rights—and these are preferable and desirable values, for Harry and Naomi. These values are juxtaposed with the 'moneyed school' and elitism, or assuming that "everyone else is somehow lesser than you". There are complex ways of thinking about the layers of superiority and inferiority, especially when considered within the context of Naomi's acceptance of extra costs.

By focusing on Harry and Naomi, I am making two arguments. First, in expressing their views of public schooling, Harry and Naomi reference their own childhood and this is common for most of the interview participants. The campaigner's conceptualisation of the public school is informed by nostalgic reflections of their own childhood schooling experiences, or their parents' profession. These reflections construct symbolic and almost mythical interpretations of the public school, one that is coded in conflicted ways, at times. Second, the pursuit of public education suggests a desire for a certain identity that is synonymous with

inclusivity, secular values and the opposite of elitism. To augment this argument, I refer to participant Matthew:

> Matthew: We don't want the elitism of the private system, the private system sells its product on fear and that, um, if you don't send little Johnny to our school then they… won't reach their full potential and um, they won't access all their wonderful resources they can offer, they won't fare the best, they won't achieve the best (*sarcastic tone*)… and, of course, they very carefully cultivate their product in that they will embrace your kids at that early stage, but as, ah, as the kids move into the higher levels of secondary education if they do not perform satisfactorily, they will be expelled from that school… so that their performance figures aren't compromised, by your, um, failings of the child… so, it is quite a cruel thing, but it is certainly the way they operate. The public system doesn't do that more or less… um…
>
> E: So you see the public as a more inclusive school?
>
> Matthew: *Yes. Yes*. Yeah, and to give them a better exposure to the real world, instead of a closeted, materialistic system… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

Matthew draws a direct connection between private schools and elitism, and conversely, public schools and inclusivity. For Matthew, the elitist private school is associated with an inferior set of *morals*—a lack of compassion, cruelty, exclusivity and superficiality. The public school is causally connected to superior morals, those

that value fairness or humanistic values. Matthew expresses a belief that the public school will enable his children access to a 'real' world, rather than immerse his children in unlikeable values within the elitist or 'private' system.

The term 'elite' is a class-based sociological term, originally denoting the ruling class or power elite. Mills (2000) defines "the power elite" as "those who have the most of what there is to have, which is generally held to include money, power, and prestige" (p. 9). However, it is clear that there are nuanced shades of elitism. Elitism is not one-dimensional or reducible to a simplistic juxtaposition of private/public.

The campaigner's choice of school is a distinct and conspicuous one, but not in terms of economic capital—it is not an exceedingly expensive choice. Rather, the campaigner's choice of school is one that looks to express certain values. There is a moral significance of class, in that a sense of morality underpins class choices (Sayer, 2005a, 2005b). By arguing this, I am not suggesting that certain class fractions hold a monopoly on morality, or are more moral than others. I am also not suggesting that these notions of morality are untroubled. Rather, what I am highlighting is that the public school is associated with particular values (such as egalitarianism, justice and inclusivity) and these choices are coded and expressed in ways that suggest a desire *to be moral*. Morality concerns "matters of how people should treat others and be treated by them" (Sayer, 2005a, p. 951). The participant's choices convey a desire to be affiliated with certain values, and these values are associated with politics, class and religion.

The way in which these choices are presented as "against-the-grain" (Reay, et al., 2011), or making the choice despite their class-based resources, holds important sociological implications. It could be argued in two ways. First, the public school acts as a place of *resistance*—by choosing the public school, the participants are looking to signal their "left-leaning, pro-welfare" cosmopolitan dispositions (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 45). However, this is based on a certain notion of public schooling (one that is separate and distinct from the near-by Charles High). Second, the participant's affiliation with public schooling and their preference to choose this school, signals both class entitlement and class power. I will now explore both of these arguments.

7.3 The public school as a place of resistance

> Matthew: It's a very conscious decision [attending the 'public' primary school], because we're actually closer to the Catholic primary school, it's just down the road… we actually walk past it, or cycle past it every day to get to the public school, so it's a very conscious decision… I find the public system really refreshing, I find, um, it also has a very strong, um, set of core values of tolerance and… it creates well-rounded children… much to—I know the criticism that is leveled at the public system is that there aren't any values, that the kids are taught… just, anything, no values… but it's not true, I mean my kids are growing up through the public school… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

For Matthew, the public school becomes a place of resistance in that his choice consciously resists and rebels against the criticism that is aimed at the public school. Kenway (1987, 1990) argued, in the Australian context, that this criticism has built a discourse of 'truth' regarding the failures of the public school. But in many ways, Matthew essentialises the public school as well, and it becomes a knowable subject (Rasmussen, 2005)—it stands as a place that is essentially inclusive, accessible and fair. These values are echoed by Steven, who believes the public school is a more inclusive place for different religious perspectives and sexualities (Steven, Interview January 24th, 2012).

The public school is also a site of resistance for Matthew on the grounds of religion. Matthew chooses not to send their children to the Catholic school and this is a highly explicit choice. Matthew is not alone in this preference—Adele also excludes schools that are associated with religion:

> Adele: Because oh my goodness if I'm ruling out Catholic and then the state schools aren't… you know… and potentially at capacity, just because they're government, I mean look at our surrounding schools, *we might not have a choice.* If you start to rule out the Catholic—well I have ruled it out, it's just not an option there, so… are you forced then into the private system… you know, *it's ruling out a lot of schools for me and options for me, but no.* (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

Adele and Matthew are the most passionate in expressing their objections to religious schools. Adele is aware that her rejection of religious schools is costing her in the way of choices and options. It is in this way that her choice of public schooling acts as a form of rebellion, in that she sees the public school as a necessary counterpoint to religion.

However, it is difficult to argue that the public school exclusively acts as a site of resistance for Adele. Rather than feeling empowered, she is feeling pushed into the private system, and this is on account of "state schools aren't…*you know*" (my emphasis). This is a pointed reference to me, the interviewer. Her silence or 'gap' is telling; there is an implication that I will readily understand, as a white middle-class person. Are the surrounding state schools 'not good enough'?

Campaigners frequently introduce their religious preferences during interviews. Not only is the public school a loaded moral signifier, it is a loaded religious signifier—in this study it equates to a middle-class expression of atheism or lack of affiliation with an organised religion. Even those participants who do identify with an organised religion (such as Harry and Naomi, Karen and Adam), they are eager to distance themselves from more traditional religious beliefs:

> Harry: *Yeah* I'd *definitely* say my values are heavily influenced by [Christianity] but it's sort of more… on the… more on the humanist side… you know, treat people the way you'd like to be treated, side of things, rather than about everyone who's not a Christian will go to hell sort of thing. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

> Karen: No, no, I'm not practicing… oh well, I talk about [Christianity]… but I also talk about that there's lots of other beliefs and I guess… if my children want to choose something else, that's fine. (Interview August 23rd, 2012a)

Certain participants, such as Karen and Michelle, are willing to consider schools that are associated with a religion, as long as they are "hands off, religion wise" and do not impose "any particular dogma" (Michelle, Interview August 23rd, 2012). However, there is a dominant preference amongst the participants for a school that is either secular or for a school that exposes their children to multiple religions. All of the participants connect the public school with secularism (and express a preference for a total lack of religious instruction in school or the teaching of multiple religions in a philosophical or ethical way).

This very much highlights the tensions in arguing for the public school as a site of resistance, especially for white middle-class campaigners. This echoes Reay, et al. (2011) who argue that comprehensive schools are "caught up in processes that reproduce social class relations" (p. 81) and whilst these choices "might appear to be 'acting against self interest', they are in fact doing nothing of the sort" (p. 80). The public school may be a site of resistance in some ways, but it also offers "specific social, cultural and ideological returns" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 80). Further, many of the campaigners rely on class power and entitlement in exercising their choice.

7.4 The public school as a place of class entitlement and class power

> E: And you said that if I pay ten [grand] I may as well pay twenty [grand] and go to the private school. Do you think that with the private school you're getting a better quality product?
>
> Harry: No not specifically I just sort of feel… I think it's more… um… it's more back to the philosophy of what the state should be providing. If there's this big gap that you need to pay ten grand then I think they're probably falling short of the proportion that I'd expect them to pay. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Harry expects the state to pay a certain amount, when it comes to schooling. He cites a 'philosophy' as a method to map his position of entitlement, but this is more so a mapping of class differentiation; Harry is willing to utilise resources—his educational background, his socio-economic position, the colour of his skin, and the language he speaks—to acquire the schooling to which he feels his children are entitled. This entitlement is clearly separate from the nearby and less desirable Charles High School. There is a paradox at work here, one that contains right-of-centre ideology (the right to choose a school) but also tenets from the left, such as an expectation of government welfare and provision. This slippage—but also the sense of class entitlement and class power—is perhaps most evident in two ways; collective campaigning and the campaigners 'left' political affiliation.

The way in which the participants are choosing a school is inherently politically—they are using individual and collective strategies to lobby the State Government for a new public high school. The act of lobbying is discussed by Peters (2004), who argues that the most significant problems faced by the British government in 2020 would be the pressures placed on public services. As the citizen is increasingly positioned as a consumer within neoliberal constructs, the citizen will be motivated to express their dissatisfaction via lobby groups and collective protest. Power will be distributed to collective protests as they express political views, through frameworks of consumer choice.

As suggested by Peters (2004), there is evidently a slippage between left-of-centre and right-of-centre political principles, in that political positions are lacking any distinct orientation between left and right. The Lawson and Smith campaigners firmly attach their purpose to left-leaning principles (such as public education, inclusion, equality and egalitarianism). But the campaigns also draw on tenets from the right-of-centre, such as their right to choose a school, partial funding mechanisms and parental ownership. The campaigners are operating as savvy consumers, straddled between endorsements of free-market principles such as school choice, whilst simultaneously supporting government welfare. However, despite this slippage between right- and left- of centre politics, the campaigners firmly denounce the right-of-centre. For the campaigners, voting for the right-of-centre signifies a lack of moral decency. To augment this point, I draw on an extended extract with Naomi and Harry:

Naomi: It [voting for the right-of-centre Liberal Party] goes against the basic ethics of why we want a public high school in the first place… (*Laughs*) that's why it's not a marginal seat, because the people here want a public high school so… I don't think it would come to that [voting for the Liberal Party].

E: So people here vote for the Greens [Party] or Labor [Party]?

Harry: Yeah I mean traditionally it's been a Labor seat, the only people who've got any chance of unseating Labor would be the Greens. [*Pause*] But… yeah… but I suppose from my personal perspective, I do think Naomi is right, I do think… that… the kind of values that people have here mean that they do sort of… um… you know tend to vote more in the direction of the parties whose values are also about the…

Naomi: Public education. *(Harry nods)* (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Naomi's expression constructs an important symbolic code that is consistent throughout interviews. Right-of-centre politics is anathema to their conceptualisation of the 'public school'. For the campaigners, the public school stands for 'leftiness'. This is clearly conflicted and limited. However, it is an important conceptualisation to examine, in terms of what it produces in the way of individual and collective political strategies. It also has significant meaning, in terms of identity representation. This is reflected in Savage, et al.'s (2001) study on class identity in England. The authors write:

> Class is a political identity. When people talk about class they tend to talk about politics… people are aware of the politics of class as a label… It is this that partly explains the defensiveness about the issue of class, since they know that class is not an innocent descriptive term but is a loaded moral signifier. (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 889).

There are ramifications for class identity when thinking about political affiliations, or how individuals represent themselves by using political markers. In this study, these ramifications are accentuated by the public school. Both Lawson and Smith High Campaign emphasise 'green' principles when it comes to their desired school, but also in their campaign. The Smith High Campaign want worm farms, compost bins, clean energy and sustainable gardening in their imagined school (Smith High Campaign Website, 2008). Their imagined school building includes "solar panels, water tanks and secure space for 2000 bikes" (Hoffman, 2011). This 'greenness' is shared by the Lawson High Campaign, and their Working Group report (2009) argues that a local secondary school would reduce carbon output and educate teenagers about environmental responsibility and sustainability. The preference for their school to be green is reflected in many of the interviews (e.g. Matthew, Steven, Karen). In extension of this, Steven believes that 'leftiness' directly attributes to the campaigners agitation for a public school:

> Steven: You're gonna get much more people, much more left people wanting a public high school than right-wing you know.

> E: Do you think that the dominant left-leaning profile [of Lawson] contributes to the fact that people are campaigning strongly?
>
> Steven: *Yeah,* I think they're more likely to campaign you know. (Interview January 24th, 2012)

Steven believes that 'lefties' are more likely to want a public high school, but this is evidently limited to nearby Beakin High School rather than Charles High or Park Secondary. Steven also believes that 'lefties' are more likely to use political strategies to obtain what they want. This sense of entitlement and awareness is connected to class, namely the middle-class:

> Matthew: Ah… the profile of the electorate in Lawson, um, most of the parents are well educated, they're middle-class and they are aware that because we are not a marginal seat, we don't do as well as we could [with getting a local high school]… and so often, there are conversations around, well, you know, we should vote differently… apart from the Labor party, probably the biggest vote catcher around here is the Greens… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

Matthew explains how there are debates amongst the Lawson residents, as to whether the seat of Lawson needs to be 'marginal' (if it were marginal, many of the campaigners believe that the right-of-centre Liberal Party would offer them a public high school in order to secure the seat). In other words, he questions whether the

middle-class Lawson residents need to vote strategically in order to acquire their local high-school.

There is a pattern, in terms of the other campaigning suburbs and their political swings. The campaigning suburbs that have become 'marginal' have obtained a local public high school (e.g. Thompson and Melville) or are in the middle of a feasibility study (e.g. Williams and Dodson). Matthew refers to the campaign suburb of Dodson to emphasise his point:

> Matthew: I think the voting panel will become different, people in the Labor party area of Dodson are acutely aware of the fact that they can't take it for granted anymore… yes they're more educated and they're demanding better facilities and more facilities… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

Matthew believes that "more educated" voters will strategically vote to demand "better facilities and more facilities". There is an important point to be made here; Matthew believes that the educated middle-class will engage in strategic voting in order to acquire government-funded services. These strategies could be read as a reaction and a form of resistance towards the significant decreased funding of public schools; but, the strategic avoidance of nearby public schools and agitating for your 'own' could also be argued as class entitlement and class power. Matthew's continued dialogue, from above, accentuates this:

> Matthew: And there is a difference in this area, I mean, the outer areas around us, they're not making these demands for better and more infrastructure… I mean, you see it in the local papers, someone will raise an issue and… I mean, it's very much like the high school… we're pushing for a local high-school and other people say, say from, Charles High, well you're not that far away from Charles High and why don't you make do, it's not far and your kids are old enough to travel and there are number of arguments that are presented and basically it's just put yourself back in place and make do with what you've got… um, yeah… (Interview January 16th, 2012)

The participants feel entitled to certain government-funded services and infrastructure—and indeed, why shouldn't they feel entitled to these services, as taxpayers'? A significant point here is that Matthew believes there is a difference, in terms of this feeling of entitlement. He believes that the "well educated" and "middle-class" suburb of Lawson is far more willing to fight for these services, than the residents from the lower-income surrounding suburbs. Matthew says that these residents argue they should "just put yourself back in place and make do with what you've got". Putting yourself back in *place* contains connotations of class; it suggests structures of power or a certain "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1984), one that contains particular rules of social, cultural and political governance.

Even though the campaigners assert a fundamental relationship between left-of-centre politics and the 'values' of public schooling, there is very little commitment to any particular political party. This is highlighted by Harry:

> Harry: Well not just public education but about everyone having an even chance for… everyone… I mean sure the Liberals [the Liberal Party] would say that's what they're about but there is a sort of… an elitist, do your own thing… but I'm politically not… I have voted for both sides of politics at different stages… depending on what they offered… if they offered me what I wanted… and… if … um… you know if the Liberals were campaigning really strongly and if they wanted to put a high school here then I'd probably vote for them. Um…. but yeah, so… but I'm not sure if that would be enough… I'm not certain, even if they were, I'm not certain that would be enough and Labor weren't and I'm sure if one was then the other suddenly would be… I'm not sure it would be enough to turn it into a marginal seat. I don't think I'd do it tactically just to turn it into a marginal seat but I… I'd consider voting for the guys who… are gonna give me what I was after. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Harry swings from one side to the other in this short extract. At first, Harry indicates that he has voted for both sides of politics, and thus is described as a 'swinging voter'; however, whilst he admits he has voted for the right-of-centre Liberal Party in the past, Harry is evidently apprehensive to commit to individualistic, strategic voting in the future. He initially surmises that "if they offered me what I wanted", but stalls with half-hearted phrases, "I'd probably vote for them" and "I'd consider". Harry's apprehension suggests a certain amount of

self-censoring, and a sense of shame associated with strategically voting for a right-of-centre political party, even though he admits to voting for both factions in the past.

The act of self-censoring, or the sense of shame that may be contained in Harry's dialogue, suggests that Harry desires a particular identity to be conveyed—he wishes to be strongly conveyed as a left-of-centre voter, a voter that is aligned with "a particular set of values, commitments and moral stances" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 12). In practice, the Australian Labor Party endorses many right-of-centre policies, and Harry's desire to associate himself with this political party is a strong theoretical marker of identity, rather than a practical marker. In other words, it is a loaded signifier of self to represent as a 'Left' voter and attach this representation to an important cultural place: the local 'public' school. The campaigner's strong affiliation with left-of-centre politics, despite their proclivity to swinging and strategic voting, demonstrates the importance of politics as a *geo-identity* signifier.

7.5 Conclusion

For the campaigners, the public school represents inclusivity, fairness and egalitarianism. However, these associations lay in tension with their awareness of entitlements and acceptance of exclusion, as based on income. The 'public school' is rendered by the middle-class as an important political, religious and social identity. But this loaded signifier of self is distinctive and distinguishing from the nearby Charles High School. Therefore, the public school is symbolic and meaningful for the choosers in this study, but it is also constrained and troubled. The choice of

school—that is, the actively choosing of ‘public’—denotes more than individual subscription to a governmental schooling provider. It represents a far richer identity, one that straddles a fine line between the classless and the classist.

The campaigners stand opposed to ‘private’ schools, those facilities that are connected to the upper-classes, elitism and right-wing politics. However, they are positioned in an idiosyncratic middle; they are keen to distinguish themselves from the perceived criminality of Charles High—the ‘working-class’—but also adamant to be distinct from the moral vacuum of the elites. As suggested throughout these chapters, categories of class construct socially divisive separations between individuals. The social separation is geographically-located and expressed via residential positioning, but the school-of-choice is fundamentally the purchase of geo-identity. The following chapter considers choice strategies for the middle-class, and how the participants engage in defensive choice making.

8 The weight of choice

8.1 Introduction

> The market stimulates arousal and is saturated with emotion: pride and shame and guilt (the three emotions that are identity-related); anger and aggression; self-love. (Lane, 1991, p. 58)

This chapter draws on Lane (1991) to explore the highly emotive narrative of choice, what Lane refers to as "theatres of emotion" (p. 51). The process of school choice for the campaigners is one that is replete with emotions that are—at times—in contradiction. Indeed, choice becomes a heavily evocative market that is negotiated and performed via coded subtexts.

This chapter focuses on school choice strategies and behaviours that characterise this particular chooser subset. The campaigners are characteristic of the "privileged/skilled" middle-class chooser and this chapter looks to extend these understandings (Ball, et al., 1996). I propose the concept of *class currencies* to critique how a school acquires class value via class coding. I do this by drawing on the case of Thompson High School.

8.2 Anxious matches

A significant volume of research has explored the 'weight of choice' and the amount of anxiety that choosing a school evokes for the middle-class (Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011). The skilled chooser is the anxious chooser, "in some ways the more skilled you are the more difficult it is" (Ball, et al., 1996, pp. 93, 94). This anxiety is evident within this study, in the amount of time and energy that the campaigners invest in their pursuit for a local community school.

The chooser in this study draws on a number of strategies, in addition to long-term campaigning for a locale-specific public school. These are important to discuss, in order to extend epistemological understandings regarding this chooser. The majority of participants are heavily engaged in child-matching, as discussed by Ball, et al., (1996):

> One of the key factors which underlies the inclination to choice and which generates complexity is that the privileged/skilled choosers are engaged in a process of *child-matching.* That is, they are looking to find a school which will suit the particular proclivities, interests, aspirations and/or personality of their child. The matching is based on a specific future/goal orientation. (p. 94, emphasis in original)

For the campaigners, one of the ways their school choosing is expressed is via compatibility matching, between school, child and family. Similar language about this strategy tends to be used, despite the separate interviews:

> Adele: There's a few options…mmm… for me personally there's a few things… one is… I suppose depending on… what the interests are or strengths of my child I think that's the thing. (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

> Karen: I don't know what I'll do with my kids, I guess I worry that I don't really know what their strengths and weaknesses are going to be… I don't really know what their strengths are gonna be and what they'll want to end—you know what they might like to do… (Interview August 23rd, 2012a)

The majority of campaigners make reference to the notion of fitting their child to the appropriate place of schooling. Parents are looking to tailor their children's personalities to a certain school. Within this process, parents are considering strengths and weaknesses, their child's interests, but also their personality. Notably, many of the participants children are under the age of five and therefore, this builds on previous contributions that middle-class choosers are long-term planners (Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009).

The impetus to consider schooling for their children—despite the young age—simultaneously demonstrates the emotional narrative that operates inside of this behaviour. Reay, et al. (2011) refers to this as "a language of panic" (p. 110). The participants demonstrate stress, feelings of pressure and anxiety. Even though campaigners are heavily engaged and proactive when it comes to school choice, many acknowledge feelings of helplessness and vulnerability:

> During a General meeting, campaigner Karen says, "The department says that all the schools are opened up, the zones are removed and private schools are an option for us… Supposedly it's all open and everyone has their choice of school. You can theoretically go where ever you want. But in practice it doesn't exist." (Field notes - August 26, 2012)

In Pusey's (2003) study of *Middle Australia*, he argued that the middle-class feel abandoned and let down by the public sector, and experience feelings of helplessness. Rather than an increased sense of freedom and empowerment, choosers experience feelings of restriction and powerlessness. Choice more so stands as a *theoretical* freedom for this subset of choosers. Karen expresses that, while school choice exists as theoretically limitless, in practice it translates as limited and constrained. This is well demonstrated in Reay, et al. (2011) who write that, "perceptions of limited choice were commonplace… choice was often described as mythical or illusory" (p. 66).

When considering the strategies that the middle-class chooser is willing to undertake, such as long-term lobbying action (that has lasted over ten years), it is of little surprise that the process and experience of school choice is permeated with feelings of angst. The chooser in this study expresses feelings of disempowerment, in spite of their relatively ample resources and capital. On the other hand, it is the fear of the 'unknown' surrounding public schools that underpin these feelings. Indeed, the pseudo-private school represents a valuable commodity that must be obtained either

financially, via direct payment of school fees, or strategically through an array of alternative methods.

8.2.1 Financial choice versus strategic choice

> Adele: I mean, if you look at the good state schools and the house prices in that area, *well I mean you're paying for your kids' education anyway, aren't you!* (*Laughs*) I mean we may as well look at private schools! (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

This section specifically explores financial choice versus strategic choice, in order to contribute understandings of how the middle-class chooser seeks to maneuver within the market. By financial choice, I am referring to direct fees paid to non-government schools, whereas strategic choice expresses the notion of strategic or calculated behaviour to obtain desirable schooling. These terms are obviously quite slippery, as both strategic and financial choice involve and necessitate monetary output.

Whether to obtain the school financially or strategically is, arguably, a core juxtaposition that campaigners are wrestling with. Campaigner Adele demonstrates this juxtaposition strongly. She believes that, when it comes to the 'good' public schools, house prices are elevated in the direct school zone. She believes that she is paying for the 'good' school, regardless of whether it is private or public. Just like the slipperiness of the political left- and right-of-centre division, in which campaigners are garnering aspects from both sides of the political divide, there lacks

any clear distinction between the public and private sector, when assessing schools that are considered more desirable, or the schools-of-choice.

Adele is a full-time employee and mother of two, who expresses a constant feeling of pressure on her time, throughout the interview. Adele berates herself throughout the interview for "sticking her head in the sand" and "cutting it really fine" in regards to finding a secondary school. Her eldest is only in grade one at the time:

> Adele: I'm really, I've really stuck my head in the sand, until like, probably last year… of whether we will have a school but I think for my eldest who is in grade one this year that potentially we're going to be cutting it really fine, so I don't know… I always thought the government [school], but… (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

Even though Adele scolds herself for her inactivity, it evidently consumes much of her time. During the interview, she tells of her meetings with the State and Shadow Minister of Education, media releases she regularly writes and distributes for Lawson High Campaign, interviews with journalists, meetings with school principals and concerned local parents, and "doing drive-bys" to check out local schools, such as Park Secondary. She is also a regular at the meetings I attend.

This is Adele's engagement with strategic choice, but she is also considering financial choices. Adele tells me early in the interview—in a confessional like tone—that she completed a school tour of Kennedy College, a private (fee-paying) school

located in Melbourne city centre. Adele told her fellow campaigners that she only completed the tour for the benefit of LHC, to "check out the competition" (Field notes - November 7th, 2011). She admits during the interview that this wasn't quite accurate (Interview January 23rd, 2012a). However, this private school has a "public" duplicate. There is a public Kennedy College located in the suburb of Kennedy, a prestigious and zone-enforcing public school. Despite this suburb being quite a distance from where Adele lives, she is thinking about relocating for enrolment:

> Adele: [The private] Kennedy is a great choice because it is secular, and academic, with good facilities. And it is in the CBD. [*Pause*] Yeah… actually, in my head I'm thinking if it's such a good school, like, and my husband has been wanting to move out to Kennedy [the suburb] because they've actually got the *real* Kennedy school there and you know… is that something you have to do…
>
> E: Would you do that?
>
> Adele: That thought has only just entered my head… but I mean yes we have definitely considered it. But it could be… I don't know… it could be an option, I don't know at this point. (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

In this excerpt, Adele is considering whether to pay the direct fees for private Kennedy College, or pay high real estate prices for the public Kennedy College. Arguably, it is far more difficult to change residential locations, buy and sell

property, than it is to travel the relative distance to Charles High School. This substantiates how geographical factors permeate their choice-making processes. But it also highlights the weight of choice and the amount of fear that these choosers have in regard to the 'unknown' public high school. Relocating for school acquisition is a common strategy that many campaigners are willing to undertake:

> Families are re-locating due to the lack of a secondary college - the Lawson High 2007 survey found that 51% are considering relocating and 10% have decided to relocate. A local real estate agent estimates that 10% to 15% of sales are due to the lack of a secondary college. (Lawson High Working Group, 2009, p. 4)

Even though the public school is sometimes imagined as separate from market forces, certain public schools become a fully functioning part of the market via real estate. Almost identical data is replicated in the Smith High Campaign (Smith High Campaign Website, 2008) and this affects the donations that the campaigns attract, too (see 6.3.1). For example, the Smith High Campaign receives sizeable donations from a real estate business and a property developer. It is definitely in the businesses interests to obtain a middle-class school in the area.

Overall, participants are highly strategic (Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009). Relocating is an example of strategic choice; however it also necessitates significant financial outlay. Rather than attribute the financial outlay directly to the school, participants are considering whether it is more beneficial to financially outlay for

house ownership. Adam, a business-manager who credits himself with business know-how, admits that he is willing to lie about his home address in order to access Beakin High School.

> E: So would you move closer to Beakin…?
>
> Adam: I said I'd have a private residence there, I didn't say I'd move there…
>
> E: So… what does that mean?
>
> Adam: That means that I'd hold two houses…
>
> E: Oh… so you would lie about your address?
>
> Adam: I would. I would in a heartbeat. Ah, I would also utilise in my business dealings, the relationships that I have, I would utilise everything to push and push just to get in… through business contacts… (Interview January 19th, 2012)

Adam is willing to utilise a number of different strategies here; he is willing to establish a false residential address via know-how and possibly financial outlay, and he is also willing to draw on social and business networks. This requires considerable time and effort, but is regarded as necessary, in order to escape the perceived threats of Charles High. However, it will also provide Adam with a relatively prestigious school that is financially affordable.

The diverse numbers of strategies that are considered amongst the campaigners vary extensively. They include religious strategies:

> Adele: Someone else I was talking to, I've had a few conversations about this and they've said like, I've only christened my children to get them into school. It *absolutely gobsmacks me* and I'm like it's not me, it's not what I'm for and I wouldn't put on a front and pretend to be… (Interview January 23rd, 2012a)

Adele considers strategic options to gain enrolment in a Catholic school as lacking in authenticity. She knows of people within her social circle who have baptised their child exclusively for school enrolment, and she greatly disapproves of it, on moral grounds. This narrative is echoed by Harry and Naomi:

> Naomi: I don't understand this, but Harry's brother's son started school last year and they're Anglican background and they wanted their son to go to a Catholic school, didn't they *[Harry nods]*, and so they actually got him baptised to do it and in the end he didn't wind up going to that school, he's gone to a public school but we were just like… these guys *don't* practice *at all*, they're so *not* religious, so this is just *absolutely crazy*… and we just thought that was *really really strange*… (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Both Naomi and Adele disagree with this strategy whole-heartedly. Adele considers it anathema to her identity; whilst Naomi expresses a sense of disbelief. In both accounts, Naomi and Adele project baptism as an important cultural ritual, one that is not to be taken lightly. Religious baptism forms part of one's identity, and

taking part in this ceremony purely for school enrolment, is viewed as an unethical strategy—one that tests the limitations of choice.

Some of the campaigners are considering private (fee-paying) schools as a back-up, in case they do not achieve their local public high school. For these campaigners, expensive waiting lists are deemed necessary, as discussed by Karen:

> Karen: I've basically put their names down *everywhere*! (*Laughs*) …Which has been expensive in itself! When they were really little I put them down at [lists elite, Independent schools].
>
> E: And do you have to pay?
>
> Karen: *Yeah, yeah*. Fifty dollars for some of them, hundred dollars for others… and [elite same-sex school] is making a *packet*—it is $250 I think to put it on [their] list. (Interview August 23rd, 2012a)

Karen's first child is school-aged, but her second child is still pre-school aged. This is an expensive 'back-up' strategy. During a General Meeting, Karen reiterates that she is putting her kid's names down for schools. She says, "I'm hedging my bets" (Field notes - August 26, 2012). 'Hedging my bets' is an economic expression regarding protection against loss. Karen is drawing on financial resources to protect herself from the perceived risks of working-class schools.

Karen is also planning to apply for a single-sex (and high-demand) public school situated in the suburb of Klein. She has already attended an open day at the school. Her eldest will need to sit an exam, in order to be considered for enrolment.

This school is not an immediately obvious choice, if judged on proximity and necessitated travel time from the Lawson suburb. Karen and Robert share this preference.

There are definite shared characteristics and strategies for the participants, when it comes to choice making, such as long-term planning, child-matching and financial versus strategic methods. Despite these well-considered strategies, they run parallel with detachments from choice making.

8.2.2 Defensive choice-making

> Naomi: I think [school choice] is a right. If that's what parents choose to do… it *should* be a choice though… they shouldn't feel that's the *only* way their child can get a good education, that's what we're scared of. (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Naomi is "scared of" choice but she also celebrates it. She is characteristic of the "privileged/skilled" chooser, as her celebration and endorsement of school choice operates simultaneously with anxiety and social principles (Ball, et al., 1996). Naomi believes that the local public school in Lawson stands as a non-choice, whereas travelling further afield to a 'private' school is a choice. There are definite space boundaries when it comes to choice, and the 'local' school is expressed as an abdication from choice-making. However, this does not explain the complexities that are occurring within this space; indeed, choosing a school becomes a contrary and discomforting spatial positioning for the participants. This is reflected by Harry, who

believes that a lack of a ‘good’ local high school forces them to travel and therefore, “make a decision”:

> Harry: If there was a good local school, um, and if they didn’t have to travel then you wouldn’t have to make a decision. You know that’s the issue… Rather than having looked around and been unhappy with the… the next ring of schools… you know there’s *not* a local high school. So it’s not specifically because I would choose *to not go* to some of the other ones… (Interview January 26th, 2012)

Just as class identity can be ambivalent and defensive (Savage, et al., 2001), this is an example of defensive choice-making. Harry simply doesn’t say, “if there was a local school”, instead the ‘local school’ is prefaced by this notion of ‘good’. He promptly qualifies this by assuring me that Lawson is lacking a local high school, and it is not specifically because they would “choose *to not go* to some of the other ones”.

Many of the participants are defensive in their choice making. I argue that this runs parallel with defensive geo-identity. In being ‘choice-less’, the participants present themselves as not participating in the production of social inequalities or social divides. Reay (1998) contends that “discourses of classlessness are in effect class discourses in so far as they operate in class interests” (p. 261). In being choice-less and class-less, the choice makers in this study frequently *simplify* the constitution of a desirable school. The axiom of choice in this instance is ‘the good

school' and the campaigners often rely on the notion of a 'good school' to signal where their preferences lie.

This axiom of choice is a function of "hot knowledge" (Ball & Vincent, 1998), which was further extended in Reay, et al.'s (2011) study. Just like this study, there was "extensive use of hot knowledge" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 76) and this informal knowledge was predominantly framed by narratives of guilt and anxiety (Ball & Vincent, 1998; Reay, et al., 2011). This is demonstrated in the following excerpt from a General Meeting with the Lawson High Campaigners:

> At a General Meeting, campaigner Karen is speaking about a phone-call she received from a friend, who lives in the Lawson suburb. "A lady called me this week—I met her in my yoga class a while ago—and we started chatting about schools… her child is in year five and she has started to look for a school… she said to me that she has spent so long, so many hours, going from school to school and she can't find a good sch—[*stopped herself abruptly here*]—good fit for her daughter… and they're so far away and she feels so anxious about the whole thing… where is she going to send her daughter?" (Field notes - October 8, 2012)

In this narrative, there are hints of defensive choice-making, the importance of spatiality and a slippage between axioms of choice—a 'good school' and a 'good fit'. Despite their proximity to the city centre, Karen's friend reportedly feels "so far

away". These feelings of physical and cultural distance in the urban centre characterise this subset of middle-class choosers.

There is a space of silence when it comes to precisely articulating what makes a *'good'* school, good. In many ways, this axiom of choice is assumed as carrying an inherent meaning (a meaning that is presumably understood and agreed upon) in terms of how a 'good' school is constituted. The desirable school ('the good school') becomes somewhat unutterable and unspeakable, an intangible but highly knowable construction. This is substantiated by the commonality of participants preferred school choices. These preferences are shared even by those who are not close friends, but simply occupy a similar social network. The schools-of-choice are evaluated via a mutual understanding of codes and symbols within a distinct *geo-identity network*. A geo-identity network is a "structure of relations" (Bourdieu, 1984) that shares residential proximity and class positioning.

The following section will examine Thompson High School, as a culminating endpoint to the data analysis chapters. I argue that Thompson High School is an example of the key theories that I have argued for, including geo-identity, the pseudo-private school and the symbolism of public schooling. It also engages with themes from this chapter, such as the notion of a 'good school', choice strategies and defensive choice-making.

8.3 What makes a good school, 'good'?

The pseudo-private school is signaled by markers of class and this type of public school is identifiable to a certain chooser via these markers. First, the pseudo-private school maintains barriers to enrolment and a sense of exclusivity. Enrolment is strategically obtained and achieved. Second, the school is distinguished aesthetically, and this includes uniforms and the school building itself. Third, the school is distinctive on the grounds of curriculum and the associated capital in the school. Each characteristic represents *class currency*—symbols and markers of value that are interpreted and converted within a certain geo-identity network. The pseudo-private school is coded as 'the good school', but it must be received by an individual knowing of the currency, in order for the constructed code of representation to make meaning (Hall, 1997). This borrows from Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital, in that each characteristic is read as a specific point of profit or return, for the middle-class chooser.

It is evident that for the Lawson and Smith High Campaigners, the schools-of-choice are those that enforce school zones. The barriers to enrolment construct a sense of exclusivity and this is a marker of prestige for the skilled/privileged chooser. It is also a barrier that excludes the less savvy or strategic chooser.

The pseudo-private school stands out with aesthetic and curriculum distinctiveness. The importance of uniforms is mentioned in the majority of interviews, but also in the surveys that campaigners conduct (Lawson High Working Group, 2007, 2009; Smith High Campaign, 2013). School leaving results and university access is largely underplayed by the participants in this study, however

these results are indicated as important in surveys (Lawson High Working Group, 2007, 2009; Smith High Campaign, 2013). An artistic and environmental bent is far more emphasised during the interviews. Arguably, this is possibly due to a middle-class assumption that a preferred school enables and facilitates university access. It is especially assumed for a subset of class that causally equates 'middle-classness' with the possession of university education.

In order to explore the *pseudo-private* school and 'what makes a good school, good', I will refer to the case of Thompson High—the school that closed and was later reopened due to a parental led campaign, despite the proximity of neighbouring Clarke Secondary school. Lawson High campaigners believe it is a textbook example of the power of politically marginal seats (Field notes - May 7, 2012; Matthew, Interview January 16th, 2012; Steven, Interview January 24th, 2012).

By drawing on the case of Thompson High, I am focusing on *class currency*—how markers of class are readily understood and converted to knowledge in a certain network, knowledge that deems a school as 'good'. The case of Thompson High suggests that visual aesthetics (such as the school building, uniforms and school location) are important in class coding, that is, interpreting the class value of a school. This school also reinforces the importance of socio-educational advantage and barriers to inclusion, in making a school more desirable.

8.3.1 The case of Thompson High

> At Thompson High there's a real dynamism about the place and it's like a private school. We're very happy with it. So why would you pay $25,000?

> That's the equivalent of an overseas trip to Paris every year [A parent with an enrolled child at Thompson High]. (Milburn, 2011a)

If an individual can obtain a public school that is ‘like’ a private school, why pay more? However, what makes a certain public school the equivalent of a private school?

The new Thompson High places considerable emphasis on the aesthetics of the school. As advertised on their website, the building was professionally designed by “award winning architects” to create a contemporary “cutting edge” look (Thompson High School, 2013). The Principal is concerned with how the colour scheme (of both the school buildings and uniforms) reflects the environment: “The soft colours [of the school building] pick up on the location; the liquid blue green of the sea and the yellow of the beach” (Topsfield, 2011b).

It is not only the aesthetics of the school building that is valued; reportedly, the parents “wanted a clearly identifiable uniform” (Topsfield, 2011b). The school uniforms were also professional designed to “produce an ensemble inspired by classic styles from the era of the 1950’s” (Milburn, 2011b). The school uniform is a statement of fashion and marker of prestige; economic capital that is directly convertible to social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The desire for a uniform to be fashionable, as well as the school building, suggests a degree of conspicuous consumption (Bourdieu, 1984; Campbell, et al., 2009), and a certain amount of freedom from utilitarianism forms of consumption.

The school markets itself on relationships with professional sports teams, community and parental involvement, artistic pursuits and compulsory Ipads for every student (Topsfield, 2011b). According to media reports, facilities are “similar to the standard of private schools” and the school is experiencing rapid over-subscription. Parents have “rushed to enrol their children” (Milburn, 2011a). In 2012, more than 300 students applied for 150 places, twice the number of students who applied at the start of 2011 (Milburn, 2011a). As a result, after only one year of opening, Thompson High made a request to the Department of Education that the school be rezoned due to the exceedingly high demand for a limited number of places. Subsequently, the school confirmed that the zone of the school would be altered for the 2013 intake, and future catchment reviews were imminent (Spalding, 2012; Thompson High School, April 2012, Issue 3; Topsfield, 2012b, 2012c). The following map illustrates the confirmed change, marked as “new boundary”:

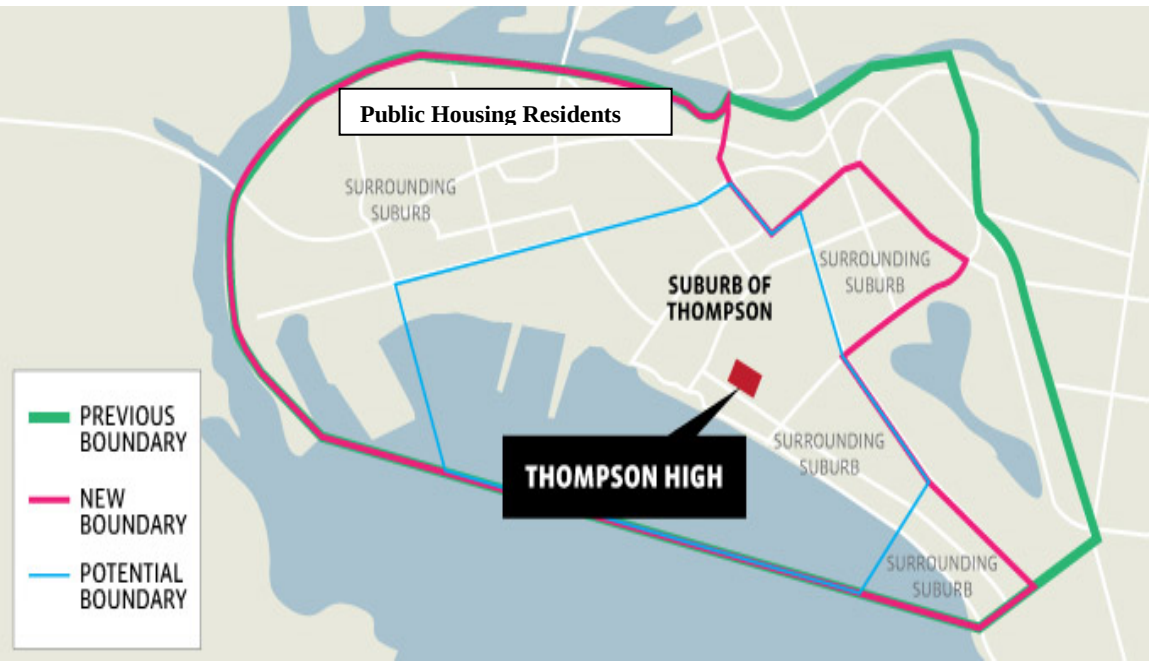


Figure 33 Thompson High modified school zones (May 2012).

Thompson High indicated a potential boundary as a possible school zone, in the near future (Thompson High School, April 2012, Issue 3). This potential boundary will exclude neighbours who reside in public housing, less than two kilometers from the school. The press labelled this as "education apartheid" (Topsfield, 2012b) and protesting parents from surrounding suburbs quickly emerged, in response (Spalding, 2012; Topsfield, 2012c). The protesting parents include many who reside closer to Clarke Secondary School (Topsfield, 2012b).

Notions of prestige gain further traction in the way of a school zone, and there is a possibility to theorise school zones as privatised spaces and class makers. Bourdieu (1986) argues that barriers to acquisition contribute to notions of prestige, "[Cultural capital] manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition" (p. 49).

It is important to note that a school zone is not a fixed and stable measurement, but rather, it may be altered in response to higher demand. This modification of enrolment perimeters, on the basis of demand, complicates theoretical propositions of demand-sensitive schooling (OECD, 2006). Demand-sensitive policy is theoretically intended to respond to customer satisfaction and demand, first and foremost. However, instead of expanding the school due to increased consumer demand, Thompson High and the associated funding governance of the school is opting to increase restrictions to access. This is an example of absolute space modification, which feeds into relational space, augments exclusivity and perceived distinction of the school.

In the case of Thompson High, the geographical boundaries of the school are of upmost significance in processes of social exclusion (Madanipour, et al., 1998). The school community is constructed and defined by geographical boundaries. The intake zones represent fixed access points, set boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Thomson, 2007). The operation of school zones facilitates social segregation and the construction of class as increasingly spatially oriented. In order to gain enrolment in Thompson High, a parent would need to either buy or rent a house within the allocated space. This would require sufficient resources. The median house price is listed as 1.5 million dollars at the time of writing (Domain Website, 2014). This is higher than the median house price in comparably located suburbs, in proximity to the central business district.

The social composition of the site is dominated by upper socio-economic positioned families, when considering median levels of household income

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, 2012a, 2012i; Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (MIAESR), 2006). The median income for Thompson households is $2,063 Australian dollars, per week (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012i). This figure is considerably higher when compared to the median weekly income for Victorian households, cited as $1,216 Australian Dollars (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012j) (see 6.4). In addition, there is a disproportionately high distribution of students from the top quarter of socio-educational advantage in Thompson High (see 6.4). In the next section, I draw on an interview with Michelle, the self-described "single mother" from the Lawson High Campaign. Michelle has a son enrolled at Thompson High which was facilitated when she was renting a home in the suburb of Thompson. She is now renting a house in the suburb of Lawson and is involved in the campaign, for her daughter.

8.3.2 The paradox of the public

> Michelle: We only got in [to Thompson High] because it was the first year... We were so lucky to be accepted. It is not like a typical public high school... during the open day, we all ate canapés on the veranda, overlooking the ocean. (Field notes - November 7, 2011)

Motifs of class are aesthetically packaged and spatially-placed. If class is expressed as a type of distinction and separation, Thompson High acquires this sense of prestige vis-à-vis its geographical positioning. Michelle specifically notes the selection of foods available on open day at Thompson High and the environmental

outlook. This works to distinguish Thompson High and it becomes something *other* than a "typical public high school". This extends upon a theorising of the *pseudo-private* school.

During the one hour interview, Michelle refers to 'luck' or feeling 'lucky' seven times, stating that she "is one of the lucky ones" in achieving access to Thompson High. This axiom of choice accentuates the barriers of exclusion, but an emphasis on 'luck' also functions as defensive choice-making. It enables the chooser to detach from active choice-making and "class resources, personal actions and decisions" (Oría et al., 2006, p. 99). However, despite the conveyed sense of disempowerment which is embedded within the notion of luck, it is suggested that barriers of exclusion are actively welcomed and endorsed. There is a paradox of the public, in that symbolic markers of separation and distance from a "typical public high school" are accepted, as they add to a sense of prestige:

> Michelle: I felt really lucky to be able to get into Thompson High because of the sense of prestige of that area and it had me feel that um… my son might be more catered to academically. That there would be an emphasis on art and culture and… some of those things that I value um, so it's sort of a hybrid school. It's not quite public-public (*laughs*). You know they've got Ipads… (Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

For Michelle, Thompson High is "not quite public-public" and this effectively captures the *pseudo-private* school, a school that acquires *class currency*

via its *geo-identity*. Significantly, the private-pseudo school is one that is separate or distinguished from the 'traditional' or 'regular' public school—a school that is associated with inferiority (Reay, et al., 2011). This separation is achieved through a number of means. The school is distinguished by the curriculum it offers, in the way of academic achievements but also "art and culture". These are not traditional or pragmatic curriculum choices, but rather they are aligned with more elitist, intellectual and classed pursuits.

Michelle consistently draws on the spatial location and physicality of the school, "overlooking the ocean" and "prestige of that area", when looking to differentiate it from a school of lesser value. Motifs of class are assembled and packaged via culture and curriculum:

> Michelle: There's not a sense that we're bottom feeders [at Thompson High]. It's more like wow, aren't we lucky we've got this… you know because other kids don't get to have plasma's in the classrooms and Ipads and…(Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

In statements such as this, class motifs are barely concealed. In my study, Michelle is an outlier in that she is the only participant who does not own a home and who identifies as a "single mother". She is university educated and employed in a professional position, but she describes herself as a low-income earner. Her narrative illuminates how a pseudo-private school is an important part of a consumption and classifying process. This borrows from Reay (1998) who writes that, "consumption

no less than production is a class and classifying process" (p. 262). In other words, the purchase of Thompson High enables Michelle to separate herself from the "bottom feeders", despite her limited 'production' abilities.

However, there are filaments of tension contained within this operationalisation of the 'public'. Whilst markers of distance from another modality of 'public' are endorsed, Thompson High parents continue to draw on inherent assumptions of how 'public' schooling is constituted, in a manner that is beneficial for the individual. This is demonstrated by an individual reportedly campaigning for Thompson High to be reopened, "I originally considered sending [my daughter] to a private school, but I think everyone has the right to a public education" (Topsfield, 2011b).

This Thompson High parent communicates a belief that public education constitutes accessibility, for all individuals as a public 'right'. According to another enrolled parent, public education is also constituted by affordability, "we thought going to public high school shouldn't be all that expensive" (Schmidt, 2011). Even though accessibility and affordability are assumed as inherent, when it comes to public schooling, both understandings are complicated when considering Thompson High. Michelle comments that annual student fees total "two or three grand" (Interview January 23rd, 2012b), which is comparable to a low-cost private school in Australia, such as a Catholic school.

The affordability of the school equates to accessibility. Whilst affordability and accessibility are sanctioned by parents, *exclusivity* is also strongly endorsed by parents. This is evident in academic programs that are competitive and only

accessible through select entry procedures (SEAL) (Bachelard, 2011; Topsfield, 2011b), the compulsory $800 professionally designed uniform (Milburn, 2011b; Schmidt, 2011), and costly excursions and fees, such as the essential $460 school levy and $300 leadership program, all of which are mandatory (Michelle, Interview January 23rd, 2012b; Schmidt, 2011; Thompson High School, 2013; Topsfield, 2011b). If parents are unable to pay the fees, their child risks social exclusion from school activities:

> E: And is [the school camp] expensive too?
>
> Michelle: Absolutely… It was a local trip… to be honest, the school camps are much more expensive than perhaps the ski trip and I was really shocked. Thirty per cent of the kids could not go to the school camp. (Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

According to Michelle, not all students were able to attend the school camp due to the high cost. Michelle also talks about a ski trip managed by a parent group, and not the school. There was an invitation extended to all of the students in the school, and her son wanted to attend, so she promptly contacted the school. She says that the school gave her “the run around”, and she made multiple calls before finally contacting a representative from the parent group. The representative said that he would speak to the other parents about her son attending. Michelle says that she was willing to pay the cost (she describes it as expensive) and also accompany her son, on

the trip. She did not hear back until the day before the ski camp, advising her that her son was unable to attend due to his "behaviour problems". Michelle extends on this:

> Michelle: And so it did feel to me that there's a little clique who all know each other and because they have responsibility to inform everyone that it's happening, they'll inform everyone that it's happening but in fact the numbers are decided beforehand. (Interview, January 23rd, 2012b)

Whilst Michelle acknowledges the active barriers of exclusion that are enforced by the school, and also *within* the school, she dually endorses the internal mechanisms of the school. She describes herself as a low income earner and asserts that "cost is prohibitive and… a huge access issue" whilst also sanctioning the costly uniform:

> Michelle: [At Thompson High] there's a lot of school pride, there's no graffiti um kids are getting around with blazers… it's quite nice. (Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

Elitism stands as irreconcilable for Michelle. She welcomes the prestige that the school enables, yet struggles to access the resources within the school itself. Windle (2008) discusses the production of inequalities internally within a school as an intensification of exclusion (p. 158), drawing on Bourdieu and Champagne (1992)

to describe it as, ‘the excluded from within’. The ‘school camp’ is an internal method of segregation, on socio-economic grounds:

> Michelle: [The school camp] was five, six hundred dollars. And we’re talking about… four days. We’re talking about four days in the bush. We’re not talking about the Ritz Carlton or whatever you know (*laughs*). It’s a lot of money for a public school. And I was very disappointed that they didn’t at least have a fundraising drive to assist families who couldn’t afford it or subsidise it. (Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

Michelle believes that as the school is ‘public’, it should theoretically cater to low-income earners. This is an ideological summation of a personal constitution of a ‘public’ school and also lends merit to the class-based connotations of public schooling. Yet it further stands as paradoxical, when concurrently valuing elitist practices and social exclusionary methods:

> Michelle: I have found [the elitism] frustrating and I suppose that’s the double edged sword of having a school in that kind of area. (Interview January 23rd, 2012b)

Michelle’s description of elitism is significant, in that she accentuates the significance of spatiality in the construction of school-of-choice. Rather than attaching elitism to a uniformly applied label such as ‘private/public’, she associates

the level of prestige with the geographical positioning of the school. It also must be evaluated in the context of her endorsement of elitist practices, such as the school uniform, an emphasis on art and culture in the school curriculum, and the sailing program (Interview January 23rd, 2012b). The conceptualisation of Thompson High—and this may also be applied to the campaigners imagined 'community school'—is a particular brand of 'public'. It is a pseudo-private school and it is identifiable via class currency.

8.4 Conclusion

The practice of school choice becomes a struggle of one's identity (Reay, et al., 2011). For the privileged/skilled chooser (Ball, et al., 1996), school choice is a core engagement with a critical social system and expression of social performance, one that is tied into feelings of pride and shame and guilt (Lane, 1991). Parents in this study spend significant time and resources in strategically achieving the preferred school. In this chapter, I have considered 'defensive choice-making'. Even though considerable efforts and planning is emotionally invested into the acquisition of 'good school', the search for school-of-choice is coded as inactive and detached for some choosers. Others acknowledge that they are 'hedging their bets'.

The final chapter will conclude this study and make clear the contributions.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

> The interpretivist attitude to generalisation is rather like that of the Victorian middle classes towards sex. They do it, they know it goes on, but they rarely admit to either. (Williams, 2000, p. 210)

This study identifies six focal contributions and before I outline these, a note on generalisations. Williams (2000) argues that generalisations seem to be "inevitable in interpretivist research" and that "virtually every reported study will contain at least some kind of generalising claim" (p. 210). In presenting my contributions, I will make theoretical claims and these need to be read cautiously and in the context of this study. These theoretical claims are essentially arguments that are based on an interpretivist analysis of data. I look to extend the field and construct conceptualisations, understandings and epistemologies that may be utilised and operational.

This study identifies the participants as middle-class choosers and this contains a danger of over-generalising, in regards to middle-class choosers. The middle-class is highly differentiated and slippery. The participants in this study are not characteristic of *all* middle-class choosers, and rather I suggest they are representative of a specific subset of the middle-class. As noted previously in chapter four, this study draws on nine interviews with ten participants and nine field notes

from meetings, as a participant observer. This data is in addition to statistics, detailed maps, images and website material. This is a small sample size and therefore, in suggesting that the participants are representative of a specific subset, the sample size needs to be taken into consideration. Therein, the contributions stand as arguments and suggestions, based on the participants in this study.

I remind the reader of the main research questions (see 1.2.2):

(1) How is campaigning for a locale-specific public school influenced by geography and class identity?

(a) In the context of educational privatisation reforms, how does the public high school achieve market value?

Each of the main contributions is presented briefly in numerical form (see 9.2) before I discuss them at length. The italics used in this chapter are to indicate my own emphasis.

9.2 Contributions to knowledge

1) The chooser in this study represents a precise sociological subset of the urban middle-class that may be identified by certain characteristics and patterns of choice behaviour. The majority of these choosers are home-owners (they pay a mortgage, rather than a lease); inner-city residents (less than ten kilometres from the city centre); they are university educated; identify as atheists or want a secular school; the

majority identify as politically left and all campaigners reside within a ‘left’ seat (see 9.2.1 for longer list). These characteristics are class-based characteristics.

This chooser demonstrates certain choice behaviour. They are early choosers, long-term planners and child-matchers. They are highly strategic. These findings are not new and have been well-demonstrated in previous research (e.g. Ball, 2003; Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011). However, this study builds upon understandings by contending that this chooser is highly engaged in collective and individual political strategies to obtain a specific school, one that is systemic specific and locale specific. These strategies include swinging voting; engaging with politicians and other core decision-makers to change, rather than exit the system; and of course, collective campaigning (I extend on this, see number five). This chooser uses *axioms of choice*, in that they appeal for a local community school. The chooser is specifically agitating for a non-selective or public school.

2) Many theorists have argued that class is outdated, but participants in this study continually draw on concepts of class as a method to identify themselves and others. Participants rely on four distinct tenets when identifying class. These are, in order: residential address; level of education; political affiliation or involvement; and religion. Participants in this study construct a ‘class story’ and this story is largely located in terms of their urban residential location, which is then routinely linked to the remaining three tenets. In light of this, I argue that class identity can be productively theorised as *geo-identity*, in order to signal the importance of geography in class analysis (see chapter 5). Just as an identity contains narratives and rich

genealogies—narratives that are fictional and symbolic—so too does geography. I argue that geo-identity drives school choices, in that residential positioning of the chooser and the location of a school are highly influential in choosing a public school. This is not simply in terms of convenience, but what these positions signal for class identity. In theorising space and topographies of class, I draw on Harvey's (1973) absolute, relative and relational space. I have argued for the value of utilising these spatial theories within school choice research. This holds ramifications for cultural geographers, class and identity theorists and school choice researchers.

3) The acquisition of a *particular* public high school is a crucial component of geo-identity, in that it acts as a means of distinction. The public high school that is desirable for the middle-class chooser in this study is named the *pseudo-private* high school. The *pseudo-private* school contains the branding of public but the characteristics of private. It is identifiable via geographical placement, in that there are dominant sociological characteristics in suburbs that contain the pseudo-private or high-demand public school. These sociological characteristics are also present in the campaigning suburbs (these characteristics are listed, see 9.3.2). In addition, this school is marked by *class currencies* (see 8.3), signifiers that are received and interpreted within a certain geo-identity network. This relates to uniforms, architectural design of school buildings and curriculum choices.

4) Public education is symbolic for the middle-class chooser in this study (however, this needs to be understood in relation to the above argument). This work draws on

Reay, et al.'s (2011) study of *White middle-class identities and urban schooling* from the United Kingdom, to extend the concept of "against-the-grain" school choices. Despite their relative resources, the participants in this study specifically want a local public high school. Indeed, it is a limited and problematic preference and the choices are not so much "against-the-grain" but more so, spatial-specific and offer "social, cultural and ideological returns" (Reay, et al., 2011, p. 80) (see chapter 7).

There are definite values that the participants attach to the public school. In this study, the public high school is incredibly meaningful for how *geo-identity* is distributed, relating to morals, political affiliations, religion and God. For this chooser, the public high school is synonymous with social justice principles, such as inclusivity, tolerance, egalitarianism and anti-elitism. The participants associate the 'public' high school with (positive) left-of-centre political values and 'basic ethics' (see 7.4)—it is a place that they imagine as a counterpoint to (negative) right-of-centre political values. This point relates to the next argument (5), in that this chooser is willing to considerably extend themselves to acquire their school-of-choice.

5) The middle-class chooser in this study is willing to intensively commit to long-term collective campaigning to obtain the pseudo-private school. This is inherently meaningful in a number of ways. First, collective campaigning differs to the choice strategies that have been previously argued for in scholarly works and denotes a contemporary middle-class choice strategy, one that evokes significant implications for—not only choice research—but also for government-funded services and policy-making. The point of difference in this study is, rather than relocate for a preferable

choice, the choosers are pressuring the government for a new school. Second, long-term campaigning incorporates a range of creative and time-intensive strategies. If unsuccessful, choosers are willing to buy and sell a house in order to move into a school zone, or lie about their residential address, which further highlights their commitment to choice and the importance of geography. Choosers are aware of other strategies such as baptizing children for religious school enrolment. Despite these commitments, the participants are defensive choice makers (see Chapter 8), in that they distance and 'dis-identify' with their active choice making.

6) In this study, I have argued for a certain methodological approach, namely a spatial analysis of class. In chapter three, I discussed this as *geo-identity as method.* I argue that class is inherently spatialised and this argument relates to the methods and theory that I have used. First, this method uses many different tools, including interviews and participant observation, to generate multiple data sets. This is critical, in that multiple data sets pay attention to the multiple tiers of class.

Second, each tool that I use to generate data reflects and contributes to geo-identity as a method. Interviews are useful for a personalised engagement with the participants and a focus on self-identity; participant observation is important for embodied immersion into the space itself; the differing and multiple data sets supplement one another and, arguably, generate a theoretically and epistemologically rich spatial analysis of class.

Third, this method is fundamentally visual. I use a series of graphic maps that include detailed distances from home to school, and the presence of the city (the city

imaginary). I draw on photographs and quantitative statistics, and these statistics are displayed visually. In this study, I mapped and analysed fifteen different suburbs, by comparing and contrasting levels of income, race and religion. I also assessed educational advantage and disadvantage by school (see Chapter 6). Each of these tools contributes to a rethinking of critical spaces of class production and class identity. These spaces may be quantifiably measured, but also characterised using qualitative means.

This method also requires a strong theoretical framework for thinking about space. In this study, I have primarily drawn on Harvey's (1973) theories of space, but I have also referred to Bourdieu and Massey. Evidently, there are strong patterns that emerge as a result of this methodology and I argue that school choice research and class analysis will benefit from ongoing and increased emphasis on the spatial. Rather than a theoretical mapping of boundaries, choice behaviour and patterns, a graphic school choice ethnography provides a visual mapping of boundaries and quantitative identification of chooser characteristics (see 6. 4).

9.3 Identifying the chooser

In order for the contributions to be epistemologically valuable, it is important to begin by providing a summary of the chooser in this study, in the form of a brief 'profile'. The majority of choosers are:

- English speakers and Australian-born

- Married
- Home-owners, rather than renters
- Gentrifiers (renovating their home, purchased in an inner-city suburb with working-class roots less than five years ago)
- Identify as atheists (for those who identify with a traditional religion, they also identify as non-practicing)
- University educated
- Are professionally employed
- Identify as politically left
- Are exclusively seeking out public secondary education (despite having the resources to choose private)
- Are politically active and engaged
- Are long-term planners, strategic school choosers
- Regularly use certain *axioms of choice*, such as the 'local' school or the 'community' school, or the 'good' school.

The concept of class is pervasive when identifying the chooser in this study and this relates to not only class-based characteristics (such as owning a home), but it also relates to how the majority of participants self-identify. All interview participants in this study introduced the subject of class, without explicit evocation from the interviewer. The majority of interview participants (80%) associate themselves with the middle-class, but use dis-identification mechanisms, to do so

(see 5.2.1). Even though class is taken up differently for each individual (as demonstrated by participant Adam), there are certain collective understandings when it comes to class and these are continually negotiated via one's identity. These collective beliefs will be examined in the following section.

9.3.1 Geo-identity

Participants utilise definite methods to determine class. The following graphic (see Figure 35) is titled: what makes class? How do individual's determine their own—and other's—category of class?

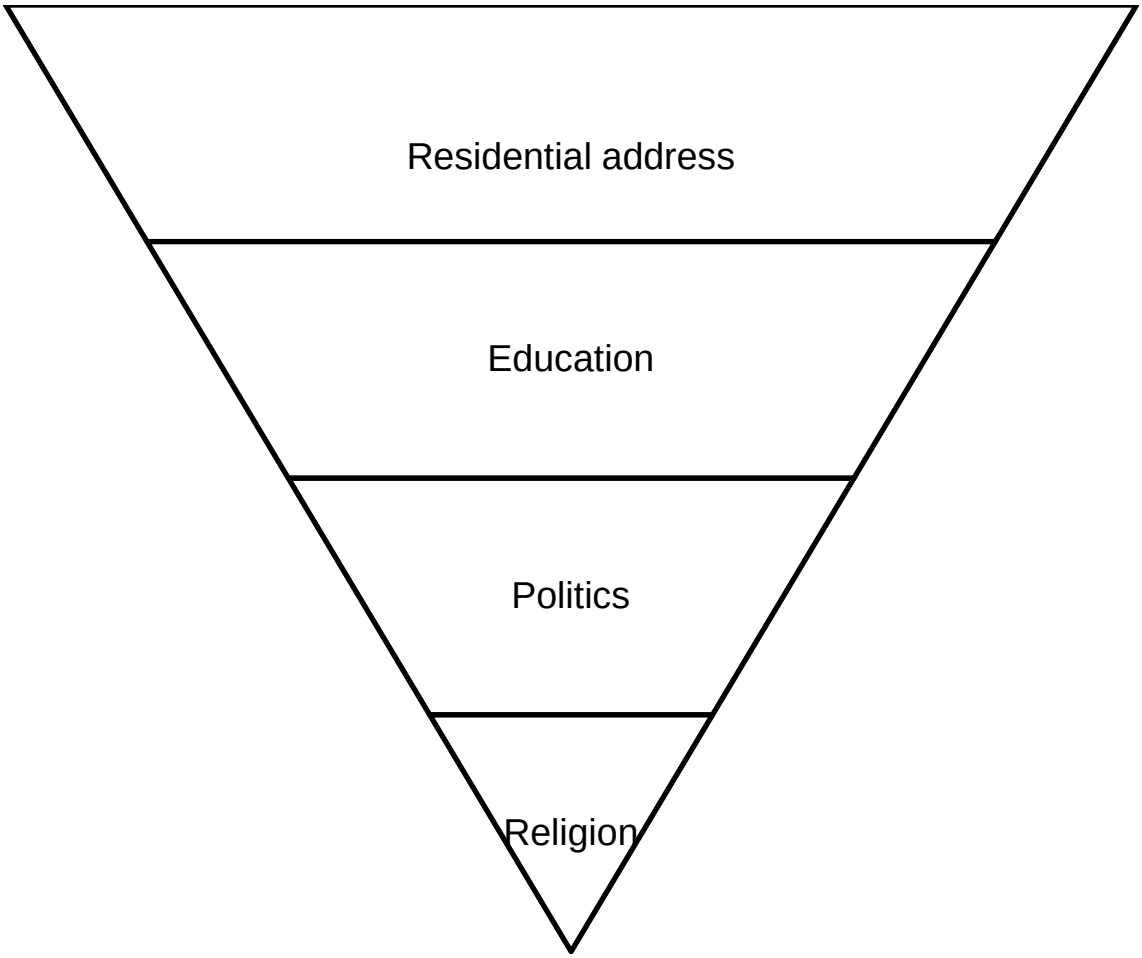


Figure 34 What makes class?

There are consistent patterns, in regards to how class concepts are applied, measured and distributed. When participants talk about class, they talk about residential address, education, politics and religion. These are four tenets that are consistently grouped together. There are also patterns in terms of how participants speak about class, in distancing and dissociative ways (see 5.2.1). I begin the discussion by considering the foremost characteristic—residential address—and a theoretical application of space.

There are topographies of class and this thesis seeks to extend Harvey's (1973) theories of absolute and relational space. I have argued for the value of utilising these spatial theories within school choice research. Participants in this study construct a 'class story' and this story is largely located in terms of their urban residential location. This identification method feeds into how the participants choose a public high school. Geography is a physical and corporeal land space—it is materially around us and under our feet. But, in simultaneous fashion, geography is very much metaphorical in that it represents and is emblematic of identity and formations of class. Where an individual is residentially positioned signals *geo-identity*, in that it equates strongly to social standing and is routinely linked to the remaining three tenets—levels of education, political identity and religion (see Figure 35).

I have argued that the residential location (the suburb itself) may be theorised as absolute space and the way in which this space is 'classified', as relational space. Thinking about a space as absolute and fixed is troubling, but it is useful for emphasising how space is commodified in the choice process, and becomes a device of identity production. Working-class spaces bear a symbolic 'known' identity, such as '*Birmingham of the South*'. The gentrifiers seek to distinguish themselves from these spaces, and the school is a fundamental method to do so.

Many campaigners express a belief in shared class status and meaning system, as based on their residential address. This is the driver for a locale-specific school. The campaigner's objective (to acquire a locale-specific public school) is constituted by quantifiable measurements (one or two kilometres from home) and

means of access. However, these measurements are a choice smoke-screen and rather, the locale-specific school is the purchase of *geo-identity*.

The consistent occurrence of class concepts and referents during interviews suggests that categories of class are pervasive, in terms of how individuals perceive of themselves within a social formation. Rather than categories of class existing as an "increasingly outmoded concept" (Clark & Lipset, 1991, p. 397), class continues to be utilised as a measure of identity, for the participants in this study. This reflects work by Reay (1998) who argues that "class is part of the micropolitics of people's lives" and "class just as much as gender, age, sexuality and ethnicity, infuses daily interactions" (p. 265). In this study, all participants associate themselves with a certain class, albeit in distancing and indirect ways. Even though class does not equate to the full story of an individual's narrative, it is a crucial benchmark for how and where individuals position themselves within a hierarchy or division. A *classification* is constructed in relation to where we live, and who we live near. This study contributes knowledge within an Australian context, and augments research from the United Kingdom (Reay, et al., 2011; Savage, et al., 2001).

The participants frequently refer to the Lawson community as 'well-educated' and 'middle-class'. For the regularity and commonality of this reference, the notion of 'education' is implicit and vague. The topic of 'education' and what it precisely means and denotes is largely left to the *receiver* to deduce the meaning. Only participant Adam points to university education and Steven refers to tertiary education (see 5.2.1). The implicit and vague nature of this reference is telling in itself, when thinking about how 'education' is used to symbolise a collective

understanding, in terms of class. This is similar to how under-stated the desire is for the campaigner's school to focus on university access and preparations (see 8.3).

Arguably, university education is an important marker of a middle-class identity. It is the tier of the ladder that sets them apart, a finding that reflects Pusey's (2003) earlier study of *Middle Australia*. Indeed, for the two participants who do not possess university education, this correlates with working-class or blue collar self-identity associations[47] (see 5.2.1).

Just as traditional religion is routinely tied to the working-class for the participant in this study, the middle-class is continuously associated with political beliefs. When the participants speak about class, they also talk about politics. This echoes Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2001) study. All of the participants in this study align themselves with the political left, but as I argued previously (see chapter 7), this is more so a desired expression of a self, rather than functioning as a staunch commitment to left-of-centre politics. A political identity is a function of class because there is a desired moral underpinning of class (Sayer, 2005b). It is a loaded signifier of self to represent as a 'Left' voter and attach this representation to the public school. Indeed, participant Harry seems ashamed when he discusses his strategic swinging voting and is reluctant to identify as anything other than a left-of-centre voter (see 7.4). This argument is expanded in contribution number four.

For the participants, the middle-class is politically engaged, aware and conscious. Participants believe that 'lefties' are far more likely to agitate and

[47] However, even for those who do not self-identify with the middle-class, they are professionally employed and home-owners in a suburb that records higher-than-median income levels (participant Adam owns multiple homes).

collectively campaign for a public school. They are prepared to strategically vote to obtain their desired government-funded service, and they express a firm belief that the educated middle-class will continue to mobilise for these services (see 7.4). The participants and the campaigners in this study demonstrate the resources, network and aptitude to effectively place pressure on the government, in agitating for a new school (see 6.3). Even though the campaigners have been relatively successful in pressuring the State Government and obtaining meetings with the Department of Education, so far the Lawson High Campaign has been unsuccessful in their bid for a brand new high school. This complicates the supposition that they are successful and savvy choosers, and I explore this further in a later point (9.3.3).

There is a strong correlation between a middle-class identity and the participant's rejection of traditional religion. However, the majority of elite schools in Australia are aligned with a traditional religion and therefore, the pairing of traditional religion with the working-class is obviously nuanced. For these reasons, I have positioned 'religion' as the fourth component (see Figure 35) and to avoid over-generalisations, I will focus on how the participants in this study conceptualise religion, in relation to their schooling preferences and identity. Even those participants who do identify with a particular religion (e.g. Karen, Harry and Naomi, Adam) immediately distance themselves with statements such as, "but I don't practice" or "I'm more on the humanist side" (see 7.3). This sociological category is marked by school choosers who are consciously and explicitly seeking out a school that is secular or not associated with traditional religion. Many of the participants purposefully exclude schools as viable choices that are connected with a traditional

religion, and feel limited in their choices (e.g. Matthew and Adele) and other participants feel traditional religion is dogmatic or not inclusive (e.g. Michelle and Steven). Traditional religion is associated with anti-intellectual curriculum, such as sport (see Matthew, 5.2.1). The explicit rejection of religion is purposeful and conscious. It performs an important function of *geo-identity*, in that it distinguishes the individual from both the working and the upper-class. It is a significant component of how this chooser identifies—as the 'intellectual leftie'.

These class-based characteristics that I have discussed—residential address, religion, politics and education—are significant, in that they respond to core ways that an individual constructs their identity. This speaks to the magnitude of school-of-choice for this chooser and it also speaks to the emotional weight that school-of-choice carries. It is essential to highlight that, for this chooser, the school choice experience is a "theatre of emotion" (Lane, 1991, p. 51) and it is full of contradictory feelings, such as guilt, shame and pride (see Chapter 8).

9.3.2 The *pseudo-private*

This research builds on Reay, et al.'s (2011) study which theorised "against-the-grain" school choices of the white middle-class in the United Kingdom. The campaigners are characteristic of the middle-class school chooser (Campbell, et al., 2009) and also, the "privileged/skilled" chooser (Ball, et al., 1996), but they are purposefully pursuing a local public school. This is "against-the-grain" in that previous research has connected the local school to the working-class chooser (Reay & Ball, 1997; Reay & Lucey, 2000, 2004). Furthermore, studies show that many

middle-class school choosers are distrustful of most public high schools, or consider them 'inferior', but it depends on where they are located (Campbell, et al., 2009; Reay, et al., 2011).

Therefore, as I argued in chapter seven, theorising the choices as acts of resistance are indeed problematic and this reiterates Reay, et al.'s (2011) study. The campaigners are using their class resources, in order to avoid surrounding public high schools. The preferable public high school is spatially specific for the chooser in this study and I draw on the demographic analysis of surrounding suburbs to augment this point (see 6.4). A public high school that is a desirable choice for the middle-class chooser in this study is located in a suburb that bears the following characteristics (as based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, see 6.4). It must also be noted that the campaigner's residential address also reflects these characteristics:

- Higher median income (higher than State median and higher than surrounding suburbs);
- Higher number of Australian-born residents, *in comparison to surrounding suburbs*[48] (my own emphasis) and this correlates with a higher number of English as first language speakers;
- Higher number of individuals whom identify as "not religious" (in comparison to State median and surrounding suburbs);

[48] The only exception to this is school 'Matheson' which has a higher proportion of Chinese-born residents (6%) in comparison to other 'desirable' suburbs (see chapter 6). This was an outlier in this regard. However, this suburb retains a high number of English-speaking residents, high income levels and a high level of university qualifications.

- Lower number of persons whom identify with minority religions (such as Buddhist, Islam and Hinduism) in comparison to surrounding suburbs and State median.

The following graphic (see Figure 36) visually demonstrates these sociological characteristics of suburbs that contain a high-demand or preferable public high school for the chooser in this study. It does so by illustrating the State median and the campaign suburbs (Lawson and Smith), which also bear these commonalities:

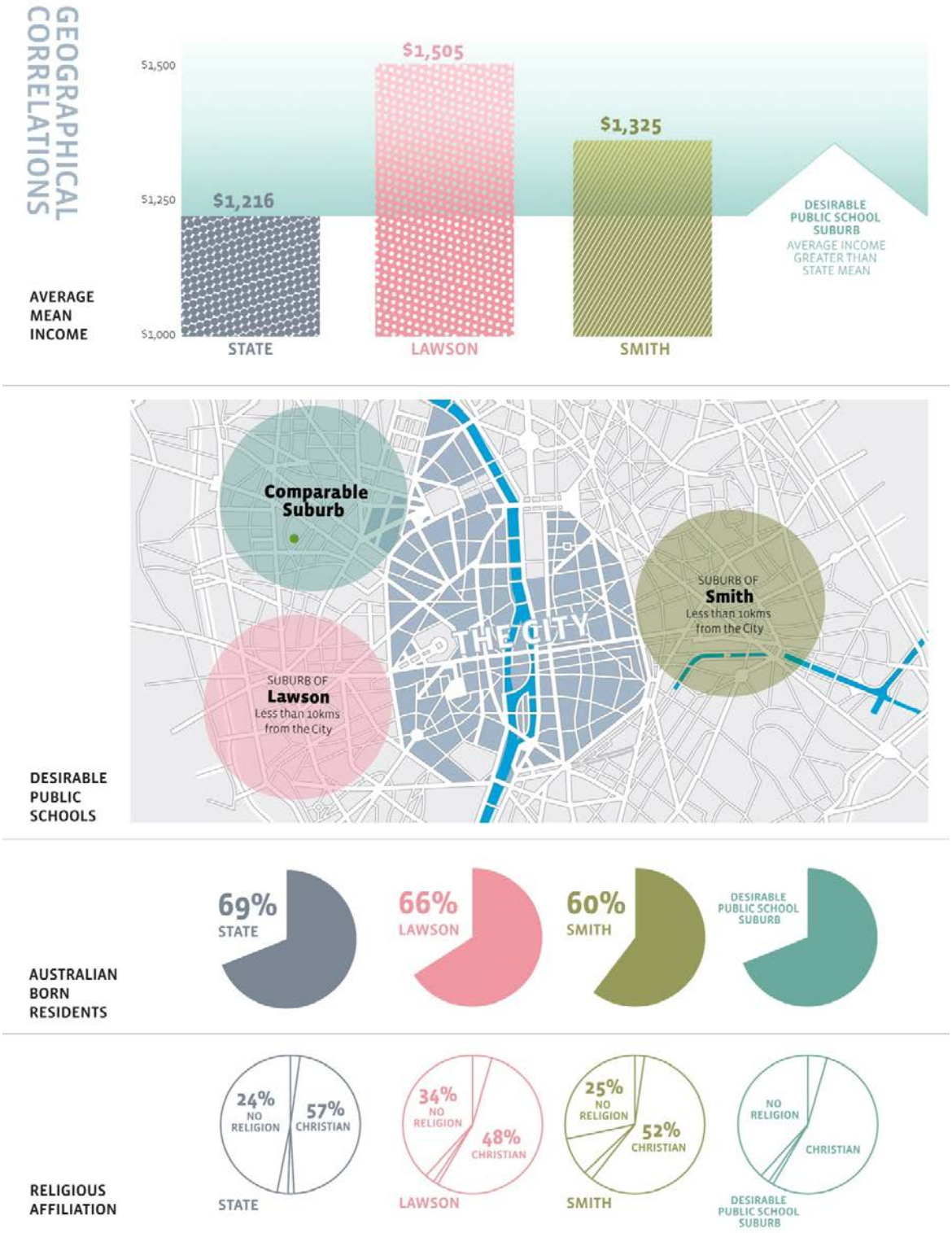


Figure 35 Sociological characteristics of suburbs that contain a high-demand public high school

For the chooser in this study, the undesirable public school is known by its location, first and foremost. It is immediately disregarded as a viable choice and this will be in spite of its relative proximity to the choosers. It is located in a suburb with lower levels of income, lower number of Australian-born residents in comparison to the surrounding suburbs and a higher proportion of individuals who associate with traditional religion. Just as there is an imagery of the pseudo-private school, there is vivid imagery of the non-preferred school. It is known for its notoriety (see 6.2).

This is not to suggest that this chooser is lacking a sense of ethics or morality. The identity that is passionately attached to public schooling is one that is regulated by certain constraints. This chooser is fully aware of segregation and concentrated forms of disadvantage in particular public schools. This is especially relevant in the context of this study, in that the State of Victoria retains the lowest-funded public school system in Australia (Gonski, et al., 2011). There is an increasing gap between high and low achievers in Australia, and the relationship between socio-economic status and achievement levels is stronger in Australia than many other OECD countries.

The chooser is strategic and savvy in their efforts to achievement enrolment within a pseudo-private school, and there is a reliance on “hot knowledge” (Ball & Vincent, 1998) and axioms of choice in the chooser network. The pseudo-private school is identified first via its geographical location, but also by certain *class*

currencies, including: enrolment restrictions[49]; fashionable or smart uniforms, akin to some private schools (see 8.3); and a curriculum that enables the students to explore themselves artistically and culturally (but also access university).

The campaigner's desired school is a pseudo-private school, but it is also an essentially *Left* school. Just like the political identity, this is an emblematic label that speaks more to class identity formation, than a staunch commitment to political affiliations. The school of their imaginary is environmentally aware; it is lesbian and gay friendly; it is secular and inclusive; it is *public* and the opposite of private. There is a visual and graphic imagery to the Left school. Structurally and architecturally, it corresponds to the environment in the way of colours (Thompson High reflects the blue of the ocean, see 8.3.1); it incorporates solar principles and spaces for bikes, a community garden, a theatre and an art exhibition space (as evident in the imagined Smith High, see 7.4).

Further, the campaigners desire a school that is partially "owned" by parents, even to the extent that they wish to prop up the school with their own sources of funding (see 6.3). This accentuates the pseudo-private label and contains implications for government policy-making over the longer term. It may promote increased interest in charter or independent public schools (both independently operated but within the public domain of funding). The desire to partially own the school and contribute to funding, to a certain extent, may be related to an overall lack of trust in levels of state funding.

[49] A pseudo-private school maintains a school zone (or catchment area) that restricts enrolment on the basis of geography (residential address). In the case of Thompson High, the school zone was modified and shrunk in response to increased demand (see 8.3.1). However, the enforced enrolment zone is in response to high demand, and therefore additional preference drivers are required.

The school of the campaigner's imaginary, the *Left* school, is distinguished on the grounds of cultural and intellectual engagement. For all the campaigners (Smith and Thompson included), their desired school is academically rigorous and prepares the students for university-access. However, the expressed desire for a university-minded school is far-less articulated and remains relatively unspoken. This is part of the tacit knowledge that operates inside of school choice discourse; it is understood as inherent or an assumed understanding that a desirable high school produces students who will access university. This assumed understanding is compared to the explicit expression and appeal for a school that is artistically-minded and environmentally aware. This composes a critical conceptualisation of this space and it also *extends* upon how we understand the public school. For this sociological grouping, there are distinct extensions to how this space will be *re-occupied*, modified and used.

9.3.3 A middle-class choice strategy

The chooser in this study is a highly strategic school chooser and plans for secondary school when their children are pre-school aged. They are long-term planners and child-matchers (see 8.2). These findings have been well documented in previous choice research. However, collective campaigning differs to the choice strategies that have been previously argued for in scholarly works and denotes a contemporary middle-class strategy, one that has significant ramifications for government policy. Collective campaigning is part of these choosers tool kit, despite the extensive time commitment that it requires. The campaigners are creative, resourceful and

committed in their endeavours (for a list of their activities, see 1.2). The Lawson High campaigners have maintained this commitment since 2003. Yet so far, the Lawson High Campaign has been unsuccessful in their bid for a brand new high school in their suburb and therefore, whilst they diligently employ a range of strategies over a long-term period, they are yet to achieve their primary goal. This acknowledges the problematic nature of educational campaigning, because whilst the campaigners may be savvy and knowledgeable in their endeavours, and draw on a range of resources, how much traction can they achieve in a policy environment seemingly committed to privatisation?

The presence of collective campaigning demands the attention of policy-makers; if only on the basis of economics. The ongoing feasibility studies necessitate the expenditure of government funds, but also the time of politicians and education department officials to engage with the lobbyists. Campaigning for a new public high school increases pressure on government services, as previously argued by a United Kingdom based think-tank (Peters, 2004). Within a demand-sensitive environment, one that theoretically promotes and supports freedom of school choice, the campaigners represent a consumer demand that is currently not being met. Dissatisfied customer demand problematises alleged freedom of choice.

School choice policy theoretically enables freedom—parents are free to send their child to their school-of-choice. Choice is theoretically unfettered by regulations, and tax-payer dollars are provided for religious oriented or fee-paying private schools, in order to support this freedom of choice. Indeed, participants in this study report that policy-makers and representatives from the Department of Education are

confused as to why the campaigners will not simply choose a private school, considering their means (see 7.2). However, the participants in this study express dissatisfaction with their potential choices and feelings of disempowerment. Many feel confined or restricted by the lack of choice, and feelings of anxiety and stress (see 8.2).

Due to the exaggerated differences between schools (e.g. difference in funding levels), certain public schools are considerably more attractive, than others. The difference in desirability is, in fact, so considerable that parents are willing to engage in longitudinal campaigning commitments, which necessitate their time and money. They are also willing to sell their house and relocate. The social composition of the school is a fundamental facet of this equation. Schools that contain an increased concentration of higher socio-economic status students are significantly more preferable for the participants in this study. In this, geography is of considerable influence to both choice-*makers* and choice-*spaces*.

9.4 Conclusion

This study contributes epistemologies regarding collective campaigns for locale-specific public schools. This represents a contemporary middle-class choice strategy. The degrees of commitment for the locale-specific school, which the campaigners are willing to extend, demonstrate the weight of school-of-choice but it also demonstrates the *heightened degree of differences* between schools. The choosers in this study are highly engaged and savvy when it comes to choice, and they are aware

of the concentrated levels of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage between their school choice options. This relates to the socio-educational composition of the student cohort, but it also relates to funding differentiations. Currently, the Australian system funds advantage rather than disadvantage. It is recommended that government policy seek to decrease these heightened differences between schools in order to improve equity.

It is my aim that this study makes important methodological and epistemological contributions into school choice, educational geography and class identity. I offer the concept of *geo-identity* as a result of a methodological inquiry into a spatial analysis of class. For the participants in this study, the local community school is the procurement of *geo-identity*. The *pseudo-private* school is distinctive on the basis of certain *class currencies*. This school expresses significant identity markers and enables the choosers to fashion their identity according to political, moral and religious beliefs. It is distinct from the 'ordinary' public school. The participants use collective and individual strategies to appeal for their school and rely on *axioms of choice*, in expressing what makes a good school, 'good'.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology

A1: How were distances calculated?

Geographical distances or numerical information presented in this study are the findings of the author, and not the findings of the campaigners. I calculated these distances by referring to a public transport website (Metlink Melbourne, 2012) and a mapping website (Google Maps, 2012). These websites are a commonly used method of calculating transport and travel times for travellers in Melbourne.

When using the Metlink Melbourne transport to calculate travel times, these times were calculated by inserting the starting point as the suburb itself and the end point as the school. The website (Metlink Melbourne) determines the start point in Lawson and therefore, this travel time would differ from user to user. The total proximity or size of Lawson suburb is 7.30 square kilometres, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Google Maps is used to calculate the actual distance from suburb to school. The point of measurement in the suburb is determined by Google Maps. The same method was used for every distance calculation. The distance is calculated by walking distance, rather than driving distance. If driving distance is reported, this is specifically noted for the reader. Walking distance is typically a shorter distance, as it negates boundary roads that increase travelling distance for motor vehicles. I have

sought to reflect the manner in which the Victorian Department of Education (2007) calculates this distance when undertaking enrolment procedures—in a straight line measurement, front gate to front gate, or "as the crow flies".

A2: Statistics—how were variables calculated?

I will explain how variables were calculated, step by step. First, I designed a chart of each suburb and the surrounding suburbs, and this chart recorded the land size and population size, in correspondence with each suburb. This is an example of one of these charts (Lawson and surrounds):

Suburb	**Size of Suburb** **(square kilometres)**	**Total Persons**
Charles	5.00	13,203
Box	4.70	8,838
Park	4.30	8,180
Matheson	4.00	6,192
Beakin	7.30	14,747
Lawson	7.30	22,105

Figure 36 Size of suburb and population.

I also created a chart like this for the Smith suburb and surrounding suburbs. The chart shows the total number of persons living in each suburb and the size of each suburb (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The 'total persons' sum was used to calculate each variable.

I will first discuss the 'median total household income ($ weekly)'. Each Census Suburb profile reports this figure. This is a gross figure which includes single parents and families with and without children. I compare the suburb's median total

household income with the median weekly household income for Victorian families (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012j). I also refer to quintile groupings in reference to "mean gross household income per week" (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a). Quintile groupings rank Australian households, according to their mean gross household income per week, using five different 'quintiles'—lowest, second, third, fourth, highest. This sets up clear income divisions.

The other variables included as graphs (country of birth and religion) were calculated into a percentage, by comparing the variable with the total population. For example, a total of 1,474 persons living in the suburb of Charles identify as Buddhist. This equates to 11 per cent (of the total population in the suburb of Charles identifying as Buddhist), using the following equation: 1474 / 13203 x 100 = 11.164.

The additional decimal points were removed and the number was rounded up or down, depending on its numerical value. The same equation (as shown above) was used for calculating country of birth and language spoken at home. It is important to note that the term 'Christian' incorporates nineteen different religions. On the Australian Census, it appears like this:

Christianity:
Anglican
Assyrian Apostolic
Baptist
Brethren
Catholic
Churches of Christ
Eastern Orthodox
Jehovah's Witnesses
Latter-day Saints
Lutheran
Oriental Orthodox
Other Protestant
Pentecostal

Presbyterian and Reformed
Salvation Army
Seventh-day Adventist
Uniting Church
Christian, nfd(a)
Other Christian
Total

Figure 37 Christianity on the Australian Census.

Accordingly, graphs in this study use the term 'Christian' to denote all nineteen different strands of Christianity. There is an extensive amount of diversity within this category, but this category is used to avoid ineffective graphic representations. When presenting this data, the percentage (%) represents the 'total' number of individuals identifying within this category on the Census.

A3: Details of data analysis

In this section, I explain in detail the process of data analysis. In the first stages of this study, I analysed campaigners published material and newspaper reports (from Lawson High and Smith High Campaign, January 2011 onwards). This material is freely available from their website. Both websites contain a high volume of data; for example, the Smith High Campaign website has available over forty support letters, numerous links to newspaper reports and surveys. A flow-chart was created for the Smith and Lawson suburb, that showed each school that closed, when and why.

During this period (January 2011 to September 2011), additional campaigns were identified, including past and present campaigns, such as Thompson, Klein, Melville and Dodson (Williams was not identified until 2012). There are many

publications about the Klein campaign and I reviewed these publications, in addition to interviewing one of the campaigners involved (November 2011). However, in 2012 I decided not to use this data as it did not respond to the research questions and methods.

In August 2011, I contacted the Smith, Lawson and Dodson campaign to ask for ethical permission to conduct participant observation. However, participant observation commenced only with the Lawson High Campaign (September 2011). The Dodson campaign was only contactable via email and I did not receive any replies to the emails I sent. In January 2012, I commenced interviews with LHC campaigners, and these lasted until August 2012. During this time, participant observation with LHC was ongoing. Also during this time, campaigner's material (for Smith, Thompson and Lawson) continued to be collected, as did newspaper reports regarding the campaign groups, in addition to suburb and school statistical data. I travelled to the suburbs with a professional photographer and obtained photographs (2012).

Data was collected on the topic of Thompson High School from the beginning of the study (January 2011). Interviews and participant observation were not conducted with campaigners from the past Thompson High School campaign or the present Smith High Campaign (I did attend a Smith High Campaign meeting but as I did not have ethical permission from the Smith High Campaigners, I did not include this data).

The main supervisor of this study (Mary Lou Rasmussen) recommended a map that could be folded out for the reader. I created a substandard map showing

each suburb and the school closures. Subsequently, I hired a professional graphic designer to create the maps (August, 2012).

I personally transcribed the interviews and field notes promptly following collection, and this helped me to engage in researcher reflexivity and improve how interview questions were crafted. It also assisted in greater submersion within the data and the identification of preliminary themes. I kept a research diary. Thorough analysis of data did not begin until all interviews were transcribed. However, this was not possibly for participant observation, which was ongoing until March 2013. Therefore, analysis of participant observation field notes was ongoing since date of collection. A 'thorough analysis' comprised of repeat reads of transcripts, and the process of 'reading' included annotating, critique and theoretical consideration, highlighting, jotted short-hand notes, and identification of themes within the short-hand notes. My aim was to identify themes by identifying data that was repeating and recurring in multiple data sets; I was also looking for data that conflicted with one another and also for data that held the potential to generate theory. It was important to include any data that may contradict each other in order to provide three-dimensionality and accuracy.

Jotted short-hand notes identified *preliminary* themes; these themes required far more substantiation and analytical processes. Preliminary themes were composed into draft chapters, and data extracts inserted into chapters, in order to assist with the process of refining themes and the identification of strong patterns. I used the program *NVivo* for data analysis for a period of time (2012). It was not the primary

means of data analysis, but it did facilitate the refinement and maturity of themes. It also helped with the organisation of data and identifying major themes.

Extracts of data were cut and pasted onto a colour-coded chart, on the computer. I endeavoured to link each data extract with a theme, onto the colour-coded chart. This proved difficult; I adopted a physical approach to the chart-making. Extracts of data were cut and pasted onto colour-coded pieces of paper, headed by the identified theme in large letters. Certain extracts contained more than one theme (for example, school choice and matters of class). These pieces of paper were then laid onto the floor. Short-hand notes were jotted onto the colour-coded pieces of paper. The purpose of this was to compose a flowing narrative and a strong argument; to identify nuances of data not previously acknowledged; and, data that contradicted, contrasted and augmented each other.

The draft chapters were critiqued and drafted repeatedly over a long period of time (August 2012 to early-2014). The analysis of data continued and grew more robust. The research questions (that came to be the final research questions) were developed in early 2014. The reading and examination of transcripts (field notes and interviews) was ongoing. This was to ensure that important data wasn’t missed.

MONASH University

Appendix B: Forms

10th April 2012

Explanatory Statement

Title: A multi-sited case study of campaigns for public education

This information sheet is for you to keep.

PhD Student research project

My name is Emma Rowe and I am a PhD Student in the Education faculty at Monash University. My supervisor is Dr Mary Lou Rasmussen, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education. I have received funding to conduct a three-year research project and I would like to conduct research regarding your campaign. I would like to attend all set events and meetings over the duration of a year—with your permission—and record notes (in code). I would not use a tape or video recorder. My preference is to attend all meetings that you allow me to attend but you will have the final word. My intention is to conduct this observation as a "participant", in that I become part of the group.

I would like to recruit participants for face-to-face semi-structured interviews, at the campaigning events and meetings. If you would be willing to assist my recruitment of participants, through word-of-mouth or advertisement on your website, I would be

most appreciative; however, you have no responsibility to do so. I would like to interview campaigners who are involved in the campaign (i.e. signed at least one petition or completed at least one survey, or purposefully attended a set campaign event or meeting).

The interviews would be audio recorded if you agree, and coded notes taken. Sensitive issues may include highest household educational qualifications, political and religious affiliation and employment position. The interview would take an estimated time of 30 to 60 minutes, which would largely depend on the participant. The participant would be shown the final transcript and their approval would be required. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the interview at any time, at their discretion.

The aim of my study is to explore your motivations for involvement in the campaigns. I would like to talk to you about when and why you moved into your local area, your beliefs regarding public education and your personal educational experiences.

Once the research has been completed, participants may request a summary of the findings. Your participation would be highly valued and would contribute to providing understanding and insight into a relatively new phenomenon which is underway in Victoria in a particularly strong way—community based campaigns for public education. I do intend to publish data which is extracted from this study, in the form of a thesis, journal articles and conference presentations.

Pseudonyms will be used at all times for names of people, places and the campaign itself. Please advise if you would like to receive more detailed information about participant observation or any other elements of this study.

Please note: I have obtained your details through your campaign web-site.

Can I withdraw from the research?

You may withdraw from the research at any time, without explanation.

Confidentiality

Pseudonyms will be used at all times, for people, places and campaigns. Names will not be used during the interview or recorded. In reporting this data, all identifying details (such as the names of people, suburbs or schools) names will be changed.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Emma Rowe on [redacted]

If you would like to contact the **researchers** about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a **complaint** concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact (including project number):
Mary Lou Rasmussen **Senior Lecturer**	Project Number: **CF11/2368 – 2011001353** Executive Officer, Human Research

Faculty of Education [redacted]	Ethics Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 [redacted]

Thank-you,

Emma Rowe

PhD Student, Monash University

MONASH University

Interview topics for campaigners

About you

Potentially sensitive topics include: employment position, levels of education, religious affiliation, and political leanings/engagement with politics.

Did you personally attend a non-government or government school?

How did you become involved in the campaign?

- What are your motivations for being involved?
- Does the campaign hold meaning for your family?
- Why is this campaign important to you personally?
- Are there any critical events that led to your involvement?
- Any important or significant ideas that influenced your involvement?

About your family

These questions are only required if this information has not yet been revealed in the interview.

- When did you move into the area?
- How old are your children?

- If they have completed primary school, which primary school did they attend?

- If they are currently enrolled in a secondary school, which secondary school are they attending and why? Could you please talk about why you chose this school.

About the campaign

Please describe, in your own words, what the purpose of your campaign is.

Campaign strategies

What other goals does the campaign have, if any?

How does the campaign achieve these goals?

Are there group decisions on how to achieve set goals?

Are there are any specific ways in which the campaign achieves goals?

What kind of relationship does the campaign have with other groups, such as the local council, professional associations, teaching bodies, journalists, primary schools, community members, developers or business groups or other campaigning groups?

How does the campaign establish these relationships?

Once the school is established, is that the end of the campaign or are there are other goals?

What are your other secondary school options if the desired school is not achieved? How far would you have to travel to these schools, and how would your child travel there? i.e. bus/train/lift in car by parents/walk/ride.

About the desired school

What is your ideal imaginary of your secondary school facility?

What involvement would you like to have in this school? Please be as specific as you like.

- What sort of curriculum do you want?

- Do you have a particular site of the school in mind?

Would it service everyone, i.e. accessible to everyone? Is it zoned to members of this community /suburb? Would the school offer a SEAL /academic extension program?

If this school was established in this area—i.e. your "perfect" school—but you had to pay for it, would you? How much would you be willing to pay?

About public education

If you were asked to define a public high-school, how would you do so? What words would you use? Or, how would you define public education?

Do you believe that the government should provide secondary education free-of-charge? Is your 'right' as an Australian citizen? Why/why not?

Consent Form 1 for Campaign Group 1

MONASH University

Consent Form

(For individuals at the campaign meeting or event to sign – this will allow me to record your speech)

Title: A multi-sited case study of campaigns for public education

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records.

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree for the researcher to observe me during a set campaign meeting and take coded notes of observation

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree for the information obtained from this observation to be used for future research purposes and/or multiple forms of publication

☐ Yes ☐ No

and

I understand that my speech and/or informal discussions after the meetings may be recorded as research

and

I understand observation will not include audio-tapes or video-tapes

and

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way
and

I understand that the researcher intends to publish this data and any data that the researcher extracts from observation will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics unless this individual has given written consent
and

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party unless an individual has given written consent
and

I understand that data from the observation will be kept in a secure storage and accessible only to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Consent Form 2 for Campaign Group 1

MONASH University

Consent Form

(This is for the campaign working party to sign. It will allow me to attend meetings and take notes)

Title: A multi-sited case study of campaigns for public education

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree for the researcher to attend all set campaign meetings and events, unless I give specific instructions for the researcher to not attend

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the researcher taking coded notes during observation

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the researcher recruiting individuals from the campaign for a face-to-face interview, at the consent of the individual

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the researcher conducting informal discussions regarding a campaign meeting or event with consenting attendants after set events

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree for the information obtained from this observation to be used for future research purposes and/or multiple forms of publication

☐ Yes ☐ No

and

I understand observation will not include audio-tapes or video-tapes

and

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way

and

I understand that the researcher intends to publish this data and any data that the researcher extracts from observation will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics unless this individual has given written consent

and

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party unless an individual has given written consent

and

I understand that data from the **observation** will be kept in a secure storage and accessible only to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Consent Form 3 for interview

Consent Form

(Face to face interview)

Title: A multi-sited case study of campaigns for public education

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree for the information obtained from this interview to be used for future research purposes and/or multiple forms of publication

☐ Yes ☐ No

and

I understand the purposes of this research is to investigate the significance of campaigns and that I will be asked about my household's highest educational qualification and employment position

and

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way

and

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview and questionnaire for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics

and

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research

and

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party

and

I understand that data from the **interview (including the audiotape)** will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

MONASH University

Copyright Permission Request

To: http://www.nationalturk.com/en/contact-us

From: Emma Rowe

Date: 16/12/2013

Dear Whom It May Concern:

I am completing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) within the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia. Monash University is an internationally recognised educational institution based in Melbourne Australia. The Education Faculty at Monash has a well established reputation for research excellence.

I am writing to kindly request your permission to reproduce this photograph in my Dissertation:

It will be cited in the Dissertation as follows:

National Turk. (2012). Chile students education protest, 3 buses burned, 49 officers were injured Retrieved August 6, 2012, from http://www.nationalturk.com/en/chile-students-education-protest-3-buses-burned-49-officers-were-injured-23658

I would like to print this photograph in my Dissertation. The published dissertation would then be made available on the Monash ARROW research repository (approximately October 2014). This repository is operated on a non-commercial basis. You can view the Monash ARROW repository at: http://arrow.monash.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Index

I am therefore requesting permission to make the following content available online as embedded within my thesis:

Author/Creator:

Title:

Publisher/Imprint/website URL: http://www.nationalturk.com/en/chile-students-education-protest-3-buses-burned-49-officers-were-injured-23658

Additional description (if required):

This content will be clearly indicated as used by permission and full acknowledgement will be provided in the form you prefer. If you do not own copyright in the above content I would appreciate any information you could provide as to who the copyright owner may be.

If you require further information, or if there are any conditions that would facilitate the permissions process, please contact me at [redacted]

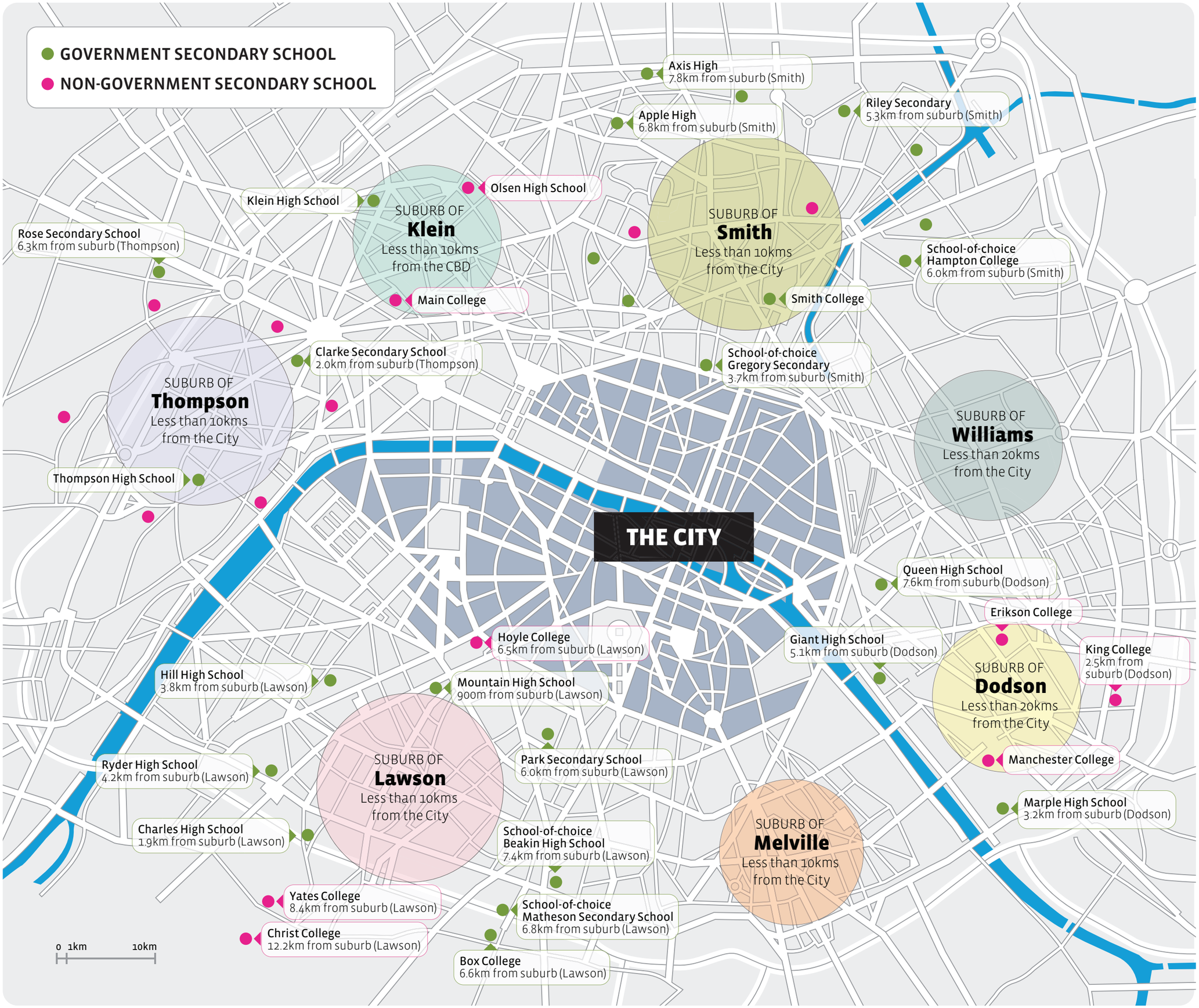
Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your response.

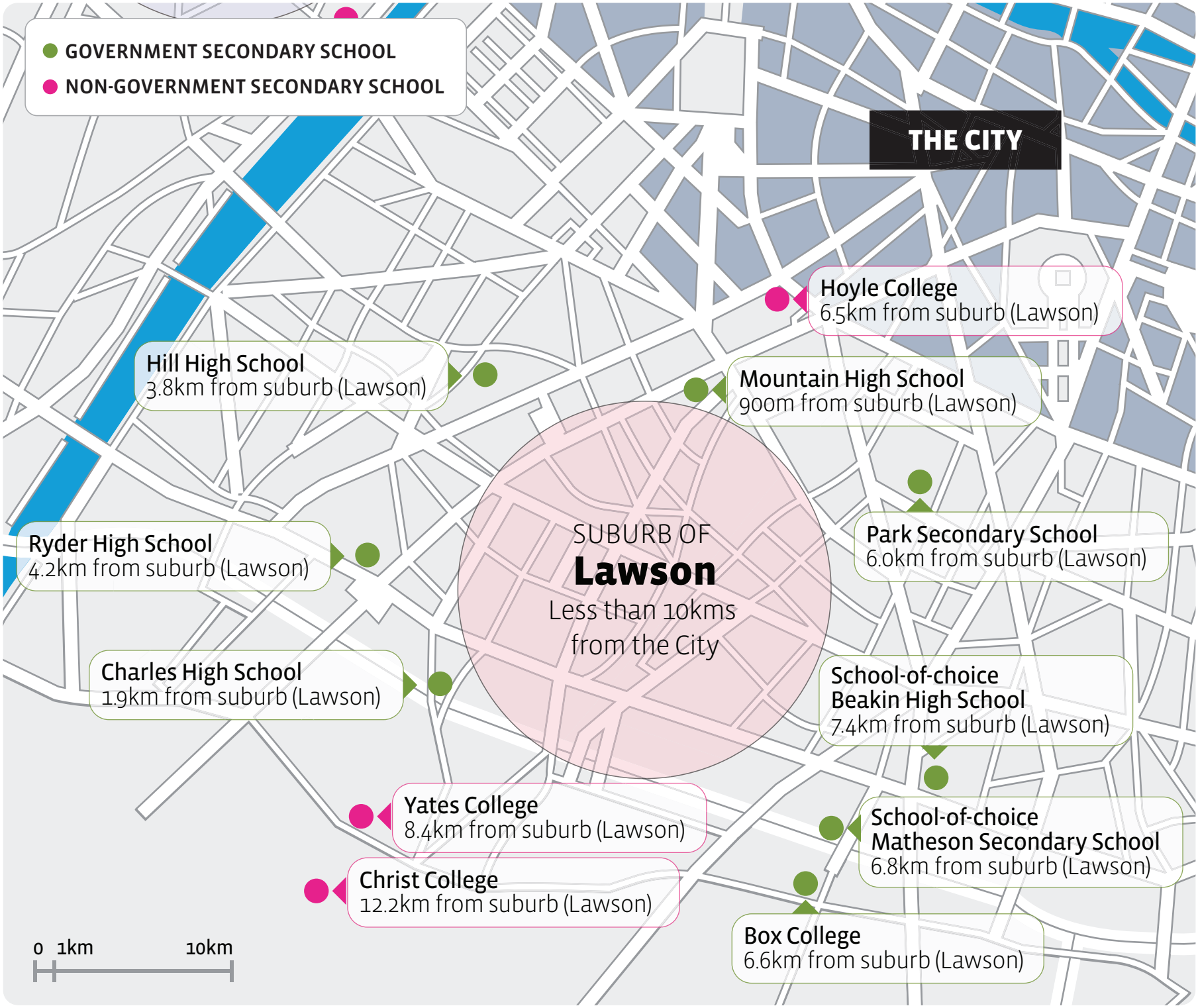
Sincerely,

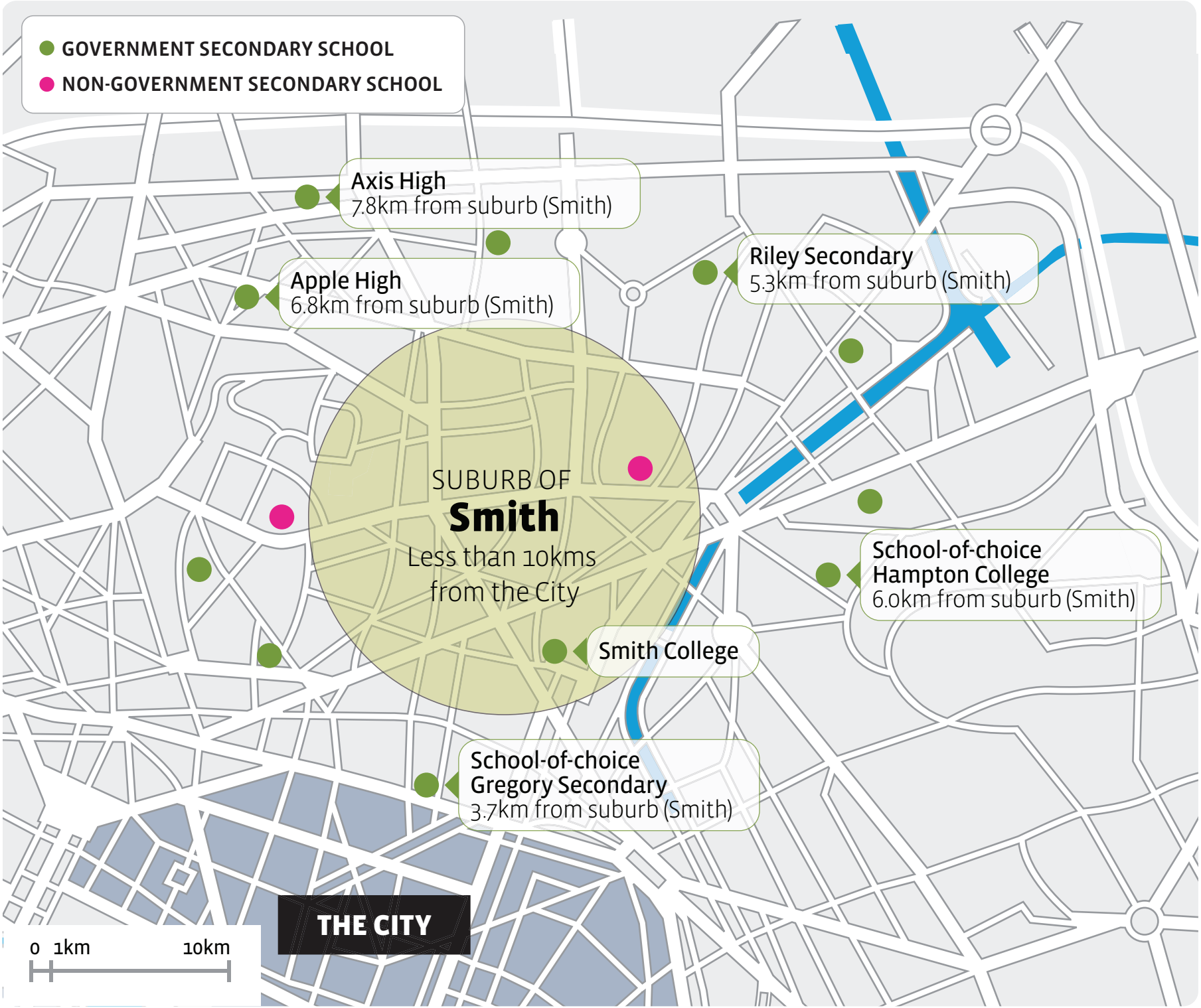
Emma Rowe
PhD Student
Monash University
[redacted]

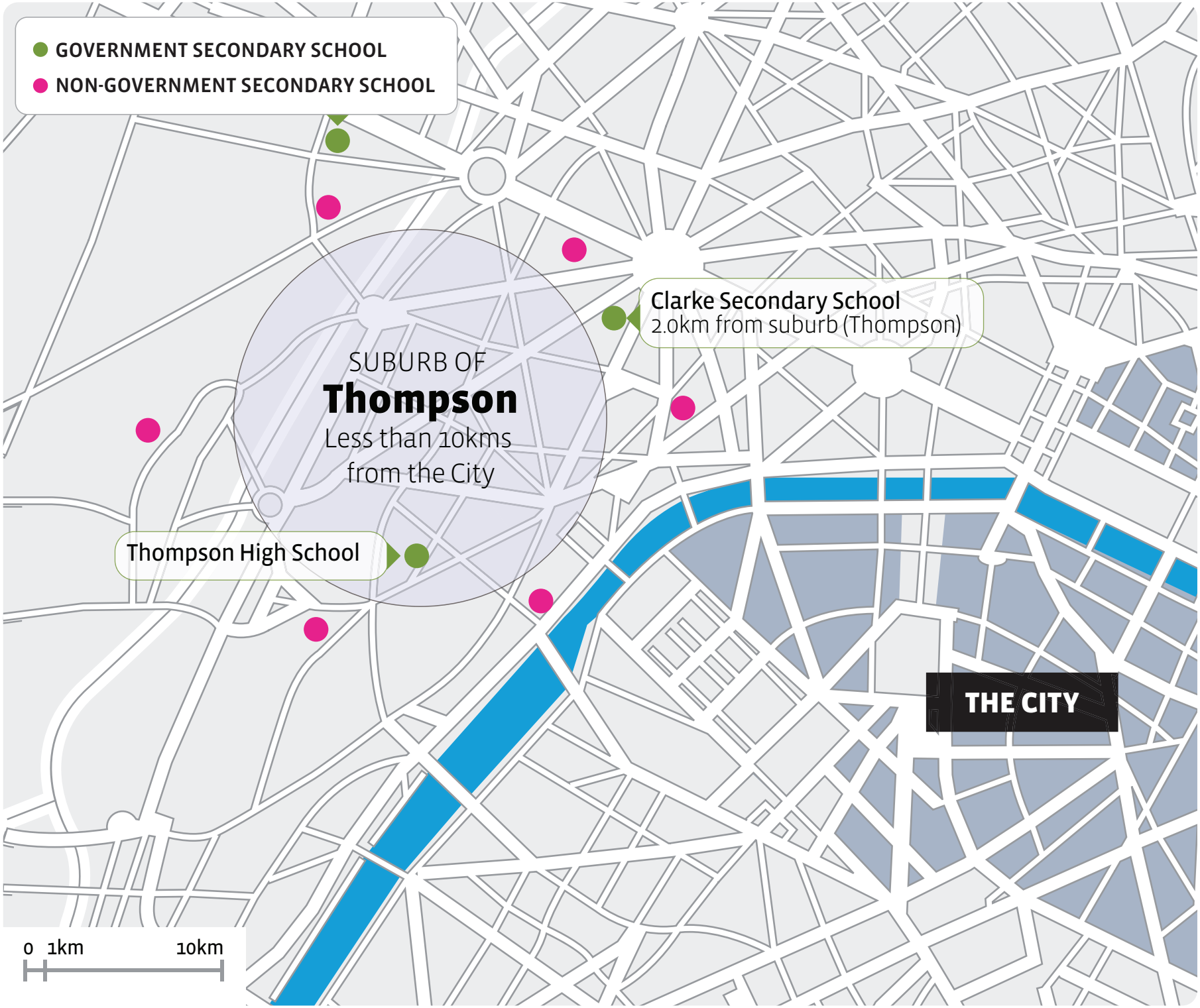
Appendix C: Maps

Past and present campaigns


GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
NON-GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
Axis High
7.8km from suburb (Smith)
Apple High
6.8km from suburb (Smith)
Riley Secondary
5.3km from suburb (Smith)
Olsen High School
Klein High School
SUBURB OF
Klein
Less than 10kms
from the CBD
SUBURB OF
Smith
Less than 10kms
from the City
Rose Secondary School
6.3km from suburb (Thompson)
School-of-choice
Hampton College
6.0km from suburb (Smith)
Main College
Smith College
Clarke Secondary School
2.0km from suburb (Thompson)
School-of-choice
Gregory Secondary
3.7km from suburb (Smith)
SUBURB OF
Thompson
Less than 10kms
from the City
SUBURB OF
Williams
Less than 20kms
from the City
Thompson High School
THE CITY
Queen High School
7.6km from suburb (Dodson)
Erikson College
Hoyle College
6.5km from suburb (Lawson)
Giant High School
5.1km from suburb (Dodson)
King College
2.5km from
suburb (Dodson)
Hill High School
3.8km from suburb (Lawson)
Mountain High School
900m from suburb (Lawson)
SUBURB OF
Dodson
Less than 20kms
from the City
Ryder High School
4.2km from suburb (Lawson)
SUBURB OF
Lawson
Less than 10kms
from the City
Park Secondary School
6.0km from suburb (Lawson)
Manchester College
Marple High School
3.2km from suburb (Dodson)
Charles High School
1.9km from suburb (Lawson)
School-of-choice
Beakin High School
7.4km from suburb (Lawson)
SUBURB OF
Melville
Less than 10kms
from the City
Yates College
8.4km from suburb (Lawson)
School-of-choice
Matheson Secondary School
6.8km from suburb (Lawson)
Christ College
12.2km from suburb (Lawson)
0 1km 10km
Box College
6.6km from suburb (Lawson)

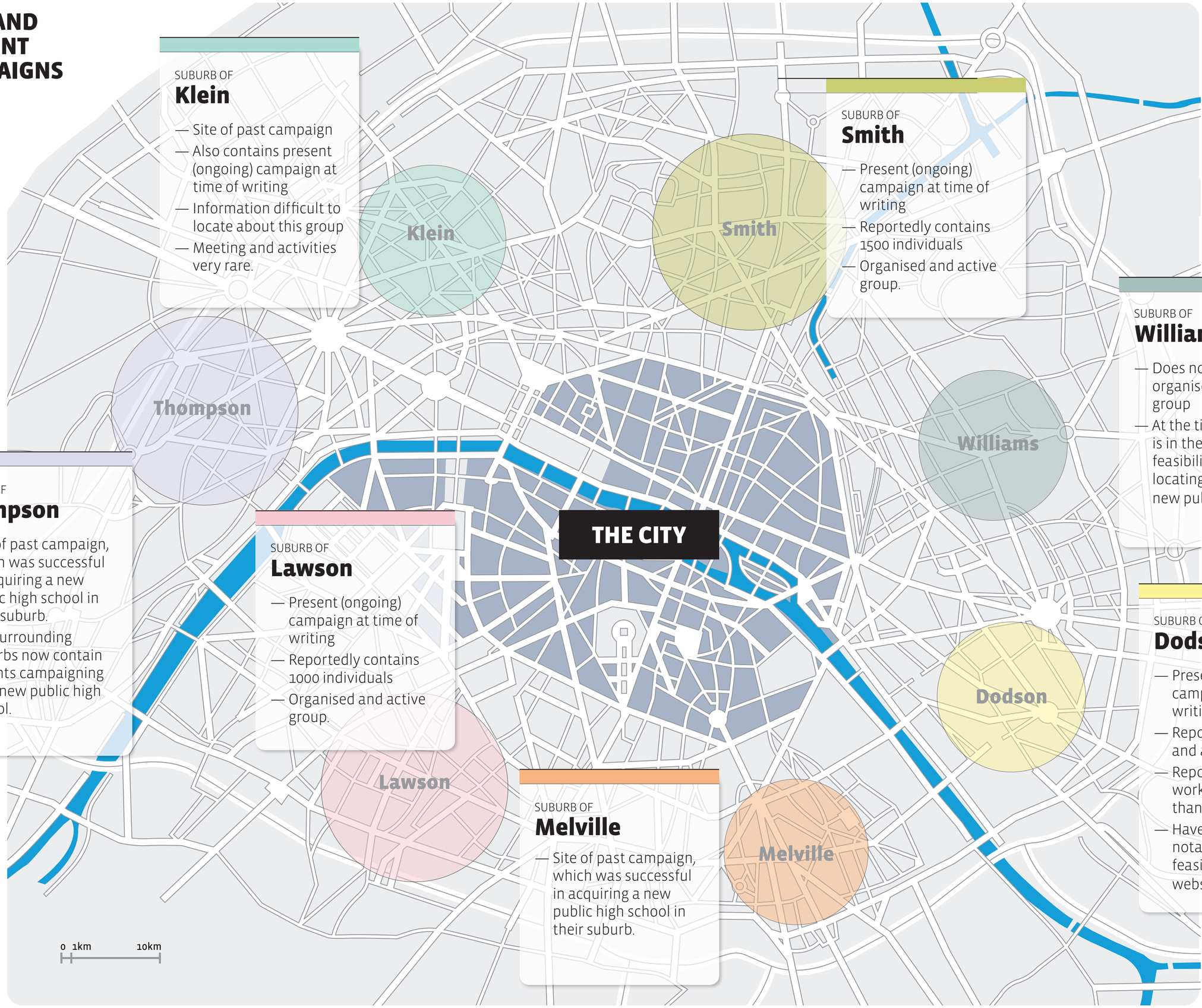

GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
NON-GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
THE CITY
Hoyle College
6.5km from suburb (Lawson)
Hill High School
3.8km from suburb (Lawson)
Mountain High School
900m from suburb (Lawson)
SUBURB OF
Lawson
Less than 10kms
from the City
Park Secondary School
6.0km from suburb (Lawson)
Ryder High School
4.2km from suburb (Lawson)
Charles High School
1.9km from suburb (Lawson)
School-of-choice
Beakin High School
7.4km from suburb (Lawson)
Yates College
8.4km from suburb (Lawson)
School-of-choice
Matheson Secondary School
6.8km from suburb (Lawson)
Christ College
12.2km from suburb (Lawson)
Box College
6.6km from suburb (Lawson)
0 1km 10km


GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
NON-GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
Axis High
7.8km from suburb (Smith)
Apple High
6.8km from suburb (Smith)
Riley Secondary
5.3km from suburb (Smith)
SUBURB OF
Smith
Less than 10kms
from the City
School-of-choice
Hampton College
6.0km from suburb (Smith)
Smith College
School-of-choice
Gregory Secondary
3.7km from suburb (Smith)
THE CITY
0 1km 10km


GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
NON-GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL
Clarke Secondary School
2.0km from suburb (Thompson)
SUBURB OF
Thompson
Less than 10kms
from the City
Thompson High School
THE CITY
0 1km 10km

PAST AND PRESENT CAMPAIGNS

(2012)



SUBURB OF
Klein

— Site of past campaign
— Also contains present (ongoing) campaign at time of writing
— Information difficult to locate about this group
— Meeting and activities very rare.

SUBURB OF
Smith

— Present (ongoing) campaign at time of writing
— Reportedly contains 1500 individuals
— Organised and active group.

SUBURB OF
Williams

— Does not contain an organised campaign group
— At the time of writing, is in the process of a feasibility study and locating a site for a new public high school.

SUBURB OF
Thompson

— Site of past campaign, which was successful in acquiring a new public high school in their suburb.
— The surrounding suburbs now contain parents campaigning for a new public high school.

SUBURB OF
Lawson

— Present (ongoing) campaign at time of writing
— Reportedly contains 1000 individuals
— Organised and active group.

SUBURB OF
Melville

— Site of past campaign, which was successful in acquiring a new public high school in their suburb.

SUBURB OF
Dodson

— Present (ongoing) campaign at time of writing
— Reports rare meetings and activity
— Reports a small working party (less than 20 members)
— Have achieved quite notable sponsors, feasibility study, have a website.