Deschooling for Outsiders

A critical ethnographic investigation of an alternative learning environment in regional Australia.

by

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Thesis

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DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP AND CO-CONTRIBUTION

Publications by the candidate relevant to this thesis

I declare that all publications included in this manuscript have not been submitted for an

award by another research degree candidate or co-Author, either at CQUniversity or

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Abstract

Learning does not need to be confined to institutions of formal schooling. Deschooling for Outsiders explores the issue of whether young people need to learn in institutionalised environments grounded in industrialised educative purpose or if they can learn in flexible, supportive community led environments designed to develop student's free-thinking and active participation in their community. This thesis details a critical ethnographic research project aimed to construct an understanding of the learning experiences of youth who, as "outsiders" of a conventional schooling system, participated in a community-based alternative learning environment (ALE) for young people aged 15-18 years in regional Queensland, Australia. Through a critical lens, this research project has identified the features of a second-chance ALE and considered how these features have impacted both the learning and the post-senior secondary school transition pathways of these young people. The study used critical discourse analysis to elicit the core discursive themes central to this environment from observations, interviews, and artefacts.

Deschooling for Outsiders explores concerns that have been raised transnationally about whether the systematic removal of young people from formal schooling into second-chance ALEs is in their best interests. The curriculum offered in these ALEs often puts students at more risk due to the strong focus on vocational and basic skill attainment, with a lack of formal academic qualifications that can be attained. Findings from contextual literature consistently raised the concern that the curriculum affordances in second-chance ALEs are not supporting sustainable transition pathways for these marginalised young people at a time when many industries in regional areas across the world are morphing from low to high-skill frameworks with concomitant knowledge demands. Given this context, the key issue of concern addressed in this thesis is that these outsiders of conventional schooling have a right to the same learning and transition opportunities as those who do have the social capital to negotiate the standard model of schooling.

Deschooling for Outsiders serves as a catalyst to conceptually reconstructing how learning and learners are positioned in 21st century societies. This thesis places a spotlight on the ways that institutionalised environments may not be entirely necessary to address the learning needs of all young people. Findings from this study challenge the hegemonic discourses of second-chance ALEs as second-rate learning options by offering possibilities of more equitable access and choice in curriculum and transition pathways for these outsiders. Deschooling for Outsiders has implications for not just the outsiders attending second-chance ALEs, but for how contemporary societies conceptualise learning.

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Publications and Presentations: Relevant to thesis content

Peer reviewed publications

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Harris, L., Dargusch, J., Ames, K., & Bloomfield, C. (2020). Catering for 'very different kids': distance education teachers' understandings of and strategies for student engagement. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/13603116.2020.1735543

Peer reviewed conference abstracts

Bloomfield, C., Harreveld, B., & Fisher, R.J. (2018, September). *Learning to Labour in the 21st Century: Troubling transition opportunities for young people from deschooled alternative learning spaces in regional Australia*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK.

Bloomfield, C., Harreveld, B., & Fisher, R.J. (2018, September). *Stratifying structures: An ethnographic investigation of curriculum affordances and systemic structures of an alternative learning program for excluded young people.* Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Free University of Bolzano, Italy.

Dargusch, J., Harris, L., Ames, K., & Bloomfield, C. (2018, December). '*How I know that they're engaged?': Distance education teachers understandings of student engagement and their*

strategies to support it. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, University of Sydney, Australia.

Submitted manuscripts

Bloomfield, C., Harreveld, B., & Fisher, R. (May 2021, submitted). 'You don't have to feel trapped': Architectural discourses of youth engagement in a community-based learning environment in regional Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*.

Symposia presentations

Bloomfield, C. (2015, August). The Practicality of Criticality. In B. Harreveld (Chair), *School of Education and the Arts Research Symposium.* Symposium conducted at the meeting of CQUniversity, Brisbane, QLD.

Bloomfield, C. (2016, September). Be Different Make a Difference. In D. Murray (Chair), *Doing School Differently: National flexible and inclusive education conference.* Symposium conducted at the meeting of Berry Street Childhood Institute, Melbourne, VIC.

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List of Acronyms

ACARA – Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

ALE – Alternative Learning Environment

BKSB – Basic Key Skills Builder

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CDT – Critical Discourse Theory

CPAR – Critical Participatory Action Research

DET – Department of Education and Training (Queensland)

FSK – Foundational Skills for Work and vocational pathways

IDMT – Information, Digital Media and Technology

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

LGA – Local Government Authority

LGBTIQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

NGO – Non-Government Organisation

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

QCE – Queensland Certificate of Education

RTO – Registered Training Organisation

SEIFA – Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

SES – Socio-Economic Status

TAFE – Technical and Further Education

TSDE – Tulsa School of Distance Education

VET – Vocational Education and Training

VETiS – Vocational Education and Training in Schools

Prologue - The biographically situated researcher

When reflecting on what has influenced me to research young people who have been oppressed by the education system and who are often labelled as disengaged, misfits, or fringe dwellers, my mind consistently filters its way through my lived experience to fiction. I refer to a novel, the 1967 teen novel "The Outsiders" by S.E. Hinton, that was prescribed reading in my Year 10 English class; a novel that echoed my own thoughts on topics of social justice and class division. In the 2003 edition, the book's editor, Julia Eccleshare (2003) described how this influential story written by a 17 year-old woman came to be:

> S.E. Hinton wrote The Outsiders because she was outraged by the way some in society are condemned to live on the margins: boys and girls who come from little and, despite being bright and potentially achieving, have little hope of going anywhere (p. i).

While I was first attracted to the story by the fierce loyalty and mateship portrayed through the street gangs, I too was witnessing this same class division some twenty-three years later in a very similar regional city context to the one portrayed in the novel.

This novel continues to influence me to this day and had a part to play in my transition from being a senior secondary school student into studying to become an English teacher. After graduating both the state education system and undergraduate university in the same region of Queensland, Australia as the study, I began teaching in local state secondary schools that served those of similar background to the characters in the novel and to myself. I identified early on that these young people needed social support to overcome barriers before any meaningful learning could occur. This had me shift gears from classroom teaching in a conventional secondary school to running an Alternative Learning Environment (ALE), once again within the same geographical area as this study. After further postgraduate study, I became a school counsellor, but always remained attached to an ALE which finally led me to being the guidance officer supporting the young people of the ALE upon which this study is based.

Beyond my desire to empower young people who are marginalised by society I also have a deep connection to this regional area that is my home. I continue to live in this region just as six generations of my family have done since leaving the UK in vain hope of a more prosperous life at the height of Australia's gold rush era. I see this community through a weathered lens of intimate knowledge of the history of challenges for marginalised people in this region. Working as a school counsellor in this community for over ten years has exposed me to the plights of many young people from a diverse range of backgrounds who have struggled to overcome inequity.

My experiences in this regional community have developed in me a keen sense of social justice which has shaped my approach to this research. Here I must acknowledge the influence that my insatiable desire to empower those whom the system oppresses, rejects and fails to cater for has had on this study. Researcher choices are not made in isolation. Our biographies influence who we are as researchers and the types of research we conduct.[1] I acknowledge that my biography has influenced my research, I can only hope that this thesis provides explanation and justification for my researcher choices. Finally, if you too are a fan of the cult classic "The Outsiders" (Hinton, 1967/2003), you may note that the pseudonyms used to describe the ALE sites in this study are locations from the novel. This is a nod to Susan Hinton and her inspirational novel about young people living on the margins. Whether you hail from the west side or the east side, I hope you dig sunsets too.

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[1] These ethical issues will be addressed in detail in Chapter Four.

Chapter One: Introduction

Young people who feel marginalised by school often find difficulty in re-engaging with formal learning once they become "outsiders" of the education system (Edwards, 2018; J. Sanders, Munford, & Boden, 2018; te Riele, Wilson, Wallace, McGinty, & Lewthwaite, 2017). Deschooling for Outsiders reports on a critical ethnographic study of a group of Alternative Learning Environments (ALEs) where young people had the opportunity to re-engage in learning in community spaces. This introductory chapter provides a brief background to the study, followed by an outline of the aim, research questions, and objectives. The significance and scope will also be explained before an overview of the thesis document is provided.

1.0 Background

The field of alternative education hosts a broad spectrum of learning programs and environments that cater for youth who may be considered to be underserved by the standard system of education delivery. ALEs, while generally being different in their approach to learning and their governance when compared to conventional schools, are often constrained by the same pressures and influences of a society. ALEs too have their own inherent power structures that are influenced by the values and directives of corporatised education systems and the influence of the government legislature that funds them.

ALEs differ greatly in design and purpose as they can cater for the learning needs of a various array of students. From an international perspective, ALEs cater for young people who have become disenfranchised with the standard model of schooling, young people who have been excluded from conventional schools, those who live in geographically isolated locations, and those whose parents may have chosen an ALE based on moral and/or religious objection to the conventional school system (Buckingham, 2017; Guterman & Neuman, 2017; Myconos, Thomas, Wilson, Te Riele, & Swain, 2016; Vadeboncoeur & Petry, 2017). While there are these different reasons for young people to attend ALEs, this study has focused on ALEs in regional Australia that cater for the learning needs of young people who have disengaged, for whatever reason, from the senior phase of secondary school. These types of ALEs can be termed second-chance ALEs due to them being another chance for young people to gain education qualifications, with the intention of supporting their transition to a life beyond the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) status

trajectory that failing to complete senior secondary school in Australia has been shown to have (Stanwick, Forrest, & Skujins, 2017; Vadeboncoeur & Vellos, 2016).

The group of five second-chance ALEs that have provided the focus for this study serviced youth aged 15-18 in regional Queensland, Australia who had left senior secondary school prior to completion either by choice or were forcibly removed and therefore considered outsiders of conventional schooling. These ALEs represented a second chance for these outsiders to engage in education and training. All five sites utilised the same model of curriculum delivery where the young people engaged in learning through a blending of face-to-face support and a school curriculum of literacy and numeracy short courses that young people accessed via laptop computers. A collaboration between a school of distance education and community support agencies made this possible by providing laptop learning spaces that were staffed by both school and community support personnel. The school of distance education provided the laptop computers, and the community support agencies provided the physical space and internet access. The young people had support from youth workers each day, while support from educators was via email or phone with face-to-face contact one to two days per week. The curriculum was self-paced course work that supported initial engagement through hyper-flexibility, but no group lessons were afforded thereby limiting opportunities for collaborative learning to these young people. However, online group lessons were provided to the other student cohorts studying via this school of distance education.

Taking a critical ethnographic perspective, this study investigated participants' (students and staff) perceptions of whether these second-chance ALEs actually met student learning needs. It examined both the lived experience of the youth who attend these second-chance ALEs and the inherent power structures that impacted upon their learning. The vocational pathways that existed to enable sustainable transitions to life beyond these learning environments were also considered through examining the curriculum affordances that this deschooled alternative provided. However, due to this study not being designed as a longitudinal study, the focus has remained on the young people's transition aspirations and potential post-ALE pathways rather than reporting findings based on destination data.

1.2 Research problem

When this study began, ALEs in Queensland catered for 2000 plus students (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2016). This figure has since risen to over 3500 in 2020 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2020). The second-chance ALEs of this study were situated in a regional community in Queensland that had been identified as a region of high vulnerability and disadvantage (Every Child CQ Inc, 2019). In 2014 a survey of this

region's population was conducted by The Smith Family. Findings established that within this regional setting, over half of the population fell into the two most disadvantaged categories on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). This was significantly higher than the state average, with 59.7% of the population falling into these two categories compared to 40% for the rest of Queensland (The Smith Family, 2014). At the end of 2019, 17.9% of the young people (aged 15-24) in this regional area were unemployed compared to the state figure of 14.0% (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2019). These statistics indicate some of the barriers that young people in this region were facing in their transitions from senior secondary school to employment or further education and/or training.

Many of the young people living in this regional community fitted categories of being pre-NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment) and/or marginalised by society. Given this context, the problem being addressed in this study was that young people, like those in these second-chance ALEs, who could be categorised as not fitting within the standard model of education offered in Queensland schools, have lost their right to the same opportunities as those who do have the social capital to negotiate the standard model. The current curriculum offerings for students who attended these second-chance ALEs was limited to literacy, numeracy, and some externally provided vocational training courses. This raised the question of whether students who took this educational pathway were limited in their post-secondary school opportunities. These unique types of second-chance ALEs were investigated critically to see if they were supporting marginalised young people in their transitions beyond NEET status or if they were in fact contributing to class stratification through an instrumentalist approach to the purpose of education.

1.3 Aims, research questions, & objectives

1.3.1 Aim

This study aimed to construct an understanding of the learning experiences of the youth who attended these five second-chance ALEs in regional Queensland, Australia. This understanding was constructed from both students' and staffs' perceptions of whether their learning needs were being met through this ALE.

1.3.2 Research questions

1. What are the features of a group of five second-chance ALEs that support the learning of young people (15-18 years of age) in regional Queensland?

2. How do these features impact on the young people's post-ALE transition pathways?

1.3.3 Objectives

To answer the research questions the following research objectives were implemented:

- Describe the features of the five Alternative Learning Environments:
    - Observe the lived experiences of participants (16 participant observations within five sites)
    - Collect existing data from the field (11 GB of artefacts held by sites and the partner organisations)
- Identify participant perceptions of how the features of this type of second-chance ALE impact on student learning and aspirations for post-ALE transition pathways:
    - Interview participants (n. 24)
    - Triangulate interview data with observation notes, artefacts, and researcher journal.

1.4 Significance

The research is significant given the absence of knowledge about distance learning for marginalised young people in second-chance ALEs. By critically examining how education systems perpetuate discourses that marginalise members of a society, significance can be found in identifying the power relationships that reinforce marginalisation. This informs the critical engagement in new or redefined discourses that support equitable access to opportunities for capital accumulation in spite of social class barriers. This study has shown significance in the (1) empirical, (2) methodological, and (3) conceptual fields to which it contributes as described below.

1. Empirically, this study is significant in the way that it has highlighted the potential for improvement in learning engagement through support and flexibility. It contributes to understanding of the sociocultural factors that influence young people's post-ALE transition pathways. It also produces experiential knowledge of the role of distance learning to deliver school curriculum flexibly in ALEs and the potential that this mode of learning has in leading to more equitable transition opportunities for young people.

2. The methodological significance of this study resides in how it provides an awareness of what issues could be encountered when conducting research with marginalised young people. Through critically appraising the impact of the choice of methodology on this study, knowledge relating to the limitations of the research

design in empowering the young people who participated in the study has also been produced.

3. The critical edge to the use of discourse theory to explore the conceptual underpinning of the study has aided in the articulation of how the features of these second-chance ALEs impact on the post-ALE transition pathways of these young people. Through developing a critical awareness of the power relationships that not only exist in these second-chance ALEs but also those created through the research process, critical questions of who truly benefits from the research could be posed. This study identified that while benefits for some stakeholders were evident, for the young people who participated in the study, the benefits were not apparent.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

This chapter, **Chapter One**, has provided an overview of the study that included a background to situate the study in the field, followed by an explanation of the study's research problem. The study's aims, research questions and research objectives were then presented before the significance of the study was addressed.

Chapter Two of this thesis is a contextual literature review designed to critically examine the existing data from research about alternative learning. This review is of critically appraised studies, government reports, policy documents and publications by expert theorists in the field of alternative education, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of what is currently known about ALEs. The contextual themes that emerge from this literature review will provide a springboard to the conceptualisations that will be explored in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three will explore the how second-chance ALEs, like the one being studied in this thesis, can be understood theoretically by considering how they are impacted upon by specific dominant discourses within broader education systems. There will be a conceptualisation of Critical Discourse Theory (CDT), followed by an exploration of the relationships of power and control in the sociocultural context of second-chance ALEs. The exploration of the dominant discourses affecting second-chance ALEs provides insight into the way discourse can reproduce, or resist, unequal power differentials within education systems (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011).

Chapter Four will show how the design of this study has been driven by the contextual and conceptual fields of knowledge, established in Chapters Two and Three respectively, to address the research questions posed in Chapter One. This chapter will detail the choices of methodology, data collection and analysis processes for an investigation into how a group of five second-chance ALEs is experienced by both young people and staff seeking to meet their learning needs. The power of the

insider researcher is considered throughout this chapter and the impact that this power has had on shaping the study is critiqued. The effect of this insider status on participants, data collection, data analysis, and the study's findings are addressed, along with other ethical considerations, before the limitations and validity of the research design are presented.

Chapter Five is the first of three evidentiary chapters. It addresses the first research question by exploring the features of these second-chance ALEs in regional Queensland (RQ 1). The first section addresses the contextual framing of the sociocultural field, the second section then provide a contextual overview of the features of each of the five ALE sites.

Chapter Six explores the discourses relating to the impact of the features of these second-chance ALEs on student learning (RQ 1). This chapter considers these discourses, that have been co-constructed from the data collected in this study, and link directly to the structural and cultural features of the second-chance ALEs. This illustrates the culture-sharing within and among the ALEs, community partnerships, and the school of distance education which provides flexible laptop learning curriculum, with low ratio student to support staff learning. The chapter concludes by describing how these discourses are fluid constructs of the features of these second-chance ALEs from the perspectives of those who work and learn within them.

Chapter Seven will explore how the features of these second-chance ALEs affect student post-ALE transition pathways (RQ 2). It considers the impact of institutional power on transition options and how staff perceptions and behaviours also impact the transition experience. The power relationships govern how these second-chance ALEs are experienced and their influence on how the young people are supported in their transitions beyond senior secondary schooling will be explored. This chapter provides interpretive insights into the advantages and disadvantages of a flexible deschooled ALE for outsiders.

The final chapter, **Chapter Eight**, provides a conceptual framing of the discourses that have emerged within this thesis. Links will be made between the discourses that emerged from the conceptual underpinnings in Chapters Two and Three, and the interpretations of the data represented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This conceptual framing of the findings will also serve to address the research aim and questions. Chapter Eight considers what is now known about Deschooling for Outsiders through the discourses of previous chapters. This chapter concludes by with thoughts on the significance and implications of the study, with reflections on how this study may influence future research.

Chapter Two: The Context of Deschooling for Outsiders

2.0 Introduction

Deschooling for Outsiders describes learning environments designed to engage young people who have experienced marginalisation in schools by removing the institutional barriers that have excluded them. Illich (1971/1980) referred to such unschooled learning environments as giving an impression of illegitimacy, being unaccredited and radical due to their potential to upset conventional notions of society. This chapter examines the context of Deschooling for Outsiders by considering existing literature on how marginalised young people, as outsiders of conventional schooling systems, are reengaged with formal learning through ALEs that represent deschooled alternatives to conventional schooling. Findings from a contextual literature review designed to critically examine the existing data from research about ALEs will be presented. Particular attention is given to research that examines how the structural features of ALEs differ to conventional schools as well as research that considers the effect of ALEs on the young people who attend them. Over one hundred and fifty books and articles describing studies that have occurred in ALEs were consulted, with fifty of the most relevant and recent studies alphabetically recorded in an analytic matrix included in Appendix A. This analytic matrix has purposefully been limited to literature that relates specifically to this study's research questions, with each study categorised under four themes of alternative learning; second-chance ALEs; marginalised young people; and transitions. These analytic themes have also served to structure the subsections of this chapter where findings from the contextual literature review are presented.

The aim of this contextual literature review was to provide a solid background to the study, by determining what has already been written on the topic of alternative learning, the outlining of relevant key terms, and analysing major trends and potential gaps in the literature. Consulted literature consisted of previous research studies, government reports, policy documents and publications by expert theorists in the field of alternative learning. From the review of this literature a substantiated definition of ALEs will be provided. The purpose of the review was to gain a better understanding of what is currently known about ALEs, specifically how they are reported to be experienced by young people and their impact on senior secondary schooling transitions. During the initial scoping of existing studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. This meant that while special schools designed to cater for the specific needs of students with multiple disabilities was not included in this review, neither were academy schools designed to cater for students identified by conventional schools as highly capable. It was also acknowledged that while schools

that align with the philosophies of Steiner and/or Montessori, along with radical free and democratic schools are certainly considered to be alternatives to conventional schools, their inclusion would broaden the focus of the literature review beyond the intent of providing a concise contextual frame for this study.

The review is a thematically ordered and integrative critical analysis providing a contextual background for this study by identifying: what are ALEs, why they exist, and whom they serve. These questions are expressed through the abovementioned themes that emerged through the critical analysis of data in the review and guided by the research questions of the study. The critical analysis of the literature followed an iterative process with an initial scoping sweep of existing data to establish the parameters of the review. This initial analysis of the data aided in sharpening the parameters of the review as a broad range of definitions of ALEs was identified. With each iterative sweep the relevance of publications to this study narrowed by focusing on studies of ALEs with features similar to those identified in this study i.e. alternative learning sites for young people who have disengaged from senior secondary school.

2.1 What is deschooling in Alternative Learning Environments?

ALEs are broadly defined as learning environments that are different when compared with conventional schools. ALEs can also be considered as deschooled learning environments where the institutional features of schools are removed from the learning experience. Transnationally, alternatives to conventional schooling have seen an increase in attention from both young people and their parents with increases in flexible, alternative and democratic schooling models operating (Guterman & Neuman, 2017; McGregor, Mills, Te Riele, Baroutsis, & Hayes, 2017; te Riele, 2014). The features of ALEs differ widely with many being designed for very different purposes and catering to different learning needs; therefore, this study's definition of an ALE needs to be articulated by identifying how ALEs are currently defined. ALEs have been defined in previous studies as supporting the learning needs of young people who:

- Have become disenfranchised with the conventional model of education (Myconos et al., 2016; te Riele et al., 2017),
- Have been excluded from conventional schools (McGregor et al., 2017; Vadeboncoeur & Petry, 2017),
- Have a moral or religious objection to what is learned in conventional schools (Guterman & Neuman, 2017),
- Are geographically isolated and cannot physically attend a conventional school (Buckingham, 2017; Reiach, Averbeck, & Cassidy, 2012).

Researchers have also described some ALEs as having the potential to be the disruptors of dominant discourse in education by doing school differently (Bloomfield, 2016; Edwards, 2018; Hope, 2019; McGregor et al., 2017).[2] Some of the studies that will be explored within this chapter refer to the counterhegemonic potential that exists within ALEs (Azaola, 2012; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017; Hope, 2019). While such opportunities are described, often through critical pedagogical approaches to learning and the promotion of active citizenship (Edwards, 2018; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017; Hope, 2019), it is acknowledged that this is not always the case as it depends very much on what purpose an ALE has and what power structures may control how the learning environment is experienced. Therefore, to identify how ALEs can be described, the terms alternative learning and conventional schooling will now be considered as to whether they describe diametrically opposed learning environments or if different learning environments are in fact comprised of features that can be ascribed to both key terms.

2.1.1 Alternatives to conventional schooling

The terms alternative and conventional could be seen as two sides of the same coin. These terms, while they appear at face value to be diametrically opposed, are influenced by context. They represent schooling contexts with varying degrees of difference in physical features, approaches to learning, and purpose. It may be more appropriate to consider a school's features as either more progressive or more traditionalist in design (Dewey, 1938/2007), because what it means to be a conventional schooling institution and an alternative schooling institution has shown to ebb and flow as societal perspectives and values on education have changed.[3] The concept of having a continuum of how progressive or traditional a schooling institution can be likened to the continuum that was originally theorised in 1973 by Ivan Illich in his book "Deschooling Society". Illich (1973) proposed an "institutional spectrum" (p. 24) as a theoretical framework to represent the degrees of conviviality and manipulation an institution may have. Features of conviviality have been described by Illich (1973) as providing freedom to learn without the constraints of institutional authority. This contrasts with what he referred to as features of manipulation within institutions of learning where learning was a locked-step, linear progression through generic curricula designed to foster docile compliancy and assign social rank (Illich, 1973). Deschooling can be considered as the removal of barriers to learning in schools that reinforce existing class distinctions and hegemonic power in

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[2] Doing school differently refers to how ALEs were identified in this review to facilitate learning in not just different physical contexts to conventional schools and the types of learning experiences they provided, but also in the pedagogy they employed, the way in which they measured learning outcomes, and their proclaimed vision for the purpose of education.

[3] See Section 3.3.1 for how a discourse of alternative is constructed in the field of education.

societies.[4] Illich's (1973) "institutional spectrum" (p. 24) has proven useful in considering the differences between ALEs and conventional schooling models.

Conventional schooling can be described as what the majority of young people in society experience as formal education. Tuition is provided via face-to-face teaching to groups of students within an institutional setting known as a school or college. This model has been the norm in western societies since the industrial era; but acknowledged as being more and more supplemented with online modes of education delivery (Edwards, 2018; Harris, Dargusch, Ames, & Bloomfield, 2020; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014). However, it can be difficult to gain a commonly accepted definition of alternative learning, as the term ALE can be used to describe behaviour modification centres, second-chance schools, and even democratic schools (McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills, Baroutsis, McGregor, Te Riele, & Hayes, 2016). Importantly, many of the features of ALEs are similar to conventional schools, as they are places of formal learning with institutionalised values that are imposed upon young minds.

The distinction between alternative learning and conventional schooling lies in the level of conviviality versus manipulation that occurs within the learning environment (Illich, 1973). To remove institutional influence would be to deschool learning (Illich, 1973). While some ALEs may have this intent, this literature review identified that most ALEs, while being more flexible in their approach to institutionalised learning than conventional schools, espoused goals that were often the same i.e. to transition young people from formal education to contributing members of society through completion of academic and/or vocational qualifications (Edwards, 2018; McGee & Lin, 2017; Myconos et al., 2016; te Riele et al., 2017; Vadeboncoeur & Vellos, 2016). ALEs can therefore be considered as sitting towards the convivial end of Illich's (1973) "institutional spectrum" (p. 24) due to their flexible delivery, sometimes deschooled physicality, and predominately progressive educative vision; however, there are still manipulative elements present in ALEs that conform to traditional educative purposes of producing human capital. Each ALE must therefore be measured on this spectrum individually as not all are designed with progressive education in mind.

ALEs may have their origins in the progressive education of Dewey (1938/2007), but they can also be traced back to the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, and even Ferrer (Avrich, 2014; McGregor & Mills, 2012; Salem Press, 2014). The Modern School movement beginning in 1910, originating from the Spanish and U.S. anarchist movements and in particular from the teachings of Spanish educator and martyr, Francisco Ferrer (Avrich, 2014; Suissa, 2005).[5] This was

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[4] Gramsci's (1975/2011) concept of hegemony will be explored in Section 3.1.1.
[5] Ferrer had been a major influence on the anarchist movement in Spain and after being disillusioned by the failure of terrorist tactics, he like many Anarchists began to place their strongest emphasis on the importance

identified in the review as the first type of ALE to have been documented. While the Modern School may have been the first, the most well-known historically significant ALE identified was A.S. Neil's Summerhill (Neill, 1973; Swartz, 2016). Summerhill, opening in 1921, was grounded in a socialist perspective on education, promoting the ideas of democratic school governance where students had the same rights as staff; and of a freedom to learn, where student choice was central to the school's philosophical underpinnings with agentic engagement the key to valued learning experiences (Hemmings, 1973; Neill, 1973, 1992). These central ideas and values contrasted with conventional schooling at the time and continue to be identified by contemporary researchers in this way (Hope, 2019; Swartz, 2016).

Grimaldi's (2012) four-year critical ethnography investigated an inclusive education policy "enacted to combat social exclusion and dropout in a disadvantaged inner-city area in the south of Italy" (p. 1131). This contemporary study questioned the effectiveness of this inclusive education policy within a neoliberal political climate (Grimaldi, 2012). The policy aimed to address early school leaving in a vocationally focused secondary school. This school was reportedly a poor performing school with high dropout percentages, servicing students with a "poor cultural background and were 'low achievers' at risk of social exclusion" (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 1138). Discourses of growth, competitiveness and human capital were identified within the policy which referred to "the purposes of education in terms of economic rationalism" (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 1150). The study found that this strategy was not effective in its goal of social inclusion but was shown to be contributing to a reinforcement of "discriminatory practices and enhancing the selective function of schooling" (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 1150). Grimaldi's (2012) article identified the struggle that education systems can have in addressing social equity and the potential that manipulative system responses can have little or even detrimental effects on those they are trying to support.

In Edwards's (2018) book on the use of relational pedagogy in a school-based youth centre's alternative program he acknowledged that the number of students attending alternative education provision in the UK had more than doubled between 2000 and 2014 to 20,503 (p. 1). Edwards (2018) called for a more holistic social learning pedagogy, based in the teachings of Freire (1970) to re-engage marginalised young people with not just education but also with family. Within the ethnographic study upon which this book is based, Edwards acted as an insider researcher, investigating the phenomenon of relational pedagogy in the youth centre where he was a lead

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of education in achieving their social goals. Ferrer's Modern School (Escuela Moderna), was a project which exercised a considerable influence on Catalan education and on experimental techniques of teaching generally (Bookchin, 1997).

practitioner. The study included fourteen secondary school students who were attending an alternative curriculum program at the school-based youth centre and engaged these young people as active participants in the research. Two of the students, along with eight youth leaders participated as researchers to video record and analyse the social practices of their peers. Focus group interviews were then used to interpret these video recordings where six relationship building behaviours were identified (Edwards, 2018). These behaviours where then embedded within an accredited, co-created curriculum. Edwards's (2018) study demonstrated how a relational pedagogy can be implemented as a convivial feature of an ALE to support the engagement of young people marginalised by the conventional schooling system.

From 2012-2014, McGregor et al. (2017) conducted a multi-sited ethnography of four ALEs across three Australian states and one territory. This study investigated students' previous school experiences; their pathways into the unconventional sites; their reasons for staying; what worked well; and each site's resourcing and sustainability issues. Thirty staff and sixty-seven young people from the various sites were interviewed. These sites varied in location and governance with one government operated ALE, one non-government operated ALE being funded by government, one ALE within a conventional metropolitan secondary school, and one community-based ALE. Findings from the study suggested that a diverse curriculum that develops critical perspectives in ALEs was needed, instead of the basic, vocationally focused, utilitarian curriculum that these ALEs provided (McGregor et al., 2017). They advised that young people in ALEs need support in the removal of barriers of inequity to access learning on the same basis as those in conventional schools. The authors indicated that there were signs of "controlled vocationalism" (McGregor et al., 2017, p. 170) in Australia due to the levels of control afforded to governments and big business in determining the direction of funding for Vocational Education and Training (VET). McGregor et al. (2017) referred to this as a "human capital educational paradigm that aims to make young people work ready also reinforces a deficit view of disadvantaged young people as being incapable of challenging intellectual work, reducing them to very marginal roles in powerful capitalist systems" (p. 29). McGregor et al. (2017) called for young people in ALEs to have the opportunity to develop the abilities in independent thinking and technological expertise to support their learning into the future and give them the confidence to actively participate in society. However, they found no evidence of this in their study.

Borup and Kennedy (2017), in their edited book chapter, *The Case for K-12 Online Learning*, referred to how "online learning has experienced tremendous growth over the past two decades" (p. 402), is ubiquitous in education, and considered as a popular, viable alternative to conventional schooling. They described both the benefits and the difficulties experienced by teachers, students,

and parents with learning in an online mode. Some of these benefits were: offering flexibility in teaching and learning; personalising learning for students; affording teachers a way to connect with students on a more one-on-one level; and preparing students for their transition to tertiary education and/or employment by introducing them to the different ways higher education and businesses operate via online collaboration and project management tools (Borup & Kennedy, 2017, pp. 403-404). Concerns regarding the effectiveness of online learning were however also raised in this chapter, citing the higher attrition rates of students in online learning institutions than conventional schools. This was attributed to developmental readiness of younger students, particularly their "locus of control, self-regulation and metacognitive skills" (Borup & Kennedy, 2017, p. 416), citing that the highly flexible online learning environment may be empowering for some, others may find the relative freedom detrimental to the learning process. Borup and Kennedy (2017) concluded that online learning can be a viable alternative for a diverse learning population, but students need strong support systems to be successful. This finding of Borup and Kennedy (2017) directly links to the type of learning support offered in the five ALEs investigated in Deschooling for Outsiders.

Vadeboncoeur and Vellos (2016) drew from transnational research of ALEs in both Australia and Canada in their journal article describing the importance of learning and teaching relationships in re-engaging young people in learning. The researchers found that the standout feature of the ALEs were the relationships between students and teachers. The supportive relationships provided opportunities for a "dialectical space through which student and teacher work toward accepting what each has to offer in the present, while together building new social futures" (Vadeboncoeur & Vellos, 2016, p. 308). Another key finding presented in this paper was how the terms that researchers use to describe learning environments can influence how they are perceived. Vadeboncoeur and Vellos (2016) noted that "the label of second-chance is often applied pejoratively to alternative and flexible programs" (p. 307). The labelling of ALEs may be necessary to define them, but it is also of the upmost importance to consider the effects of these labels.[6]

These examples of salient studies in the field of alternative learning describe how ALEs can be viewed as spaces that offers flexibility in how students engage in learning, support in terms of learning and social-emotional wellbeing, freedom choose when and how to learn, a critical curriculum, a second chance for young people who have left formal education early, and even as spaces that exist virtually in online learning environments. However, the term ALE still has an even broader definition. Beyond what has been presented here, it has also been used to describe

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[6] The impacts of assigning labels will be explored in Chapters Three & Four of this thesis.

behaviour intervention programs which could be considered to be manipulative in their design with goals of modifying student behaviour to conform with the education system's hegemonic values (McGregor & Mills, 2012). Contemporary alternatives to conventional schooling that were identified in the literature showed them as being diverse in both operation and purpose. Through this literature review process, it was possible to understand how the ALEs upon which this study is based, could be framed within the wider international context of the field of alternative learning. The ALEs in this study fit best with the label of second-chance ALE and for this reason the following subsection narrows the literature review's focus to explaining second-chance ALEs as a specific type of ALE.

2.1.2 Second-chance ALEs

Second-chance ALEs have been receiving transnational interest in recent years (M. Mills & McGregor, 2014). They are described as those ALEs that provide a second chance at education to young people who have disengaged from conventional secondary schools (McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014; Moffatt & Riddle, 2019; Musita, Ogange, & Lugendo, 2018; te Riele, 2014). They tend to cater mainly for young people of secondary school age, with small student numbers compared to conventional classrooms, often but not always located in sites away from conventional schools, and operated by non-government organisations (NGOs) with aims of re-engaging young people in learning to help transition them back to conventional school, into employment, or into further training with VET providers (McGregor et al., 2017; te Riele, 2014; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2013). The sense of community, supportive relationships, access to services, and flexible structure have been cited as deschooled attributes of these ALEs that support engagement of those young people whom the conventional schooling system has failed (Bloomfield, Harreveld, & Fisher, 2020; McGregor & Mills, 2012; Musita et al., 2018; te Riele, 2014).

The abovementioned deschooled attributes of second-chance ALEs, while sometimes labelled as aspects of a holistic learning model, not to be confused with Laird's (1985) Holistic Learning Theory, are elements of a comprehensive learning model often seen in what are termed full-service schools (J. Sanders et al., 2018). M. Sanders (2016) refers to these ALEs that operate as full-service community schools as sites where young people's holistic needs are met with reduced fragmentation and delays often experienced by marginalised individuals accessing community support agencies. Through considering the whole person in this comprehensive approach to learning, engagement in learning would appear more sustainable than within a conventional schooling model with enhanced access to community resources that support students' learning

outcomes (M. Mills & McGregor, 2014; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson, 2006; M. Sanders, 2016).

Second-chance ALEs are also described as vocationally orientated literacy and numeracy providers due to the curriculum that they offer (McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014). Supporting youth with solely vocationally focused learning, has been the point of much academic discussion. Concerns have been raised as to whether such a focus is stifling young people's potential through limited curriculum offerings (Bloomfield, Harreveld, & Fisher, 2018b; McGregor, Mills, Thomson, & Pennacchia, 2018; M. Mills et al., 2016; Musita et al., 2018). Researchers claim that learners in these ALEs are at more risk due to the focus on low-level vocational and basic skill attainment, with a lack of formal academic pathways available to them through a well-rounded curriculum (Bloomfield et al., 2018b; Caroleo, 2014; McGregor et al., 2017). This has been researched in a range of countries, notably in Canada, USA, UK, and Australia, often in conjunction with issues of education, training and/or work engagement and transition pathways post-school (Caroleo, 2014; Henderson & Barnes, 2015; Kraftl, 2015; M. Mills et al., 2016; Salem Press, 2014; Skelton, 2017; Stringer, Kerpelman, & Skorikov, 2012).

Even though a comprehensive approach to learning would appear to be a key feature of these second-chance ALEs, the school curriculum being afforded in these spaces does not seem to align with this approach. Equitable access to a broad curriculum is important for opening transition pathway options to these young people. For young people already marginalised into second-chance ALEs, the lack of school curriculum options results in a worrisome utilitarian perspective on the purpose of their education (Ball, 2016; Saltman, 2012).

2.2 Why do outsiders need second-chance ALEs in Australia?

Second-chance ALEs exist in Australia because of conventional schools' inability to meet the learning needs of all young people. By the time young people reach the senior phase of learning in secondary school (typically when aged 15-18 years), many choose to leave or are asked to leave, but education policy and legislation require that they be engaged in some form of education, training, or employment. Second-chance ALEs therefore exist to re-engage young people who have been marginalised by conventional schooling with learning in ways that meets their needs, while also meeting the education system's needs of supporting student attainment of formal qualifications.[7]

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[7] Within Australia these formal qualifications may be quite diverse in comparison to the education systems of other western countries described in this review.

Second-chance ALEs provide a means to address the difficulties that some young people experience in transitioning from conventional schooling into life beyond their compulsory phase of learning. This has been a major concern in Australia (Thomas, McGinty, te Riele, & Wilson, 2017) . An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report indicated that 580,000 Australians age 15–29 years were NEET (OECD, 2016). This report recommended that Australia needed to improve the quality of VET, particularly for disengaged young people (OECD, 2016).

Education policy reform has tried to address the potential NEET trajectories of young Australians. Young people in Australia have been legislated to either stay in education, or move into training or employment, or a mixture of the three (COAG, 2009; McGregor et al., 2017; Queensland Department of Education, 2018a; Queensland Parliament, 2003; te Riele et al., 2017). There are varied post-school transition pathways offered to students and this highlights the flexibility that the Australian education system provides when compared to highly stratified secondary school systems, (Polesel, 2017). While the Australian education system may not be as academically selective as others globally, for young Australians who are in second-chance ALEs learning and transition options do become limited (McGregor et al., 2017; te Riele, 2014).

This section will explore how second-chance ALEs have emerged in Australia to address the NEET trajectories of marginalised young people who have disengaged from the senior phase of learning in conventional schools (Subsection 2.2.1). This will be followed an examination of the impact of Australian education policies on transitions from the senior phase of secondary school learning for young people in Queensland, Australia. This focus on education policy within the state of Queensland provides a deeper context to the educational and political geography of this study (Subsection 2.2.2).

2.2.1 Engaging the outsiders

Young people who attend second-chance ALEs have been referred to in the literature as pre-NEETs (see Powell, 2018; Stanwick et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2017) and as marginalised young people (see G. McGregor & Mills, 2012; M. Mills et al., 2016; Myconos et al., 2016) due to their potential transition trajectories that have been influenced by their marginalisation within the education system (G. McGregor et al., 2017). In many cases these outsiders who attend second-chance ALEs have felt alienated in conventional school, disengaged with learning, and disenfranchised with the education system (McGregor et al., 2017; Moffatt & Riddle, 2019; J. Sanders, Munford, Boden, & Johnston, 2020). They are outsiders of the senior secondary school system in Australia as they are, as much as is allowed by the legislation, channelled by conventional schools into second-chance ALEs that do not provide the same curriculum affordances as those in

the mainstream system of conventional schooling (Caroleo, 2014; McGregor, 2009; M. Mills et al., 2016). They are outsiders because they have been pushed to the margins of the state education system, as they are still enrolled in school, but since they are not making any meaningful contribution to academic attainment data or attendance statistics, they are placed into second-chance ALEs on the margins of schooling.[8] The marginalisation of young people into second-chance ALEs could be viewed as a form of institutionalised social exclusion through the failure of the education system to accommodate young people's learning needs (Myconos et al., 2016).

Researchers claim that young people in these second-chance ALEs are at more risk of entering NEET status due an instrumentalist approach, where there is a lack of choice of formal academic pathways available to them through a well-rounded curriculum (Connor, 2006; McGregor et al., 2017; te Riele et al., 2017). This re-emergence of traditional educative purpose of producing human capital has been seen as a dominant approach to second-chance ALEs that try to circumvent the pre-NEET pathways of these marginalised young people (McGregor et al., 2017). While some second-chance ALEs in metropolitan areas of Australia do afford a relatively broad curriculum, options are more limited and confined in regional areas (Moffatt & Riddle, 2019) The transition journeys of young people, who have been marginalised by education systems, more often than not lead them along a path to low-skill, insecure employment or no employment at all (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2017; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014; Moffatt & Riddle, 2019).

There are a number of risk factors that can be attributed to unsuccessful transitions, including: low socioeconomic status; being indigenous; being male; a lack of human capital (parental education), financial capital (parental income), and social capital (supportive friendships and family relationships) (Lamb et al., 2020; Ross & Gray, 2005). Given that the context of this study is in regional Queensland it is important to note that Lamb et al. (2020) in their report on educational opportunity in Australia also identified that "those living in major city areas are more than twice as likely to have gained a degree or to be studying at age 24 as are those living in regional or remote communities (47.2 per cent for major cities and 20.5 per cent for outer regional and 16.6 per cent for remote communities)." (p. 17). In addition to young people who possess these risk factors, those who attend second-chance ALEs also include young people who: exhibit behavioural or mental health concerns; are pregnant or parenting; are considered disruptive; have disabilities; and are at risk of academic failure (Caroleo, 2014; Putwain, Nicholson, & Edwards, 2016; J. Sanders et al., 2020).

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[8] State education systems refers to the government departments that provide funding and oversight to schools. While schools in Australia are predominately controlled by state and territory governments, the term state also refers in this thesis to Weber's (1930/2002) concept of the state control of the lives of the citizens.

Attempts to re-engage these outsiders with education through second-chance ALEs would appear to be an effective measure to support them to avoid NEET status. However, the curriculum that is afforded to these young people in second-chance ALEs has been questioned in the literature. The narrowing of education options for young people in second-chance ALEs, via what McGregor et al. (2017) refer to as "short-term goals of literacy, numeracy and lower-level vocational qualifications" (p. 31), means that the level and type of educational capital that they can accumulate is reduced. This reinforces Illich's (1973) view that curriculum has always been used to assign social rank.

Second-chance ALEs in Australia are designed to re-engage young people with education and/or training to support their transition from senior secondary schooling to employment (Myconos et al., 2016; te Riele et al., 2017). Australian education systems employing second-chance ALEs as a strategy to address the re-engagement of pre-NEETs (those at risk of transitioning to NEET status), position second-chance ALEs as serving not just the individual needs of young people who have been marginalised by the conventional schooling model, but also Australian society's need for human capital (McGregor et al., 2017). From a system's perspective second-chance ALEs provide opportunities for marginalised young people, who are positioned as outsiders of the conventional senior secondary school, to transition to being insiders of society by becoming gainfully employed and therefore serving as contributing members to the Australian economy (Bauman, 2011, 2012; Musita et al., 2018; te Riele et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Transitions from senior secondary schooling in Australia

The dominant perspective on transitions from senior secondary schooling identified in this contextual literature review was of marginalised young people being skilled to gain employment (Dandolopartners, 2012; J. Sanders et al., 2020; te Riele et al., 2017). Historically, there has never been more transition opportunities for young people exiting the secondary school system in Australia. However, pathway options for these outsiders in second-chance ALEs continue to be limited in comparison to their peers in conventional schools (Bloomfield et al., 2020). Research commissioned by the International Labour Organisation over the last decade suggested that internationally there remain implementation gaps in the well-intentioned reforms to education, training and employment frameworks (CEDEFOP, ETF, & UNESCO, 2017); namely ensuring inclusive and equitable curriculum affordances for young people. Transition pathway options for young people who have diverted from the conventional senior secondary school model in Australia can be considered as limited. Even if pathways to further training and tertiary education are possible, these

pathways tend to be lengthier and more complicated when compared to those who progress through the conventional pathway (Bloomfield et al., 2020).

In Australia, young people's transitions beyond NEET status has been a concern for both federal and state governments for decades. Consequently, legislative reform in Australia during the early 2000s has led to there now being a requirement for young people to stay on at school, engage in training, employment, or a combination of these until seventeen years of age (Stanwick et al., 2017). This legislative change was introduced in 2010, with targets for schools to ensure the attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications (COAG, 2009; Stanwick et al., 2017). Education policy and legislation that are now keeping young Australians in formal education and training until the age of seventeen appears to have led to a rise in the number of second-chance ALEs in the country (McGregor et al., 2017; te Riele, 2014). The National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions set a target of 90% of young people (aged 20–24) completing secondary school with a qualification i.e. Senior Certificate or a VET Certificate II (te Riele et al., 2017). To achieve this goal, Australian state and territories developed legislation to mandate engagement in formal education, training, or employment until the age of seventeen, with second-chance ALEs becoming an integral strategy in achieving this goal (Dandolopartners, 2012; Singh & Harreveld, 2014; te Riele et al., 2017).

Within the context of Queensland, Australia, where this study was situated, the need for second-chance ALEs can be attributed to some degree to it being compulsory for Queensland youth to remain at school until they have completed Year 10 or turned sixteen (Queensland Parliament, 2003). This state legislation pre-empted the National Partnership Agreement by additionally introducing a new compulsory participation phase where once youth complete Year 10 or turn sixteen years of age, they have to remain in education or obtain paid employment for at least 25 hours per week, for a further two years, or until they obtain a Senior Certificate or a VET Certificate III (Queensland Parliament, 2003). The legislation that introduced the compulsory participation phase of senior secondary schooling could be seen to have exacerbated the need for second-chance ALEs in Queensland. Young people who have become disenfranchised by conventional schooling are being required to remain in institutions that they feel no connection to and this has led to increasing numbers of young people becoming outsiders of secondary schooling through school policies that have led to their exclusion or cancellation of enrolment (McGregor et al., 2017; Moffatt & Riddle, 2019). Exclusion from school adversely affects young people's access to learning opportunities and condemns them to weakened socioeconomic positions in society (Bloomfield, Harreveld, & Fisher, 2018a; McGregor et al., 2017). For many, the best option for them is to re-engage with education through second-chance ALEs that have a strong focus on vocational training to develop their

employability skills. A major concern that arises when investigating why second-chance ALEs exist in Australia, is that the achievement of a successful transition pathway from secondary school to further education, training or employment appears to dominate how success is defined for these young people.

Education policies and legislation may aim to prevent the number of young people transitioning to NEET status, but to keep all young people engaged in learning a variety of school and training options have been required. These various schooling options may avail multiple transition pathways beyond NEET status, however the equitable affordance of these options and pathways remains as a concern of academics researching the field of second-chance ALEs. In Queensland, all young people who fall within the compulsory participation phase of senior secondary schooling are expected to be engaged in learning and/or earning. This is regardless of whether the curriculum affordances meet their learning needs or whether there are entry-level employment opportunities available to them; let alone whether they have the social capital, identity capital and emotional intelligence to successfully navigate their transition pathway out of secondary schooling (Bloomfield et al., 2020; Lamb et al., 2020; te Riele, 2006). This creates a problem for not only the young people who are disenfranchised outsiders of the conventional secondary schooling model, but for the schools that struggle to cater for them, and the second-chance ALEs that continually need to justify their existence (McGregor et al., 2017; Myconos et al., 2016; te Riele et al., 2017).

2.3 Chapter summary

This chapter described how the contextual discursive themes of alternative learning, second-chance ALEs, marginalised young people, and transitions have been represented in existing literature. The features of ALEs were considered in comparison to conventional schooling models. These features were critically analysed for both their progressive and traditionalist traits and how these traits could position an ALE along Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum. The studies that were explored in this chapter represented research into the features of alternative learning and presented findings relating to inclusive education policy (Grimaldi, 2012), relational pedagogy (Edwards, 2018), curriculum affordance (McGregor et al., 2017), flexible online learning with support (Borup & Kennedy, 2017), and the power of labels to position (Vadeboncoeur & Vellos, 2016). Senior secondary schooling transitions in Australia were considered, particularly the need for formal academic certification to address the NEET trajectory of marginalised young Australians learning in second-chance ALEs. While counter hegemonic practices may be featured in some alternative learning sites in the form of a critical pedagogy, second-chance ALEs in Australia do not appear to be counterhegemonic, but instead appear to reinforce the state aim of skilling human capital, through

narrowly focused curriculum where marginalised young people's transition pathways are potentially limited. Second-chance ALEs, as deschooled learning spaces for outsiders, have been described as (1) being more convivial than conventional schools; (2) designed to engage senior secondary school students who are on NEET trajectories; and (3) providing a formal curriculum that prioritises vocational certification.

Chapter Three: The Theoretical Framing of the Study

3.0 Introduction

One way to conceptualise second-chance ALEs is to understand and explain them as discourses. Chapter Three will deconstruct the discourse of alternative, second-chance, and successful transition to explain how second-chance ALEs can be understood conceptually. While there are a number of discourse theories (see Gee, 2017; Van Dijk, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), one is pertinent to this study, Fairclough's (1989, 1992) Critical Discourse Theory (CDT). CDT provides a critical theory perspective on discourse that places a spotlight on the ways that power relationships influence social fields. However, researchers using CDT need to be cognisant of how their own power and influence can impact on a social field. On balance, CDT suits the research aim of understanding the learning experiences of the young people in second-chance ALEs and aligns with the research questions of the study.

In this study, CDT provides a framework that encapsulates the research aim and allows for the construction of a lens through which the conceptual influences of this study can be critiqued. Deschooling for Outsiders employs the work of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1999, 2000, 2013a) by considering how critical theory interacts with the sociolinguistic concept of discourse. This chapter will provide an overview of CDT and how the use of this framework positions the study. Firstly, CDT will be both defined and critiqued (Section 3.1). Secondly, how elements of CDT have been engaged by researchers in existing studies of second-chance ALEs will be considered (Section 3.2). Finally, Section 3.3 will explore the theoretical capability of CDT in this study by deconstructing three of the dominant discourses that emerged through the key concepts identified in Chapter Two.

3.1 Critical Discourse Theory

In this study, CDT is used to explain the social field of second-chance ALEs, predominately from the work of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2000). CDT is best described as a bridging of social theory, namely critical theory, and sociolinguistic theory to enable researchers to conceptualise the influence of power through language.[9] The different theoretical and analytical perspectives of CDT have historically been influenced by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory[10] and

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[9] It is acknowledged that other perspectives on CDT have stemmed from social and linguistic theories (see Gee, 2014, 2017; Van Dijk, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

[10] Critical theory had its beginnings at Goethe University's Institute for Social Research, better known as the 'Frankfurt School', through the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse and has its foundations in the philosophical and social thought of Marx, Kant, Hegel, and Weber (Hammersley, 1990; Juanjuan, 2013).

the subsequent work of Althusser (1971), Bourdieu (1979/1984), Foucault (1971), and Gramsci (1975/2011) among others. The elements of linguistic theory that influence CDT come from a sociolinguistic perspective of discourse and predominately emerge from the work of Halliday (1973). This study, while using a Faircloughian theoretical framework for CDT, acknowledges the collective contributions of knowledge by all the academics who have developed the field of CDT, some of whom through their work with Fairclough have directly influenced the conceptualisation of CDT in this study. It is acknowledged that while CDT is the term being used in this study, critical approaches to discourse are also commonly known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). By referring to CDT as the theoretical framework for this study any misconception that this critical approach is limited to being a method of discourse analysis can be removed. Van Dijk (2009), when referring to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) as an alternative nomenclature to CDA, stated that "this more general term suggests that such a critical approach not only involves critical analysis, but also critical theory, as well as critical application" (p. 62). Hence, CDT is the term used herein for describing the theoretical framework for this study that, as outlined in Chapter One, incorporates a critical ethnographic methodology and uses CDA processes for the analysis of data.

3.1.1 The Critical Theory perspective

Critical theory, as a form of social theory, strongly influences how CDT is conceptualised. While discourse theory sees language as a form of social practice, when considered through a lens of critical theory, social practice centres upon the concepts of ideology and hegemony (Fairclough, 1992). CDT brings together linguistically orientated discourse analysis and social and political thought in a cohesive theoretical framework. Fairclough (1992) considers Gramsci's (1975/2011) concept of hegemony as providing "a fruitful framework for the conceptualising and analysing [of] discursive practice" (p. 67). From this perspective, discourses are not only a way of representing the world but through different levels of abstraction, can be harnessed for critical action (Fairclough, 1992).

The ideologies of dominant groups in a society hold the power to become hegemonic. Fairclough (2003/2006) has defined ideology in the Marxist sense where people's representations of aspects of their world contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power. This critical view of ideology is described by Fairclough (2003/2006) as contrasting with a conceptualisation of ideology as descriptive representations of people's world views. From this perspective, hegemony can be considered a conceptualisation of power struggles, based on dominant group ideologies in a society that depends on oppressed peoples consent rather than just force (Fairclough, 2003/2006). While Weber (1930/2002) described hegemony of the dominant class as the sedation of workers

into accepting exploitation, Gramsci's (1975/2011) elaboration of the notion of hegemony has continued to be the dominant perspective of this concept in critical theory (Mayo, 2007; Straubhaar, 2013). Gramsci (1975/2011) describes how, within a capitalist societal context, hegemony is the power of the dominant social classes within a capitalist system to marginalise and oppress the lower classes. This oppression is allowed to continue through the dominated class's consent to and acceptance of the capitalist system in its current form (Gramsci, 1975/2011; Straubhaar, 2013; Willis, 1977). The reinforcement of the hegemonic discourse to which Gramsci (1975/2011) refers was described by Mayo (2014) as an educational relationship, not confined to education institutions, but existing within a society and even a world-wide field. While hegemonic discourses may exist within a world-wide field it would be remiss to discount the influence that education institutions have, as "technologies of governance" (Mitchell, 2006, p. 389), to reinforce the ideologies of dominant groups in a society to a level where acceptance of these ideologies in a society become hegemonic.

The culture of dominant groups in society are embodied in educational institutions' formal and non-formal programs through their power that controls the economic, social, and political resources of that society (Bourdieu, 1970/2018, 1977, 1979/1984; Straubhaar, 2013). Educational institutions, through their hegemonic structure, provide unequal opportunities to students of different social classes (Straubhaar, 2013; Willis, 1977). In "Celebration of Awareness: A call for institutional revolution" (1971/1980), Illich's precursor publication to "Deschooling Society", he referred to how schools selected those bound for success based on time and money spent on formal education. Illich (1971/1980) identified how schooling institutions, while having had served to overcome feudalism, had in turn reinforced social class division in the post-industrial era. The unequal outcomes of this division continue to be evident in the reduction in education capital (symbolic capital of education certification) often attained by marginalised groups (Apple, 2018; Stanwick et al., 2017; Straubhaar, 2013). Apple's (2016) "epistemological fog" (p. 505) of hegemonic discourses within education institutions was evident in Straubhaar's (2013) statement that, "the most economically disadvantaged students consent to that unequal educational system, either by continuing to participate in it or by refusing to challenge it" (p. 7). This acceptance of and consent to an inherently unequal social structure exemplifies the concept of hegemony within education institutions (hooks, 2003; Illich, 1971/1980; Straubhaar, 2013). Education institutions can therefore be considered to be sites of ideological hegemony, where systems of practices, meanings, and values provided legitimacy to the dominant class's institutional arrangements and interests (Giroux, 2011; Illich, 1971/1980; Kincheloe, 2004).

The power that the concepts of ideology and hegemony reveal exists within the social orders of institutions and are constituted by relations of power between oppressors and the oppressed

(Fairclough, 1989; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; Willis, 1977). Social conditions that provide the field for these power relationships determine properties of discourse and are essentially connected through language (Fairclough, 1989, 2013b). Through language use people can be legitimising (or delegitimising) power relations and reinforcing dominant ideologies, often without being conscious of doing so (Fairclough, 1989). The critical aspect of CDT aims to make visible these power relationships which may be hidden from people (Fairclough, 1989). This is emphasised in Fairclough's seminal work 'Language and power' (1989) with the opening quote from Franz Boas, "How do we recognise the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we can recognise them, we are also able to break them" (p. 1). CDT is not only interested in understanding the world, but also in changing it (Fairclough, 2013a, 2013b). However, this criticality is subject to critique by considering the impact that seeking change can have on the validity of research studies. There is power and therefore potential bias inherent within a critical approach to a study that has been conceptually framed to instigate change.

3.1.2 The concept of discourse

The goal of CDT to make visible the power relationships that would otherwise go unnoticed, is possible through the analysis of discourse. The conceptualisation of discourse originates from the Foucauldian tradition and therefore consider discourse as the ways of constituting knowledge together with the social practices through language (Foucault, 1971). Discourse, as defined by Fairclough (2003/2006) is used in a general sense for language as an element of social life which is dialectically related to other elements. Discourse can also be considered as different ways of representing aspects of the world. Discourse is therefore constructed, through data analysis, as one of many different potential representations of a sociocultural context and its linguistic textual features. With this in mind, the critical analysis of language and the power relations inherent in social practices can only go so far without a deeper interpretation of the relationships between linguistic textual features and the sociocultural context.

To study how language, beyond the sentence level, is dialectically constructed within social practice, it is essential to consider how language is constructed within the sentence level to interpret how the production of texts can generate new meanings as elements of semiotic systems (Fairclough, 1999). This is where the work of sociolinguists, particularly the work of Halliday (1973), has provided an analytic dimension for critical theorists to define discourse and the impact that language has on power relationships in networks of social practice through the critical concepts of ideology and hegemony. Fairclough (2000, 2005) considers the marrying of sociolinguistics with critical theory as adding value to the thinking, theorising, and analysing done by social theorists

through providing methods for analysing linguistic, semiotic and interdiscursive features of texts in more detail. The study of language through discourse allows researchers to critically question who controls the dominant ideologies that exist within a society by making connections between the microstructures of conversation and the macrostructures of social institutions (Fairclough, 1989).

The concept of discourse, from a critical perspective, has been heavily influenced by the work of Foucault (1971, 1973, 1985). Discourse has the potential to explain the semiotic relationships of social interactions, power, institutions, and cultural practices (Fairclough, 2013a). The semiotic dimension of the networks of social practices constitute social fields, institutions, and organisations (Fairclough, 1992). Networks of social practice follow what Foucault (1971) termed, orders of discourse, that are configurations of different genres, different discourses and different styles (Fairclough, 1992). An order of discourse is described by (Fairclough, 2013a) as, "a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of making meaning – different genres, discourses and styles" (p. 179). CDT critically examines the power within the social ordering of relationships by questioning who controls the order of discourse in the context of a study. CDT further questions who the dominant group is that holds governance i.e. who is managing or regulating social practices within an organisation or institution; and questions who holds the power of legitimation i.e. who justifies how things are within a given context from an ideological perspective made evident through the orders of discourse (Fairclough, 2003/2006).

Discourse can be described as a conceptual representation of language as one element of the social world. Likewise, text analysis is but one part of discourse analysis. The study of the "orders of discourse" (Fairclough, 2013b, p. 179), i.e. the structuring of discourse within the semiotic dimension of social practices, provides the opportunity to better understand the power relationships that affect how learning is experienced in the setting of this study. The power relationships of social actors that, sometimes unwittingly, vie for control over whose ideologies pertaining to the core purpose of second-chance ALEs, creates the hegemonic values and beliefs within the culture-sharing group of these learning environments in the same way they do in any education institution. Young people's access to opportunities to accumulate capital (social, cultural, economic, and symbolic) can be affected by orders of discourse that constitute the configuration or ordering of the different discourses that are driven by the ideologies of those groups in power in education institutions (Fairclough, 2000). Fairclough (1989, 2003/2006) identifies that when analysing discourse, the framework for analysis needs three elements, firstly description of text, secondly, interpretation of the relationship between the text and interaction, and thirdly, explanation of the relationship

between the interaction and social context. This three-level framework for analysis of discourse has extrapolation potential for designing a framework for conceptually understanding CDT.

3.1.3 The CDT framework

Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for analysing discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1992) is grounded in the relationships between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 2003/2006, 2013b; Fairclough et al., 2011). Foremost this framework considers the local, institutional, and societal influences on the production of discourses i.e. at the text-level (micro); the modalities of text production, distribution, and consumption (meso); and the sociocultural practices within which and through which they have been brought into being (macro). Fairclough (1992) identified that people are often unaware of the impact of their practice on social structures and social relations. This CDT framework provides a process of identifying the cultural models that would otherwise go unnoticed; it caters for the critiquing of how text impacts culture but also the power of text production in determining the sphere of influence that a text has on culture.

A conceptual framework of CDT incorporates the micro, meso, macro dimensions of discourse (Fairclough, 2003/2006, 2013b; Fairclough et al., 2011). Figure 3.1 outlines how Fairclough's CDT framework provides a structure for understanding these dimensions with a three-level conceptualisation of the power of discourse. Figure 3.1 also shows how, in CDT, the discourse type, operates at the micro-level, the orders of discourse that is comprised of various discourse types is represented at the meso-level, and the dominant ideologies of a society operate at the macro-level where they influence and are influenced by the orders of discourse as they operate within the sociocultural field of practice through various social relations enacted within the discourse types.

Figure 3.1 – The CDT framework

An example of how this conceptual framework can be used to understand the power of discourse would be to consider the discourse of 'alternative' that emerged in the contextual literature review of Chapter Two. 'Alternative', as shown in red in Figure 3.1, serves as the discourse type at the micro-level where it exists as a text or simply a word. Meaning is made at the meso-level where the discourse type of 'alternative' is positioned within an order of discourse pertaining to the contextual field of senior secondary schooling. Within this field, meanings for 'alternative' are constructed and reconstructed as counter meanings emerge that highlight the fluid nature of discourse. The contextual meaning of alternative referring to a type of schooling that is different to a conventional schooling model is then impacted upon by the dominant ideologies surrounding the discourse at the macro-level. At this level 'alternative' can be a synonym for second-rate schooling, a discourse that describes a schooling experience for the misfits of conventional schools, even as a school for the lower-class workers. The dominant ideologies of society that impact upon this discourse become common sense assumptions that can be evidenced through the demographics of their student populations i.e. students from families with low SES, students excluded from conventional schools. This is turn leads to the discourse of 'alternative' being appropriated as a deficit discourse type and potentially being the hegemonic interpretation of the word in the field of senior secondary schooling.

The CDT framework allows for the critical investigation of the impact that language has on power relationships in various networks of social practice. This is achievable through the incorporation of tools derived from text analysis in sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics, in its own right, is strong on answering 'what' questions and adding value and credibility to CDT, but Fairclough believed this approach to be weak on addressing 'why' and 'how' questions (Fairclough, 1989). Critical theory, as the metaphorical glove for the hand of text analysis, can also be criticised for its unashamed bias towards the emancipation of oppressed groups; the outsiders of a society (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997/2007). However, the subjectivity that this brings can also be countered by the understanding that there is no such thing as an objective analysis of a text, because researchers bring their own lenses to research that is always biased in some form due to the research paradigm and personal biographies (Fairclough, 1989).

CDT provides a framework to analyse and critique the social world but can still be limited in how discourse construction is from a particular perspective or a unique understanding of the linguistic features of a field of social practice. Through problematising conventions of discursive practice through CDT, researchers can shed light on how discursive practice may well contribute to either reproducing society or transforming society (Fairclough, 1992). The exploration of the dominant discourses affecting second-chance ALEs provides this type of insight into the way that

discourses can reproduce, or resist, unequal power differentials within education systems (Fairclough et al., 2011). CDT allow us to contemplate what is and what could be within the sociocultural context of second-chance ALEs. The CDT framework enables the exploration of the relationships of power and control in second-chance ALEs by examining the ideologies and power relations involved in the field. However, the impact of CDT in transforming society may be limited to explaining how dominant discourses can be reproducers, or potentially resisters, of institutionalised inequity.

3.2 Studying discourse in second-chance ALEs

The use of discourse in the theorising of studies in second-chance ALEs is varied. Different theoretical frameworks of discourse and different approaches to analysing discourse are at times clearly demarked by the authors of the publications relating to their studies, but sometimes the theorisation and use of discourse remains opaque. In this section three studies of second-chance ALEs, all analysed in the contextual literature review and referenced in Appendix A, will be considered in relation to how they have incorporated discourse in either their conceptualisation of the study or in the analysis of data and the links between the two. While many of the publications noted in Appendix A have used discourse to vary degrees (see G. McGregor, 2009; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014), these three have been chosen for critique in this section to highlight how the use of discourse has shaped not only the publications but the studies upon which they are based. Firstly, Grimaldi's (2012) publication will be considered for the way in which orders of discourse are described as impacting on education policy and how these discourses contribute to social exclusion. Secondly, Edwards's (2018) book will be explored to uncover how the power of discourse has been described as influencing class reproduction and identity construction. Thirdly, the impact of discourse on the framing of success that was described in Thomas et al.'s (2017) publication will be examined.

3.2.1 Studying discourse in an inclusive education policy

Grimaldi's (2012) publication focused on what he described as neoliberal discourses controlling how an inclusive education policy was being implemented. This publication argued that there was an "overall framework of discourses of human capital, individualisation, school improvement, performativity, and standardisation" (p.1131). This framework of discourses that Grimaldi (2012) refers to could be described as a neoliberal order of discourses. Grimaldi (2012) raised concerns about each of the abovementioned discourse types and the pressure that they were inflicting on policy implementation in such a way that they formed a social structuring of semiotic relationships between the discourses (Fairclough, 2013a).

The impact of a neoliberal order of discourses has been positioned in this publication as reinforcing social exclusion where the intent of the policy was to create inclusivity. This inclusive education policy was described by Grimaldi (2012) as intending to address dropout and social exclusion by providing young people the education (symbolic) capital of vocational credentials to improve their opportunities in the labour market. Grimaldi (2012) conceptualised how "neoliberal discourses have the power to weaken and divert education policies intended to pursue social justice and inclusion" (p.1132). From this perspective, the neoliberal order of discourses has served to influence how the inclusive education policy has been interpreted by those in power. Grimaldi (2012) referred to how the policy, enacted through "a set of neoliberal understandings has reframed the initial egalitarian and inclusive purposes" (p. 1150). This has redefined the concept of inclusive education within the policy implementation via an education paradigm of economic rationalism which meant that at a macro-level, the ideological intent of the policy was not being communicated at a meso-level for inclusive practice to take effect. This publication cites findings from the study that indicate that the inclusive education policy "did not produce any egalitarian outcome, contributing on the contrary to reinforce discriminatory practices and enhancing the selective function of schooling" (p. 1150). In this respect, the neoliberal order of discourses would appear to have influenced the interpretation of this policy and from Grimaldi's (2012) position, has critical implications for how inclusive education policies are enacted.

Grimaldi (2012) did not appear to use the dimensions of CDT to deconstruct state education policy but did critique the policy's framework through the discourses of human capital, individualisation, school improvement, performativity, and standardisation. While a neoliberal order of discourse was established, this was not explicitly stated and did not transfer from a conceptual understanding of the influence of discourse on the social field to the analysis of discourse presented in the findings from the study's data. Critical analysis was mentioned as part of a conceptual discussion on how the "hegemonic neoliberal discourse" (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 1133) has shown a marginalisation and subjugation of the state's commitment to social justice and inclusive education in Italy.

3.2.2 Studying class reproduction in a second-chance ALE

The influence of a neoliberal order of discourse on education was a major theme within Edwards's (2018) book based on his study of a school-based youth centre's alternative program focused on how education institutions can be seen to operate as reproducers of class distinction. The discourse of human capital is referred to throughout the publication, particularly how an emphasis on vocational preparation has served to reinforce class division. Edwards (2018) considers

neoliberalism as "an umbrella term [that] draws together a range of concepts related to marketisation, self-identity and personal liberty" (p. 24). In this way he, like Grimaldi (2012), has conceptualised a neoliberal order of discourses present within an education system. Edwards (2018) also referred to neoliberal ideology in the production of human capital and individualistic responsibility. This publication used the dimensions of CDT at both the meso-level of orders of discourse and the ideologies present at the macro-level of conceptualisation.

Edwards's (2018) conceptualisation of how discourses of marketisation, self-identity, and personal liberty are framed by neoliberal ideologies demonstrates how critical theory influenced this study. References to Marxist ideology are made within the publication, particularly how class reproduction is reinforced through the technologies of governance within education institutions (Edwards, 2018; Mitchell, 2006). Edwards (2018) cites how education institutions are "rigidly maintaining social boundaries and class distinctions, but also ensuring the best use of lower-class labour to maximise profits for the middle classes and state" (p. 29). This statement echoes concerns raised by another UK ethnographer who referred to how, in the 1970s, working class kids got working class jobs (Willis, 1977). Edwards (2018), in the same vain as Willis (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (2000), considered the competition for credentials in education institutions served to reproduce and legitimise existing class inequalities. Edwards's (2018) use of critical theory sheds light upon a neoliberal ideological veil of individual betterment through qualifications. This dominant ideology in UK society therefore has the power to achieve hegemonic status in the reproduction of class division.

Edwards (2018) has used dimensions of CDT in conceptualising his study. Bernstein's (1971) sociolinguistic language codes were employed to interpret the impact on class reproduction through textual analysis of the data. While the notion of discourse analysis is not made explicit, this study has used of a sociolinguistic analytic framework that conceptually relies on critical theory. Of note is how the publication of this study has focused on theoretical framing from Bernstein's (1971) text, but not mentioned the use of Bernstein's (1990) work on pedagogic discourse. Flow of Bernstein's evolving work in sociolinguistics may have been considered within Edwards' (2018) study, however there was no connection between Bernstein's theoretical concepts, analytic framework, and the findings that were presented. Given that the notion of Freirean relational pedagogy is presented in the publication as a core element within the findings of the study, Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse may have provided additional credence to this supposition.

Edwards (2018) has incorporated elements of CDT through the critical theory perspective that was used to conceptualise the impact of neoliberalism on class reproduction in education institutions. The use of sociolinguistics in the study also shows a connection to CDT, however that

explicit use of discourse in the conceptualisation of the study was not entirely evident. Political discourses influencing education policy were considered but discourse as a theoretical construct was only briefly explored. While the lack of detailed exploration of the concept of discourse was not present, it is in no way a negative reflection of the publication, the study, or the contribution to knowledge that Edwards (2018) has made. The purpose of this critique is simply to acknowledge how discourse has been or could be used to conceptualise social practice within the field of second-chance ALEs.

3.2.3 Studying the discourse of success in second-chance ALEs

The conceptual underpinnings of research studies are not always evident in publications. Thomas et al.'s (2017) journal article that challenges the notion of success for second-chance ALEs is a case in point. While references are made in the publication to critical inquiry and education policy discourse, there is little space afforded to identifying and explaining the theoretical framing of the study. This publication provided detailed explanation of the context of the study and the issues pertaining to the measurement of success in these learning environments. Comments were also made on how the young people who are excluded by conventional schools and forced to attend second-chance ALEs are more often than not from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Thomas et.al, 2017).

Thomas et.al (2017) referred to discourse in conceptual terms when reporting on the power of neoliberal education policy, "In the last three decades, neoliberalism has come to dominate education policy discourses internationally, with the value of education increasingly measured against its contributions to national economies" (p. 444). This reference to education policy discourses in the introduction was situated within a critical perspective of neoliberalism. This notion of neoliberal ideologies impacting on policy discourses emerged again in the discussion section where participant's critical awareness of the impact of these discourses on their work was presented.

Attention was given to how neoliberal policy discourses affected the framing of success in these second-chance ALEs. Thomas et al. (2017) stated that when framing success "practitioners demonstrate critical awareness of the social and structural mechanisms by which young people are marginalised from mainstream schooling" (p. 443). Practitioners were also described as being critically aware of how framing successful transition pathways beyond the second-chance ALE was different to conventional schools. They were aware of the need to attend to students' wellbeing and future hopes, not just on ensuring certification for employability (Thomas et al., 2017). However, practitioners were also noted as having "extolled the value of 'traditional' academic outcomes,

including functional literacy and numeracy, certifications and credentials, and pathways for transition into further education, training and employment" (p. 455). This dual perspective of practitioners when framing the concept of a successful transition shows the power struggle that operates within this particular field of practice between what could be termed as discourses of relative growth and discourses of vocational pathways.

These studies of second-chance ALEs have shown that there is often limited space afforded to drawing a clear picture of how discourse has impacted on a study in a theoretical and conceptual sense. All three publications mentioned discourse at a conceptual level, however there appeared to be a lack of explanation of how discourse sits within the theoretical framework of each study. This is not to say that the term discourse is used in a general, superfluous way, only that the use of discourse in research cannot always be articulated in publications with enough depth to gain a true understanding of the authors' conceptualisation of discourse as a theoretical construct.

3.3 Deconstructing the dominant discourses

Through deconstructing a dominant discourse type, it becomes possible to identify the producers of ideologies within a field of social practice as ideological common sense is established through the naturalisation of a dominant discourse type (Fairclough, 1989). The deconstruction develops a critical awareness and allows for opposing discourse types to challenge the ideological constructions that dominate the field. Fairclough (1999) defines this critical awareness of discourse within social practices as distinguishing one discourse from a number of co-existing or conceivable discourses with the aim to "look beyond existing discourses or existing relations of dominance and marginalisation between discourses" (p. 74-75). From this perspective critical awareness of discourse is essential for success in life (Fairclough, 1999). This goes beyond the dominant view of education as a vocationally orientated transmission of knowledge and skills designed to serve the needs of the economy, by considering critical awareness capabilities as essential skills to maintain successful transition beyond NEET status (Fairclough, 1999; Freire, 1970; Thomson-Bunn, 2014).

This section considers how the order of discourses that pertain to this study of five second-chance ALEs are positioned by dominant ideologies within the field of education that were identified in the contextual literature review in Chapter Two. Firstly, the discourse of alternative will be considered in relation to what alternative means in the context of education institutions. Next, the discourse of second-chance will be deconstructed by exploring this discourse in the context of senior secondary schooling. Thirdly, a critical problematisation of the discourse of successful transition will unpack the power relations and dominant ideologies that this discourse is influenced by. This section

problematises how the discourses of second-chance, alternative, and successful transitions are defined within the context of senior secondary schooling.

3.3.1 The discourse of 'alternative'

To fully explain why these young people need an alternative, an exploration of how the discourse of alternative has emerged in education is needed. Alternative and second-chance are two key terms that are used in this doctoral thesis to describe the type of learning environment that this research is situated. In this thesis the term alternative is used to describe the learning environment as this was the term used by the research participants and it serves to highlight the power differential that potentially exists for young people learning on the margins. It is however acknowledged that the term flexible, used by both researchers and practitioners (see te Riele et.al, 2017; Thomas et.al, 2017; Vadeboncoeur & Petry, 2017) to describe these types of learning environments has the potential to serve as a discourse with less value judgement attached and less power to position than the discourse of alternative. While alternative learning has been defined as non-traditional pedagogical approaches (Hope, 2019; te Riele, 2014; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2013), the term alternative functions in juxtaposition with conventional. The discourse of alternative is constructed within a field of education where second-chance ALEs operate in contrast to conventional schools through their differences in setting, pedagogy, and curriculum. The discourse only has meaning and power by being in opposition to the status quo. This relationship was defined by Popkewitz (2018) during his keynote presentation at the 2018 European Conference on Educational Research where he argued that inclusion can only exist if exclusion does as well. The relationship between terms like inclusion and exclusion, alternative and conventional, are symbiotic. Neither have meaning without the other.

To effectively explore the discourse of alternative, it is acknowledged that there have been alternatives to conventional schooling since the beginning of the 20th century, including Dewey's progressive model, the Modern School movement as well as famous examples like Summerhill, Montessori, and Steiner (Avrich, 2014; Dewey, 1938/2007; Hope, 2019; Neill, 1973; Salem Press, 2014). [11] These examples were working in the opposite direction to traditional schooling methods where "knowledge and skills were communicated and rules of conduct enforced" (Dewey, 1938/2007, p. 3). Traditional schools were described as enacting "processes of suppression, making continuous demands for conformity, [where] original thinking was discouraged and ready-made

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[11] The discourse of alternative has been used at a text level to label learning environments that differ from the dominant education institutions. This is evident not only in the naming of these environments by dominant social groups in the field but also by academics who study them (see Caroleo, 2014; Hemmings, 1973; Kraftl, 2015; Mills, Baroutsis, McGregor, te Riele & Hayes, 2016).

thoughts were put into people's heads" (Fromm, 1942, p. 213). Fromm's views were later echoed by Shipman (1968) in his statement that critical and creative thinking continued to be oppressed in traditional schools where "competence and personal achievement had become increasingly the product of adequate schooling" (p. 54). Rogers (1983) explained this phenomenon when stating that "we must teach only the 'basics', […] teach them to obey and follow […] they must be presented with only one set of values; […] students are in school to be taught, not to discuss problems or make choices" (pp. 1-2). The purpose of traditional schooling was skill acquisition and developing workplace competencies rather than encouraging free-thinking young people capable of having both choice and voice.

The utilitarian focus of traditional schooling where teachers were charged with developing habits in young people that contributed to them becoming productive, and somewhat docile, workers was not just a desire of industry but a state goal of increasing national economic growth (Bauman, 2011; Giroux, 2011; Illich, 1971/1980; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014; Willis, 1977). Even though the 1970s saw a resurgence in the discourses of progressive, free, radical, and alternative learning options as part of a humanistic movement in many western societies (Freire, 1970; Friedenberg & Rogers, 1971; Hemmings, 1973; Hope, 2019; Illich, 1971/1980, 1973; Levitas, 1974), by the 1980s these discourses were under mounting pressure from a socio-political environment where freedom in education was being redefined by the neoliberal discourse of competitive free-market economies (Hope, 2019; McGregor, 2009; Thomas et al., 2017). Since this time neoliberalism as both a dominant ideology and order of discourse, has been described as being grounded in the classical liberalism idea of a free market with humanistic values (McGregor et al., 2017; Rowe, Lubienski, Skourdoumbis, Gerrard, & Hursh, 2019). However, the dominant belief is that state powers should actively shape the kinds of individuals who will help to optimize the economy (Angus, 2015; Ball, 2008; Hope, 2019). This dominant, possibly hegemonic, ideology of neoliberalism contrasts with humanistic ideology of education where the discourses of progressive, free, and radical education hold power.

Humanistic and counter hegemonic educators have in schools challenged the conformist thinking designed to maintain the existing power structures of social order (Apple, 2018; Giroux, 2011; Kincheloe, 2004). None more so than Paulo Freire, who while teaching reading to working class Brazilians, developed a distrust of bourgeois institutions and conventional teaching methods marked by what he would call banking education, an activity which serves to support the status quo in a society (Kincheloe, 2004; Mayo, 2007). Freire's (1970) approach to literacy development has been critical in the nurturing of counterhegemonic discourses in education (Apple, 2018; Gramsci, 1975/2011). The combination of humanistic discourses with teaching critical awareness has the

power to generate reflective practice and school-level democracy (Connell, 2009; Thomson-Bunn, 2014).

Beyond the humanistic heyday of counterhegemonic education in the 1970s, the dominant discourse in contemporary western education appears to be of "learning to work within the given capitalist framework" (Mayo, 2014, p. 392). There has been a greater focus on vocational or basic skill attainment and meeting the needs for future employment (Caroleo, 2014). This re-emergence of traditionalist educative purpose has been seen as a dominant approach to ALEs that offer a second chance to young people who have left conventional schooling without any certification (McGregor, 2009; McGregor et al., 2017). The focus of second-chance ALEs on basic skill attainment may be negatively impacting on young peoples' future opportunities for career advancement where there could in fact be an opportunity for social mobility through a counterhegemonic learning experience (Bloomfield et al., 2020; Hope, 2019; McGregor et al., 2017). Alternative learning could offer a second chance at counterhegemony.

Challenging capitalist hegemony is central to many ALEs (Chatelier, 2015). These ALEs tend to be influenced by critical pedagogy and are often categorised as radical, free schools using a democratic model of educating (Chatelier, 2015; Hope, 2019). Pedagogues implementing a democratic model view the role of education as one of preparing students for democratic citizenship (Hytten, 2016). By creating a learning environment that offers a critical curriculum, where teachers implement emancipatory pedagogies, ALEs can serve to address issues of inequality and champion the social justice agenda (Hall & Hope, 2018; Hope & Hall, 2018). Hope (2019), in her recent book, provides a platform for describing how ALEs can offer "a freedom from the marginalisation and oppression that students have experienced within conventional schools [by providing] a safe space which enables students to have a freedom to be themselves, to think, to learn, to argue, to be" (p.57). Through developing more egalitarian and democratic structures these ALEs can move beyond being warehouses for young people marginalised by the education system, to becoming community spaces where all can belong, and empower learners via liberating pedagogies and emancipatory curricula where multiple perspectives are valued (Freire & Freire, 2004; Hope, 2019).

The discourse of alternative may be used to describe how ALEs use non-traditional approaches to schooling that reduce the effects of marginalisation that some young people experience in conventional schools. These ALEs are sometimes described as a second chance for marginalised young people to avoid NEET status. However, the discourse of second-chance may also represent a second chance for society to develop critically aware young people who are empowered to transition from these ALEs to positions beyond NEET status and to become active, democratic citizens (Barr et al., 2008).

3.3.2 The discourse of 'second-chance'

Second-chance, when referring to ALEs, is a discourse that constructs ALEs as providers of learning experiences to young people who have left secondary school prior to completion.[12] The discourse constructs a cultural model that positions young people who attend these ALEs as students who have failed to meet the expectations of conventional schooling (Vadeboncoeur & Vellos, 2016; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2013). The discourse of second-chance is constructed in the field of education at an institutional level where senior secondary schooling policy pressures and is pressured by a neoliberal ideological desire for attainment of symbolic capital in the form of education certification (Bourdieu, 1970/2018, 1979/1984). The discourse of second-chance also raises the question of whether there is a third chance or if it is the last chance for these young people to gain education certification. For many young people attending second-chance ALEs it is their third, fourth or fifth chance at gaining some level of certification after being moved on from different conventional schools either by choice or by force i.e. through non-attendance, by exclusion, or by cancellation of enrolment. Reasons for these "early school leavers" (Stanwick et al., 2017, p. 12) engaging with second-chance ALEs can be varied, with some choosing to re-engage in learning and others needing to conform with state education policy measures, and/or as a means of survival through continued access to government study support payments (Harreveld & Singh, 2007; Queensland Government, 2002; te Riele, 2014).

The discourse of second-chance, that has been constructed from the analysis of existing data in the contextual literature review, represents a cultural model where these young people who have not been successful in the conventional schooling system need not only a second-chance, but in an ALE. Why a second-chance at senior secondary schooling needs to be in an alternative setting fuels the debate by academics concerned that the conventional model of schooling is not meeting learning needs of these young people and of twenty-first century society (Bloomfield et al., 2020; Guterman & Neuman, 2017; Hope, 2019; McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills et al., 2016). Since these young people do not conform to the institutional production line of systematic soldiering (Willis, 1977) of conventional schooling an alternative must be given in order for schools to comply with state legislation.[13]

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[12] Second-chance ALEs are but one type of alternative to conventional schools for students who do not fit the standard mode of education delivery. They are typically designed to cater for young people who have disengaged from conventional schools in senior secondary school with the aim of supporting them to avoid NEET status (Bloomfield et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2017; te Riele, 2014; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2013).

[13] Examples of education legislation and state policy in Queensland, Australia will be examined in Section 7.1.2.

The dominant discourse of second-chance operating within a neoliberal ideological paradigm, aims to ensure the nation's human capital are skilled enough to contribute and not be a burden on the economy. This constructs a cultural model where marginalised young people are given a second-chance to be members of society instead of becoming NEETs who have the potential to become what Bauman (2011) refers to as "the underclass (not part of the upper, middle or lower-class workers) ... those who are not contributing to society and seen as though society would be better off without them" (p. 3). State-influenced education systems may be reinforcing this deficit discourse of second-chance that marginalises these young people. Learning in second-chance ALEs is positioned as a deficit mode of learning where the second-chance at an education is considered as better than no education at all. Since these marginalised young people do not meet the system requirements necessary to navigate the field of senior secondary schooling, they are provided with a second-chance at skill acquisition for rapidly disappearing low-skilled labour positions (Bloomfield et al., 2020).

The dominant discourse of second-chance is defined within the field of senior secondary schooling through a frame of student deficit. Within this discourse young people who have been marginalised by conventional schools are positioned by a need for a different way to satisfy a neoliberal capitalist agenda for human capital through skill acquisition and educational certification, even if it is considered by some academics as second-rate due to the lack in student choice and transition opportunities (Bloomfield et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014). The discourse of second-chance positions these outsiders of conventional schooling as not having the requisite capital to understand the doxa, or hidden curriculum, that is needed to successfully navigate the field of education systems (Bourdieu, 1970/2018, 1977; Gee, 2014). Illich (1973) referred to the hidden curriculum of schools as adding to the prejudice and discrimination within society, thereby compounding the privilege of those with the social capital to navigate the schooling institution and further marginalising those without. The contemporary mode of defining this discourse would not appear to be in the best interests of society and certainly not in the interests of the young people who attend second-chance ALEs.

Instead of viewing second-chance ALEs as the young person's second-chance at skill acquisition and certification, the counter discourse implies that it is the state's second-chance, through the social institution of the education system, to ensure that the learning needs of these young people are met. These types of ALEs are second-chance for society to engage these young people for whom society has previously marginalised. Instead of positioning second-chance ALEs as a lesser alternative to conventional schooling, here the intention is to consider how alternative learning can be a field rich in avantgarde approaches that may inform humanistic practices in

conventional schools. Failure to meet the expectations of the conventional schooling model positions young people as needing a second chance because of their failure rather than considering the failure of the system in meeting their learning needs.

3.3.3 The discourse of 'successful transitions'

The discourse of successful transitions that is being considered in this thesis describes a student transitioning from the senior phase of secondary school to life post compulsory education. The definition of transitions in the field of education typically concerns the juncture points between initial school entry, moving from primary to secondary school and exiting secondary school (Bloomfield et al., 2018a; Brown, 2019; Pendergast, 2016; Webb, 2019). The definition of what is a successful transition when exiting senior secondary school is the stepping off point for this exploration of the discourse of successful transitions. The dominant discourse of successful transitions would appear to be constructed through ideologies that, at a societal level, operate to ensure that the discourse's attributes focus on young people's contribution to society by avoiding NEET status. This section explores how the discourse of successful transitions currently positions young people as human capital through a unidirectional lens of linear transition from vocational preparation to employment (Chatelier, 2015; McGregor et al., 2017; M. Mills & McGregor, 2014). There are however alternative discourses of successful transitions that counter the dominant discourse in the power struggle over how successful transitions are constructed.

The dominant discourse of successful transitions in the senior phase of secondary school, as identified in Section 2.2.1, currently positions young people on a linear pathway from compulsory education to engagement in further formal training or employment. This conceptualisation of the discourse views successful transitions through a unidirectional lens with a vocational focus of transitioning from education to employment. The power that underpins this interpretation lies within the associated necessity for capital accumulation to navigate a successful transition. Unfortunately, the requisite levels of capital accumulation for those who struggle to navigate the doxa of the education system, capital accumulation may not be achieved as easily and often equates to a less than successful transition when measured within a competitive, neoliberal socio-political paradigm (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Lamb et al., 2020; J. Sanders et al., 2018; Stanwick et al., 2017).

Not completing conventional senior secondary school has an adverse effect on successful transitions to life beyond compulsory education (J. Sanders et al., 2018). In Queensland, the state of Australia where this study was undertaken, this academic certification milestone is marked by not just attending an educational institution for the required thirteen years but completing the final two

years to a high enough academic standard to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Gaining the symbolic education capital of a QCE is made more difficult in second-chance ALEs due to the narrow curriculum affordance (Bloomfield et al., 2018b; Lamb et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2017). Achieving the academic qualification of the QCE is considered the first step in the linear progression of education capital accumulation from a career perspective. Further vocational training, combined with vocational experience leads to an ascension of linear career progression, which from this perspective on the discourse of successful transitions equates to the accumulation of both educational and financial capital.

The career-focused representation of the discourse of successful transitions positions the goal of education as the production of human capital for the nation's economy (M. Mills & McGregor, 2014; Savvides & Stengos, 2008). As discussed in Section 2.2.2, some young people are marginalised by the state education system for their lack of capital, or knowledge of doxa, to succeed in the social field of school. These young people are therefore placed in a weaker position to succeed in the transition journey of capital accumulation from this career perspective. They are positioned to be "less likely to possess the skills and experience for a successful future transition into employment and further education and are more likely to have poorer employment and other outcomes later in life" (Stanwick et al., 2017, p. 12). This situation echoes Bourdieu's (1979/1984; 2000) argument that the more privileged in society reinforce their controlling position in the dominant culture (Azaola, 2012). The reproduction of social advantage for those in positions of power continues to be to the detriment of marginalised young people who do not have the same resources and opportunities to develop the requisite capital for social mobility (Azaola, 2012; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; OECD, 2012). The institutional structures of schools continue to contribute to the reproduction of the dominant culture and existing power relations thereby reproducing existing inequalities within society that stratify marginalised young people in their career transitions by limiting them to low-skill vocations (Azaola, 2012; Bloomfield et al., 2018a, 2018b; Hope, 2019) (see also Illich, 1973; Levitas, 1974; Marx & Engels, 1848/2010; Willis, 1977).

Opportunities within the discourse of successful transitions for marginalised young people to successfully climb a ladder of capital accumulation from a linear career perspective may be significantly reduced. The affordance of a narrow curriculum in second-chance ALEs supports a transition to a narrow field of occupations (Azaola, 2012; Bloomfield et al., 2018b, 2020). This "human capital educational paradigm" (McGregor et al., 2017, p. 29) reinforces the dominant discourse of successful transitions where marginalised young people represent a significant loss of economic opportunity and are reduced to very marginal roles in powerful capitalist systems (Lamb & Huo, 2017; Lamb et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2017).

The dominant perspective that has shaped the discourse of transitions can be challenged through the questioning of the power relations inherent within it. By questioning who defines what a successful transition is, a different perspective to the dominant discourse of transitions may exist. Success does not need to be measured through linear career progression, structured to reproduce existing class barriers, but rather through a more holistic and humanistic model where nonlinear, iterative concepts of transition allow for a reframing of both capital accumulation and social mobility. Instead of it being harder for a marginalised young person to be recruited to a position of power and wealth than for a young person whose family is already there (Shipman, 1968), a more equitable visioning of the discourse of successful transitions could encourage a reframing of this discourse and what it means to transition successfully.

Viewing transitions from a holistic and humanistic development perspective they could be seen more as an iterative rite of passage movement through the liminal space of transitioning from childhood to adulthood.[14] Such a view of the discourse of successful transitions allows for a fluid, rather than lock-step progression afforded by a career journey perspective, where young people can move between spaces of child and adult behaviour. This model is inclusive of all aspects of a young person's life where the definition of capital accumulation is not limited to educational and financial capital. L. Smith and Dowse (2019), in their recent work on transition for young people with complex support needs, refer to a complexity approach when conceptualising transitions. This approach affords an understanding how events and circumstances overlap, entangle, and intersect in the lives of marginalised young people in place of being a series of steps or stages that reinforces outdated markers of progression to adulthood (Furlong et al., 2011; L. Smith & Dowse, 2019).

L. Smith & Dowse's (2019) complexity approach aligns with the concept of "distance travelled" (Thomas et al., 2017, p. 446) where transition refers to the "observable changes" (Thomson-Bunn, 2014, p. 36) that have occurred for a young person in a second-chance ALE that are relative to their holistic experience rather than measured against an artificial marker of success like QCE attainment. When the discourse of successful transitions is constructed as a social development journeying young people can move in and out of the social fields in their habitus development where they engage in multiple experiences of overcoming adversity, developing empathy, developing a sense of purpose, and supporting others (Hope, 2019; Moffatt & Riddle, 2019; te Riele et al., 2017).

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[14] This perspective on transitioning from childhood to adulthood stems from a conversation that I was fortunate to have with an articulate young man whom at the time was experiencing this very transition. I am immeasurably grateful for the clarity that he provided as I tried to explain two opposing constructions of the discourse of successful transitions. He demonstrated an ability to distil a complex concept by simply stating that, "It's like how you grow up… going from being a kid to an adult" (L. Bloomfield, personal communication, October 31, 2019). Yes, this was a proud dad moment.

This construction of the discourse of successful transitions allows us to consider the associated concept of social mobility as nonlinear also. While traditionally social mobility has been defined as a person's vertical movement between social classes (Forrest, Hodgson, Parker, & Pearce, 2011; Staff, Hogan, & Whalley, 2017), this vertical appropriation of social mobility can be viewed as self-defeating in the way that social mobility reinforces the class system.

Humanistic and progressive alternatives to traditional schooling in the post-industrial era have tended to focus on social mobility and/or class emancipation (Levitas, 1974; Willis, 1977). Social mobility and class emancipation however are not mutually exclusive terms, as Willis (1977) points out that "the whole nature of Western capitalism is such that classes are structured and persistent so that even relatively high rates of individual mobility make no difference to the existence or position of the working class" (p. 127). This is due to the cultural capital of dominant groups in society ensuring the success of their offspring and the reproduction of class position and privilege (Bourdieu, 1989). The former, social mobility, is individual movement from one stratum to another, the latter, class emancipation, is social revolution (Levitas, 1974, p. 47). When viewed through a capitalist lens, social mobility is a noble aspiration celebrated by humanitarian educators, yet when considered from a socialist perspective there is an inherent danger in social mobility as "the more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule" (Marx & Engels, 1894, p. 587). In order to challenge the existing power and control inherent within the discourse of successful transitions, the concepts of social mobility and transitions need to be reimagined to be inclusive of horizontal, intersecting, and nonlinear experiences in one's habitus development (Bloomfield et al., 2020; Bourdieu, 1979/1984; L. Smith & Dowse, 2019).

The capital accumulation journey that demonstrates a critical aspect of the discourse of successful transitions encompasses not just educational and financial capital but includes developing social, cultural and psychological capital (Bloomfield et al., 2020). A narrow focus on academic attainment (education capital) and vocational opportunities that lead to financial capital that neoliberal education systems appear to have, only serves those already in positions of power. Transitions that lead to sustainable social mobility requires a broader definition than the capitalist view of vertical advancement of the social class system for economic prosperity.

This section has explored the discourses of second-chance, alternative, and successful transitions, with the intention of exposing how these constructs can exert power and control (Azaola, 2012; Levitas, 1974; McGregor et al., 2017; Willis, 1977). These discourses have the power to influence how young people who attend second-chance ALEs are represented, how they experience their senior phase of secondary school, and how they are positioned to transition beyond

these learning environments. The exploration of the relationships of power and control in the sociocultural context of second-chance ALEs has shown that current discourses can be reproducers of class-reinforcing institutions and inequity (Angus, 2015; Goudeau & Croizet, 2016; Willis, 1977). It has also shown how second-chance ALEs can resist the dominant conceptualisations of these discourses.

3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the conceptual underpinnings of this study. CDT has facilitated the deconstruction of discourse within the sociocultural context of second-chance ALEs. The CDT framework has enabled the critical exploration of the relationships of power and control within the field of second-chance ALEs and the impact this has on transition pathways for outsiders of conventional schooling. CDT emerged as a plausible framework to explore and understand the complexity of this study's research problem, the concept of deschooling in the context of alternative learning, and the impact that second-chance ALEs can have on both learning and transitions for outsiders of conventional schooling. By using CDT to deconstruct the discourses operating within second-chance ALEs, the existing power structures that control how this field of social practice is defined can be not only explained but critiqued. The hegemonic influence of schooling institutions can be considered through CDT as can the extent to which second-chance ALEs are deschooled. By critically exploring the discursive elements of second-chance ALEs the institutional tentacles of power that influence how young people experience learning in these environments can be revealed.

CDT has been utilised in this study as a framework for critically examining the power of discourse in the sociocultural context of second-chance ALEs. This chapter has considered how the dimensions of CDT have influenced existing studies in the field of alternative learning. Fairclough's (1989) micro, meso, macro structure of CDT has also been adopted to deconstruct the dominant discourses of this study's research problem and thereby providing a theoretical basis for this thesis. Firstly, the discourse of alternative was found to be used to describe how ALEs use non-traditional approaches to schooling that reduce the effects of marginalisation that some young people experience in conventional schools. Secondly, the counter discourse of second-chance was described as implying that it is the state's second-chance to ensure that the learning needs of these young people are met, instead of being these outsiders second-chance at education certification. Thirdly, the discourse of successful transitions was found to be more than linear progression through education certification and vertical advancement of the social class system. CDT provides a theoretical framework for this study that incorporates Illich's critical perspective on contemporary society at the macro-level, while considering the direct influence of power relationships on how

these outsiders experience learning and the impact that power relationships have on their transition pathways at both the meso and micro-levels.

Chapter Four: The Research Design

4.0 Introduction

The critical approach to the theoretical framing of this study is continued in the research design. This chapter will detail the choices of methodology, data collection and analysis processes for an investigation into how the second-chance ALEs of this study met young people's learning needs. The design of this study has been driven by both the contextual and theoretical fields of knowledge, established in Chapters Two and Three respectively, to address the research questions posed in Chapter One. Chapter Two situated the study within the temporal and spatial contexts of alternative learning. In Chapter Three, discourses of second-chance, alternative, and successful transitions were deconstructed to theorise the research problem.

This study was a multi-sited critical ethnography (Bryman, 2012; van Maanen, 1988) with time-in-field of three years as guidance officer and an insider researcher.[15] I had been a staff member of these second-chance ALEs for two years as the program's guidance officer, employed by the school to provide case management and counselling support to the young people in the program. Data collection took place after ethics approval and for an initial period of six months from June to November 2017. McGregor et al. (2017) identified that the strength of multi-sited ethnography was that it "enabled the researchers to make connections between sites" (p. 9) which aided in the richness of the ethnographic data. By choosing five second-chance ALEs operating within the same regional Queensland context with a common partner of the one school of distance education, the scale of the study was small, but not for qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was a conscious choice made by the supervisory team due to the study being for a doctoral candidature. While this provided a unique study, being the only alternative school that was identified as using an online curriculum delivery mode braided with face-to-face education support within Queensland, researcher decisions regarding convenience affected the scope of the study. With well over 2000 Queensland students enrolled in alternative schools across the state (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2016), a broader study was certainly possible with a different methodology and data collection methods, just not practical for a doctoral study addressing these research questions with one researcher and a limited budget. The choice of geographical locations to conduct observations was affected by budgetary constraints, but also selected for ease of access to potential participants in these sites. These choices were made based

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[15] Guidance officers provide a comprehensive guidance and counselling service for students and their families, and professional and personal skill development programs for school staff (Queensland Department of Education, 2018b).

upon insider knowledge. While the research design was approved by the CQUniversity's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and by the Queensland's Department of Education and Training (DET), the power of researcher choice cannot be understated in how it shapes a study.[16]

This chapter explains, firstly, the research paradigm (Section 4.1), followed by a justification of the conceptual and methodological perspectives that frame the research methods (Section 4.2). Section 4.3 and 4.4 delineate the data collection methods and data analysis process respectively. Within these sections plausible links are made between methods and methodology, establishing what counts as data based upon the research paradigm described in Section 4.1. Ethical considerations are addressed in Section 4.5, where the issues regarding access to participants, and the role of an insider researcher are considered. Section 4.6 deals with the scope and limitations of the study, outlining how the research design addresses the aim of the research as well as the implications of using the chosen design on the outcomes of the study and the power of researchers in these choices.

4.1 Qualitative research paradigm

This section will outline the "architectural blueprint" (Merriam, 1988, p. 6) for this study. Through considering my philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, and axiology) the impact that these have on the research design (methodology), and the theoretical orientation of this study are examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research paradigm is therefore examined through the four perspectives of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

As the researcher for this study, I subscribe to a constructivist ontology where a researcher perceives reality as being self-constructed (Maxwell, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). This is due to a belief that reality and therefore knowledge (epistemology) is constructed through an individual's social interactions (Wahyuni, 2012). Since individuals have different perspectives, values, and beliefs, and make decisions based upon varying cultural assumptions and life experiences, it is plausible to view reality as a social construct. As Wahyuni (2012) states, "these human perspectives and experiences are subjective, therefore social reality may change and can have multiple perspectives" (p. 71). In this respect, social-constructivists seek understanding of their world by addressing the "processes" of interaction among individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). They investigate the impact of historical and cultural settings in which participants live and work so as to better understand their experience, while also recognising how a researcher's interpretation flows from their own personal,

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[16] Ethical clearance was sought and approved to collect data relating to these second-chance ALEs. HREC Approval number 20566. Letter of approval is available in Appendix B.

cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The social-constructivist ontological and epistemological perspective aligns with an interpretivist researcher's axiology of valuing the multiple perspectives of the people being researched.

As the researcher, I viewed these social realities through a critical lens to examine how power relationships influenced the learning experiences of the young people in these second-chance ALEs. Through this perspective, a critical theory approach, aligning with the key findings from Chapter Two and discourses of second-chance ALEs that were deconstructed in Chapter Three, was employed to examine the larger contextual factors at play within this social field. It is acknowledged that studying discourse from a critical perspective, through a theoretical framework such as CDT, is but one research approach that could have been taken to this study. The critical edge that CDT provides can have the potential to narrowly focus a researcher on the power relations that may be present within discourses to the detriment of seeing all that is occurring within the social field. As Fairclough (2013a) noted, discourse is but one social element within a field of social practice.

Research projects that consist of a deep immersion within the social setting that is to be studied may have the potential to remedy this by allowing a researcher to see more intimately the multiple perspectives of the various discourses in operation. However, there is also the potential to find only what one is looking for when using a theoretical approach that is unashamedly focused on emancipatory goals (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997/2007). This concern is addressed in the research design through the use of reflexivity and member checking which will be identified and discussed throughout this chapter. A critical theoretical approach to this study allowed for the dominant discourse types that influenced the learning experiences in these second-chance ALEs to be analysed with the intent of seeking change within those structures to better meet the needs of these marginalised young people (Davis, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). With a critical theory approach to this study, the research design may offer a critique of the social field of these second-chance ALEs, along with an envisioning of new possibilities in relation to learning institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fay, 1987; Morrow & Brown, 1994).

With a critical theoretical orientation in mind, the methodology chosen to frame this study was critical ethnography as it provided the opportunity to "produce credible knowledge of interpretations, with an emphasis on uniqueness and contexts" (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 77). This methodological approach served to investigate the context of where learning took place, along with the influence that culture and institutions had on framing how learning was experienced (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Other methodologies may have also been suitable for answering the research questions of this study. Grounded theory method would have explained the process of transitions of the young people from the second-chance ALEs. Case study would have provided an in-depth

understanding and insight into the problems inherent within senior secondary school transitions from second-chance ALEs. Phenomenology would have reported the individual lived experiences of the young people attending these second-chance ALES. However, critical ethnography was chosen as it situated me within the social field of these second-chance ALEs in a way that was conducive to examining how the power relationships and social organisation of this second-chance ALE affected the learning experiences of these discursively constructed outsiders.

Critical ethnography allowed for the uncovering of participant perceptions and meanings surrounding how power structures influence the young people's educational opportunities (Fetterman, 2010). This methodology allowed me to view the construction of reality through the interpretation of the multiple perspectives present within a social world. It is through this paradigm that the varying perspectives of participants have been foregrounded in the co-construction of this critical ethnographic study of the features of these second-chance ALEs. The critical ethnographic account was therefore co-created from data generated and analysed inductively from an emic perspective. The study described both students' and staff "lived experiences" in this learning environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). It also explained the young peoples' experiences in relation to the broader social impacts affecting their engagement in education. Section 4.2 below will examine the choice of methodology in detail.

4.2 Methodology

Critical ethnography was chosen as the methodology because it allowed a synergy between the conceptual framing of the study and the ontological and epistemological perspectives that knowledge is a social construct influenced by power relations; along with the possibility of participant involvement becoming an empowering experience (Fetterman, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). This section will firstly contextualise the choice of methodology, beginning with ethnography as a methodology before engaging more specifically with critical ethnography.

4.2.1 Ethnography

Ethnography, while having roots in anthropology, emerged also from the ideas of W.I. Thomas, George H. Mead, and John Dewey (Deegan, 2001). Dewey, in his role as a professor at the University of Michigan, had a major impact on the thinking of Robert Parks, who with Ernest Burgess trained a vast number of students who wrote many of the now-famous ethnographies (Deegan, 2001; Park, Burgess, & Janowitz, 1921; D. E. Smith, 2005). Ethnography as field work was described by Brewer (2000) and Fetterman (2010) as a way to research people's behaviour in everyday contexts. It uses observation, interviews, and artefacts, and requires from "six months to two years

or more in the field" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 8). This extended time spent in the field with those being studied provides an opportunity for the researcher to "gradually enter their world and gain an understanding of their lives" (Jeffrey & Walford, 2004, p. vii). The focus is normally on a single setting and is small-scale where thick description and sharp analysis are combined to examine how these micro-communities operate as social ecosystems (Geertz, 1973; Hatch, 2002; D. Mills & Morton, 2013; Walford, 2008).

Social ecosystems consist of culture-sharing groups that are created through shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An ethnographer focuses on the entire culture-sharing group and examines these shared patterns by being immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people within the social ecosystem, making observations and interviewing participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research begins with compiling a detailed description of the culture-sharing group which moves into a thematic analysis of patterns and topics of significance, and ends with a holistic cultural portrait of how the ecosystem works (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fetterman, 2010).[17] Through the analysis of the data, attribution of the meanings of the human actions are described and explained to produce the essence of the culture of the social ecosystem (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010).

Ethnographic researchers consistently use reflexivity to deliberate upon the influences that helped to create the data that is rich with detail, context, emotion, and reflects the tacit knowledge required to navigate the webs of social relationships (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Gelling, 2014).[18] Special attention is given to the way participants perceive their reality in order to answer the questions of how, not just why (Denscombe, 2010; Gordon, 2002). Ethnography has sometimes been dismissed on the grounds that "the data and findings it produces are subjective and cannot provide a solid foundation for rigorous scientific analysis" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989, p. 2). Yet, as outlined by Pole and Morrison (2003), ethnographic analysis "moves from detailed description to the identification of concepts and theories which are grounded in the data" (p. 3). Charles Darwin himself acknowledged the subjectivity of all observations in a letter to Henry Fawcett where he wrote that "How odd it is that anyone should not see that observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service" (Darwin, 1861, p. 1). This highlights the need for reflexivity by the researcher in order to justify how the concepts and theories are truly emic in perspective and acknowledge the impact the researcher's etic perspective has on the data and analysis.

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[17] The flow of evidentiary chapters and final theorising chapter follow this ethnographic approach by providing a detailed description of the social ecosystem of these second-chance ALEs, followed by the thematic analysis of patterns and topics that have merged from the data, culminating in a holistic cultural portrait that provides a critical synthesis of the complexities impacting learning in such an environment.

[18] Specifics on how reflexivity has been used in this study will be presented in Section 4.3.5.

4.2.2 Critical ethnography

Critical ethnography focuses on not just explaining a social ecosystem through the research process but also attempts to empower disadvantaged groups within a society. This is where critical ethnography enriches ethnography. Criticism of ethnography was highlighted by Hammersley (2006) when he stated that "some Marxists and others have charged ethnography with only documenting the surface of events in particular local settings, rather than seeking to understand the deeper social forces that shape the whole society, and that operate even within those settings" (p. 7). It is here that critical ethnography comes into its own. Critical ethnographies have a "Marxist edge" (van Maanen, 1988, p. 140). Theoretically, they are concerned with how social structures are seen through the eyes of disadvantaged groups in capitalist societies. Through this critical lens the ethnographer can potentially empower underserved, marginalised young people to reflect upon their realities and the social influences and power relationships that impact them as a transformative outcome of the research (Day, 1999; Gordon, 2002). While the direct influence of critical ethnography to empower participants can be limited compare to a methodology like participatory action research, empowerment is often attributed indirectly through findings impacting on policy or decisions that affect groups beyond the study's participants (Bloomfield & Harreveld, 2020; Bradbury, 2015).

Critical ethnography aligns with the research aim of this study through being able to describe how a cultural group interacts. As a methodology it facilitates an exploration into the beliefs, language, behaviours, and issues facing the group i.e. power, resistance, and dominance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the culture-sharing group in this study is not a mainstream group, rather a group that has been marginalised by the education system, the use of critical ethnography becomes purposeful. Critical ethnography is a type of ethnographic research in which the author advocates, through the findings, for the emancipation of groups marginalised in society (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thomas, 1993). By using a critical ethnographic methodology this study had the potential to advocate for the learning needs of marginalised young people in these second-chance ALEs. This potential for advocacy stems from a critical ethnographer harnessing a study's findings to suggest changes in society relating to the institutionalisation of learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Maanen, 1988). The advocacy perspective in critical ethnography is in response to "the systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority [that] serve to marginalise individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders"(Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 92). Critical ethnography potentially provides an opportunity to empower marginalised young people to transcend the constraints placed on them by learning institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fay, 1987; D. E. Smith, 2005).

A critical ethnographer aims to use the research experience to provide participants with opportunity to challenge the power structures present within their field of social practice rather than just retell their lived experience. By providing the opportunity for young people who are part of the culture-sharing group to critically reflect upon their learning institution, how it serves them, and the inherent power structures within it, it was hoped that they would become aware of and empowered to challenge repressive discourse types. Thomas (1993) clarified this concept by stating that "conventional ethnographers study culture for the purpose of describing it; critical ethnographers do so to change it" (p. 4). Given the context and types of participants that form the basis of this study, the use of a critical ethnography was considered a more suitable choice than conventional ethnography due to its potential for empowering the staff and students existing in this social ecosystem. However, this methodological approach maintains researcher centrality to the study. While the influence of researcher power can be mitigated through methods that build an emic perspective, a stronger participatory element to the research design could facilitate a foregrounding of the voices of the marginalised participants instead of relying as heavily on the co-creation of data where methods lend themselves to being researcher driven.[19]

4.3 Data collection methods

This section will outline the data collection methods and how they were implemented in this study. The methods of data collection align not only with a critical ethnographic methodology, but also respond to the research questions by examining the social phenomenon within this second-chance ALE (Brewer, 2000; Wahyuni, 2012). Once ethical approval was confirmed by CQUniversity's HREC (Copy in Appendix B), data was collected through (1) participant observations with field notes; (2) semi-structured individual and focused small group interviews with students and support staff (i.e. youth workers, teachers, program administrators); (3) artefacts; and (4) reflexive journal.[20] Through this triangulation of these data sources and types the robustness of the findings were enhanced by providing a cross-checking measure (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Wahyuni, 2012). The use of a reflexive journal was also essential in guiding the data collection and analysis processes because it informed and influenced the interview questions, the structure of interviews and the focus of the observations (Brewer, 2000; Denscombe, 2010; Lichterman, 2015; Roth, 2012).

The participants in this study were the youth who attended these second-chance ALE sites, the support staff which included youth workers (facilitators who worked on-site with the youth) and

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[19] The ethical considerations of the influence of researcher power will be explored in Section 4.5.
[20] Within the subsequent evidentiary chapters abbreviations of the data collection methods will be used i.e. Interview Transcript (IT), Participant Observation (PO), Reflexive Journal (RJ).

their volunteers, the teachers who provide the curriculum from the school of distance education, as well as administrators from both the community organisations who hosted the locations and the administrative staff from the school of distance education. These people were approached to be participants in the study due to their intimate involvement within the culture-sharing groups. Other stakeholders who have not been included would be parents/guardians of the youth who attend, and the support workers from other community organisations and education systems who referred the young people to the program. These people have not been chosen to be included within this study due to their peripheral level of involvement in these second-chance ALEs and their limited knowledge of and experience with the curriculum.

4.3.1 Participant observation with field notes

The backbone method of primary data collection in any ethnography is participant observation (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; van Maanen, 1988). It requires the researcher to engage in the culture and become immersed in the day-to-day issues that the people experience (van Maanen, 1988). This immersion takes time and requires the researcher to become accepted as a member of the micro-community being observed (Gelling, 2014). During the six months of data collection, sixteen (n=16) structured observations of the interactions between staff and students across the five sites were conducted, focusing on what observable features constituted an effective learning environment. These observations included the documentation of the physical environment, the sequencing of events, counting and mapping the learning interactions, and were conducted through a lens of searching for indicators of sociocultural difference (S. L. Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).[21] These observations and the subsequent field notes focused on the students' learning experiences and included observations on engagement with the curriculum and with the support staff.

A formal protocol to each observation was adhered to through the use of a predesigned form to record information collected during the observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observations were conducted on a weekly basis for approximately 2-3 hours per day (between 9 am and 2pm) over the different sites, throughout the entire six-month phase of data collection. Each observation was recorded in a coded manner for efficiency and consistency with the following aspects of the sites were the focus of the observations: the setting, the students, the staff, the learning activities, and time. Observations of the setting included (a) the physical size and design, (b) layout including

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[21] The indicators of sociocultural difference observed in this study, refer to the discourses of power operating within the field of social practice (as presented in Chapter 3). These discourses of power will be identified and critiqued in the evidentiary chapters.

fixtures, fittings, learning technologies, fixed and consumable resources, (c) the location geographically in terms of services, transport, other access issues. The observations of the students included (a) how many, (b) which gender, (c) what learning roles were observed requiring what kinds of experience and knowledge. Observations of the staff related to the different categories of staff (a) youth workers, volunteers, teachers; (b) how many in each category; (c) which gender; (b) the roles each appeared to have; and (c) their interactions with the students and each other. Observations of the learning activities included what ways students (a) related to each other, and (b) related to staff; (c) communication style/s; (d) interacted with technology and other resources for the curriculum; (e) evidence of decision making and judgements about learning. In relation to time, observations focused on (a) what were the working hours for each site and during that period when was learning occurring; (b) how many and with which staff did each student engage with during the given observation period e.g. whether there were periods which were very busy and if so what was happening during those busy times; (c) any 'downtime' from learning and how it was utilised by students and staff; (d) whether there were learning, workload and/or engagement protocols.

Observations were undertaken while still holding the position of guidance officer for the school of distance education. The existing position of guidance officer presented both an advantage and a risk for undertaking participant observations. On the one hand, this "insider's knowledge" (Thomas, 1993, p. 37) provided a comfortable entry into conducting participant observation of the second-chance ALEs without the need for "gatekeepers" (Brewer, 2000, p. 58; Denscombe, 2010, p. 92). It also fitted with a "convenience sampling"(R. W. Emerson, 2015, p. 166) approach as it provided ease of access to participants in these second-chance ALEs. On the other hand, the risk was that the roles of guidance officer and researcher would be blurred, and unforeseen actions observed may provide knowledge and/or dilemmas impacting either or both roles.

The observations that were conducted in this phase of data collection were written as field notes. Ethnographic field notes have been described by R. M. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) as capturing and preserving the experiences, insights and understanding gained from the close, long-term experience that the researcher is exposed to. These field notes on observations were written as close to the times of observation as possible, in order to maintain the richness of the data that was collected (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989; Whyte, 1943/1993). By writing field notes contemporaneously, they were sharper in description and could therefore serve as memory markers when I re-read the notes for coding and analysis (R. M. Emerson et al., 2011). It was possible to write the notes while in each site and this supported the rich telling of the participant's stories.

Writing field notes did not appear to adversely affect the observed behaviours of participants as they were used to me writing notes in the spaces as the guidance officer. The use of pen and paper also fitted with the general use of the spaces as education facilities where these items were in regular use by all. Unlike other settings, the writing of notes in situ did not lead to a negative effect on my insider status the way that it could appear unusual and off-putting for note taking to occur in other settings due to notetaking not being part of the social practice in the field (van Maanen, 1988). These observation notes that were recorded while in each site were however only initial notes. These initial notes were often done in short-hand and needed to be enrichened, which occurred as soon as possible after leaving each site. To ensure that these initial notes were confidentially written while in the space, a private system of symbols and abbreviations were used to make the notes incomprehensible to people in the space who may have asked to see them (R. M. Emerson et al., 2011). They were descriptive and objective, with any inferencing of meaning being reserved for the journal (S. L. Schensul et al., 1999).

Participant observation allowed for in-depth description of participants realities and helped to build an understand of how the community was organised (Whyte, 1943/1993). S. L. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (2013) wrote that over time, through "repeated observation and questioning, the meanings of items, articles, patterns of behavior, and social relationships and events will become clearer" (p. 91). This intimacy provides richer data than interviews alone; something best described by Whyte (1943/1993) when he said, "As I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions that I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis" (p. 303). However, the researcher must ensure that they maintain the balance between insider and outsider status in order to conduct adequate observations and data collection (Davis, 2008; Wolcott, 1975).

4.3.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collection method, as they are in most ethnographies, and mimicked the appearance of casual conversations that were experienced by participants in the observation phase (Fetterman, 2010). The potential number of participants who would be recruited for the interview phase of the study was 30-40 based on observations of the number of people in each of the locations. The actual number of participants totalled 24.[22] The thirteen interviews lasted between 20-60 mins each and were digitally recorded for later transcription. This data collection phase was an opportunity to ask specific interview questions that mapped to the research questions for this study and were informed by the data collected during the

[22] A full breakdown of participants is available in Appendix C.

participant observation phase. Reasons for this smaller number of participants than anticipated will be explored in Section 4.5.2. Interviews were a mix of focused small group interviews and individual interviews. This reduced the number of interviews to thirteen, fitted with the number of interviews used in most qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The spread of interviewees was a mix of both male and female youth; youth workers/facilitators, volunteers, teachers, and administrators. The number of interviewees in each participant group were: young people (n=8); youth workers and volunteers who facilitate students' learning (n=7); teachers (n=3); administrators (n=6). A list of anonymised participant demographics has been included in Appendix C to assist readers in conceptualising the participants that are referred to within the evidentiary chapters of the thesis.

The use of semi-structured interviews provided a relaxed informal atmosphere that is generally attributed to unstructured interviews, while still having a list of pre-prepared questions that were used as a guide to the data generation (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). The data generated from the interviews provided insider perspectives specific to the research aim (Knobel, Kalman, & Lankshear, 2020; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). This meant that different responses to the same questions could be compared, but still retained flexibility for the interviewee to direct responses to highlight concepts of importance that may have been overlooked when preparing the interview questions and maintain the emic perspective (Knobel et al., 2020; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

Since data analysis processes occurred in tandem with the collection phases the refinement of questions and the possibility of returning to ask clarifying questions. This was considered and implemented when the principal administrator and program manager from the school of distance education were both interviewed a second time to respond to some clarifying questions that emerged during the data analysis.

Interview questions were derived from an "interview guide" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471; Davis, 2008, p. 63). This interview guide provided a plan of what questions were asked based upon the research aim, research questions, data collected during participant observation, and insights from the reflexive journal, but also allowed for asking questions based specifically on the interviewees' answers (Davis, 2008; Day, 1999). Questions for the interview guide began with a non-threatening "survey question" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 43) to maintain/re-engage rapport with the participant and gain a broad understanding of the participant's world. The survey question for the young people in this study's interview guide was: What is different between this ALE and the school you came from?

What things do you find to be the same? A similar survey question was asked of staff and administrators. Following this survey question specific interview questions that were shaped by the

research questions were asked. Sample questions that were posed to staff were: How do you think the ALE supports and develops the students? (Research Question 1) What are your thoughts on what students learn at ALS? (Research Question 1) How do you think this learning this help them with their future pathways? (Research Question 2). The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed participants voices to be heard, but at the same time it is acknowledged that the interview data was co-produced (El Zoghbi, 2013). This co-producer effect is due to the interviewer choosing when to ask secondary questions that lead the interviewee to elaborate and reflect on what they have said and thereby co-creating the interview data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014).

Individual interviews were scheduled with program administrators to lessen any inconvenience to their work commitments and ensure a higher participation rate. Focused small group interviews were conducted for the groups of student participants, teachers, and facilitators. Interviews with students occurred during their scheduled learning time at the site they attended. The focused small group interviews were planned and prescheduled, due to the need for written consent from parents/guardians for youth to participate, but still occurred in the participants naturalistic setting (J. J. Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, & Borgatti, 1999). Teacher and facilitator group interviews occurred during time allocated for their professional development as this was operationally convenient for the organisations and fit with the purpose of their meeting. All interviews were facilitated by myself as I already had an established relationship with the group.[23]

Even though I had been immersed in these second-chance ALEs for two and a half years prior to data collection; had numerous conversations with participants during the observation period; had a solid grasp of the learning environment from an emic perspective; and was considered as already being "part of the community under study" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 2), Fetterman (2010) advised that "interviews are most useful at the middle and end stages of a study for the collection of data about a specific question" (p. 40). This meant that even though several informal conversations about the research questions had occurred during the participant observation phase, conversations with a structure and a purpose occurred post this via semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). It was here that knowledge was co-constructed through the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Hertz, 1997). Interview data was used to lead the data analysis process, with observation field notes and artefacts serving to triangulate discourses that emerged from the interview data.

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[23] The impact of this pre-existing relationship will be discussed in Section 4.5.1.

4.3.3 Artefacts

The artefacts collected in this study were a rich source of information that helped to gain a clear picture of the features of these second-chance ALEs. A wide range of varying data types were provided by the school and host organisations, totalling eleven gigabytes of data. These included samples of student work e.g. assessment items, student academic data, levels of achievement and diagnostic testing, student transition data, as well as advertising and enrolment information for the program. Maps and diagrams were also produced to help enrich the telling of the participants' stories (Day, 1999). These data sources helped to verify and, in some instances, challenge the discourses that emerged from the analysis of interview and observation data.

Artefacts in this study included not only written text in official documents but also included visual data through photographs taken on site by staff. These photographs, some included in Section 5.3, provided a detailed visual depiction context of each site. The photographs not only enrichen the telling of the physical features of each site described in Section 5.3, but also have been included in the analysis of data that has contributed to the construction of discourses relating to the cultural features of these second-chance ALEs.[24] The collection and analysis of artefacts has been integral in bringing to light the relations of power and control inherent within the sociocultural context of these second-chance ALEs. While the voices of the participants in the interviews provided a rich depiction of the lived experiences of those in each site and the perceptions of those who supported them, the textual analysis of artefacts further enrichened the data collection (Fetterman, 2010; van Maanen, 1988).

The artefacts gathered during the data collection phase have supported the construction of discourses that explain not only the features of these second-chance ALEs, but also the relations of power and control within this field of social practice. The official school communications and policies that were gathered have proven to be integral to gaining a clear understanding of the institutional power inherent within this social field (D. E. Smith, 2005). The textual analysis of such documents produced by the school have directly influenced the construction of competing discourses that demonstrate how different ideologies, values, and beliefs about the purpose of this program as a second-chance ALE.

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[24] The cultural features of these second-chance ALEs are represented through the discourses of supportive environment and relationships. These discourses have been constructed from interview, observation, and artefact data, and are presented in Section 6.2.

4.3.4 Reflexive journal

The reflexive journal provided both a secondary data source to assist with triangulation of the other data types as well as a means to document the research process and consider the influence of the researcher on the research. Through the use of a reflexive journal, subjectivity could be addressed by providing a space for self-awareness and accountability to the standards of knowing and telling of the people who were studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A reflexive journal allowed me to document the reality that I experienced through the data collection and analysis processes. The reflexive journal added to the credibility of my account of the cultural, social, individual, and communal conceptualisations of the social field (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Richardson, 2000).

The use of reflexive journaling in this study was purposeful. It provided a space to acknowledge the co-constructed nature of the data (Brewer, 2000; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Lichterman, 2015). The journaling facilitated reflection upon questions about what was being observed and how researcher's biographies influence the lens of observation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Bryman, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reflexive journaling provided the opportunity to critically examine the influence of the power-imbalance of both the roles of researcher and guidance officer. One example of this was, "Will the students feel obliged to participate in the interviews because I work for the school?" (Reflective Journal/3, 2017). The reflexive journal documented the ethical issues relating to power relationships in the study as well as decisions in research design thereby recognising the power of the researcher in the creation of knowledge.

This journaling played an integral part of research process with reflection not only on the other data sets but also the research process and the influence of the researcher on this process (Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 1965; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989; Leedy & Ormond, 2005; Wahyuni, 2012). It provided an intellectual space to consider the various impacts upon the knowledge generation process in both data collection and analysis phases, especially the potential influences of my familiarity with the participants and the context of the research. The transparency that came from reflexivity also accounted for the influence of my ontological perspective when conducting a critical ethnography and led to a more trustworthy and authentic representation of these second-chance ALEs (Brewer, 2000; Hertz, 1997).

4.4 Data analysis process

This study's data analysis process involved the secure management of the various datasets for analysis that were outlined in Section 4.3 and the use of the CDA analytic framework as the

study's data analysis method.[25] CDA was chosen due to its alignment with the research paradigm and aim of the study. Since this study's aim was to construct an understanding of the learning experiences of the youth who attended these five second-chance ALEs in regional Queensland, Australia, discourse became a both a conceptual and analytic medium for constructing this understanding. The study of how discourse was experienced in these second-chance ALEs has afforded a critical exploration of the power structures that were inherent within the production of the various texts and images that constituted the research data. These ethnographic datasets were analysed by considering how the relationships and dominant discourses of the culture-sharing group impacted upon the "knowledges, attitudes, ideologies and social representations" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 206).

The critical discourse theoretical framework that anchors this study situates the critical ethnographic methodology and the use of CDA as the study's analytic framework within a social-constructivist and interpretivist research paradigm. CDA, as a data analysis method, provides the opportunity to analyse the various ethnographic datasets at three distinct levels of analysis. CDA is used in this study to analyse the textual features of the visual, auditory, and print data at the syntactic level; the social features that impact the production and distribution of the data; and the cultural features that influence how the discourses constructed from the data represent certain values, beliefs, traditions, and assumptions. The following subsections detail the data analysis process, how the data was managed during analysis and how CDA was used as this study's analytic method.

4.4.1 Data management for analysis

With the wealth of data made available for analysis there was potential for data to be not only be misinterpreted or misrepresented, but simply misplaced due to the complexity of the data sets. For this reason, the following analysis methods and tools were employed to mitigate this potential:

(1) Qualitative data analysis software,

(2) Member checking loop,

(3) Reflexive journaling.

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[25] The term CDA is used in this thesis to describe the analytic process that has been adopted in this study. As was acknowledged in Section 3.1.1, CDT is the term being used to represent the theoretical framework for the study and CDA as the term used to represent the analytic framework.

(1) The NVivo computer software program was used to manage these complex data sets by providing a database for the analysis process. NVivo enables a researcher to easily manipulate the data and conduct searches, while providing security by storing the database and files together in a single file (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once all the raw data had been anonymised, it was entered into the NVivo program where it underwent a process of data reduction as some artefacts were in fact duplicates. Next, I began the *in vivo* coding of the data where I looked for patterns of thought and behaviour evident in the text (Fetterman, 2010). This was followed by increased levels of understanding of the various patterns within the coded data. As I moved up a conceptual ladder, I was able to identify potential discourses and overarching discursive themes by mixing and matching patterns in the data that would then be verified through a process of triangulation (Fetterman, 2010). NVivo was also used to display the data through graphic figures, tables/matrices, and textual displays. In consultation with the research supervisors, to reduce researcher bias, these textual displays informed the drawing of discursive interpretations of the data in relation to the research questions.

(2) This analytic process was also supported through the use of a "member checking loop" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204) where participants were given opportunity to read their interview transcript and comment on how their words were represented in the transcripts. All staff read and approved their transcripts without any changes, however some of the young people had moved on or were sporadic in their attendance, making the checking of transcripts more difficult. Only three of the eight young people participated in the member checking loop. The coding of interview transcripts was also quality assured through the research supervisors, where initial codes were reviewed to counteract the closeness to the data that is common with insider research (Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Merriam, 2002).

(3) The reflexive journal documented the decisions and interpretations of the data (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 2005). Journaling allowed consideration of decisions and responses by critiquing the "what, why, and from whence the data was derived, before responding with more self-awareness and discernment" (Rothman, 2014, p. 3). This journal also contributed to the transparency inherent within the design of the study by providing an audit trail of the decisions made on the research process; an essential tool given the insider status in the study.

In addition to these data analysis tools and methods, the data was de-identified prior to analysis and was stored in three secure locations to provide security and minimise the risk of loss: (1) AARNet Cloudstor (an Australian-based cloud service for researchers), (2) password encrypted portable hard drive, (3) password encrypted laptop. All hardcopy material was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher. These procedures aligned with the study's Research

Data Management Plan (DMP_46) as per CQUniversity's Research Data Management Policy and Procedures. Data identification codes will also be used in the evidentiary chapters of this thesis where findings from the CDA process will be presented. Identification codes for the different sources of data will be: participant observation field notes (PO), reflexive journal notes (RJ), interview transcripts (IT), and artefacts will be stated in full.

4.4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA provided a systematic way to critically analyse differences in perceptions between the students, staff, and the intended readings of the artefacts developed to promote the learning program. It reflects a social-constructivist paradigm and adds a historical dimension to the interactions between social and discourse structures, while highlighting the way discourse can influence the reproduction or resistance of inequity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fairclough, 2013b). The use of other analysis methods i.e. constant comparative method, grounded theory method, may have revealed important concepts, processes, and the overarching values inherent within each of the second-chance ALEs (Denscombe, 2010). However, the use of CDA in this critical ethnography had the potential to not only enlighten but emancipate the marginalised young people learning in these second-chance ALEs by critically questioning the power relationships inherent within the discourses that were being constructed within this field of social practice (Shi, 2015; Weiss & Wodak, 2007).[26]

The analysis of the culture-sharing group in an ethnography involves the researcher identifying potential discourses that emerge from the data. This entails a process of reviewing all of the data, starting with the interview transcripts to provide the emic perspective, assigning *in vivo* codes to the text, and categorising the codes into a small sets of potential discourses that are constructed under common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These themes and discourses were then challenged to ensure that they were well supported by evidence in the data (Wolcott, 1994). This approach to textual analysis, identified the differences in the data and discourse construction, thereby providing opportunities to interpret how power distributions and associated norms were created and reified within these second-chance ALEs (Brewer, 2000; Davis, 2008; Fairclough, 2003/2006).

It is important to note that since the interview transcripts served as the initial data type for analysis to foreground participant voices, they were participant representations, and at times elicited competing stories about their experiences and do not claim to be 'truths', but rather

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[26] See Sections 3.1.3, 4.1, 4.2.2, and 7.1 for the emancipatory potential of critical approaches to research.

constructs from an emic perspective (McGregor et al., 2017). Discourses were developed through a thematic analysis that utilised this emic perspective to initial open coding, with ongoing pattern development and constant comparison processes as data were examined across and within code categories (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Interpretation of the potential discourses and discursive themes entailed reading and rereading the data categories and evidentiary excerpts, referencing relevant literature and working with the research supervisors through the CDA framework for analysis. The exploration of the interrelationships between the data provided by participants was analysed to identify dominant discourses (Bryman, 2012; Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011). The discourses were then be compared and contrasted using CDA to determine what overarching discursive themes that then led the theoretical interpretations that answer the research questions (Fairclough, 2003/2006).

CDA focuses on the analysis of language texts (description of data as texts), analysis of processes of meaning production (interpretation of the meanings of texts), and analysis of the sociocultural practices within with the previous text/s and meaning/s are produced (explanation). Fairclough (2013b) described CDA as using these three levels (micro, meso and macro) of analysis.[27] The data from this study, along with the co-constructed discourses and discursive themes, were analysed through this framework at (1) Micro: where the object of analysis was expressed as text, whether it be auditory, image, or written word, and subjected to linguistic analysis that provided a syntactic description of the text; (2) Meso: where the processes by which that object was produced and communicated were analysed to determine the impact of power relationships on the process of text production, distribution, and consumption; and (3) Macro: where the sociocultural conditions under which these processes were enacted were analysed as discursive events within the field of sociocultural practice of this study (Fairclough, 2013b).

This approach to CDA was used because it provided multiple points of entry for analysis, depending on the research questions being addressed and type of data being analysed (e.g. field notes, reflexive journal notes, interview transcripts, and/or artefacts). CDA, as a method of analysis, provided a means to interrogate the construction of texts so that institutional or other power influences on text production could be discerned (Fairclough et al., 2011; Weiss & Wodak, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). It also afforded the iterative capacity to consider the intertextual and interdiscursive elements of the broader sociocultural influences affecting the text being studied (Fairclough, 2013b; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Maposa, 2015).

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[27] See Figure 3.1 in Section 3.1.3 for Fairclough's (2013b) three levels of discourse.

The data analysis process afforded by CDA fits within a critical ethnographic methodology (Fetterman, 2010). It also fits within both the social-constructivist and interpretivist perspectives as it aligns with the understanding that through multiple analyses the researcher can move in and out of the data to find various connections as well as differences in the perceptions of participants (Davis, 2008; Fetterman, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). From an interpretivist perspective, discourses are representations of values, beliefs, events, representations of oneself and representations of others that are current, have been or may yet become social practices and ways of being in the world. Thus, through this multi-tiered, constant comparison of potential discourses and discursive themes were possible, with the level of understanding and critique increasing with each analysis of the data (Fetterman, 2010; Kolb, 2012).

4.5 Ethical considerations

The following section will examine some of the ethical issues that needed to be considered in the design and implementation of this study (Bryman, 2015). The roles of the researcher and participants will be articulated as will the plan for a clear and transparent audit trail of collection and analysis processes including the use of researcher reflexivity throughout the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It will start by addressing the personal ethical dilemmas associated with insider research, followed by the ethical considerations required from a procedural perspective of undertaking this type of research with marginalised young people.

Prior to conducting the research, ethical clearance was sought from CQUniversity's HREC in the form of a Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) (see Appendix B for ethics approval letter). Additionally, ethical approval was also sought from the partner organisations involved in the program which included the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET), Local Government Authorities (LGA), and non-government organisations (NGO). This ethics approval at the organisational level also involved the acquisition of informed consent from participants and in the case of the young people, their parents/guardians as well, to ensure that no harm came from their participation in the study.

From a procedural perspective, participants' involvement was voluntary. A project summary outlining the aims of the research in plain English was provided to potential participants via an information sheet to ensure informed consent was given. Parents/caregivers of students under 18 years of age were required to provide informed consent to meet ethical clearance requirements of DET. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any reason needing to be given. Those who chose to participate were allocated pseudonyms and locations were de-identified, as shown Appendix C, to protect their identities. The use of

pseudonyms also assisted with the smoothness of reading about participants' perspectives in the evidentiary chapters of this thesis by providing a sense of participant personalities and identities without breaching confidentiality (Charmaz, 2006). To ensure confidentiality, all raw data and any publicly available records that contain identifiable details were carefully handled and de-identified where applicable. This de-identification process adhered to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 3.1.42 where identifiable data presented in this thesis and in other publications has been obscured with changes made to key identifiers (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Australian Vice -Chancellors' Committee, 2018, p. 35).

4.5.1 Insider research

As researchers we are in positions of power, even more so as insider researchers (Breen, 2007; Floyd & Arthur, 2010; Mercer, 2007). The positional power of insider researchers, due to their pre-existing role in the environment, is an ethical dilemma that emerged in this study. My insider status as the guidance officer equated to power in this context as power came from insider knowledge and positional power. The power of the guidance officer role came from extensive experience working with young people in this education system and centred around the role's premise of supporting marginalised young people, whom as outsiders of the education system, had not accumulated their own insider knowledge or social capital, to successfully navigate the education system. Even though this role was one of support for the young people in this second-chance ALE as a counsellor, the position meant that I held power not just through insider knowledge of the education system, but to varying degrees, in my pre-existing relationships with both students and staff. Students had the potential to view me as an adult with an official role representing the schooling institution and the staff were aware that my role was a position of leadership within the school and for teaching staff this could mean being viewed as having administrative power.

Being an existing part of these culture-sharing groups had a significant impact on the research. The notion of being an insider researcher was described by Breen (2007) as when a researcher engages in research within a group to which they already belong. It is also important to note that even though a researcher may have once been an insider in their previous role and are as Trowler (2011) says "culturally literate" (p. 2), once research begins, a new relationship with participants is brokered where they are in fact outsiders in their new role of researcher (Zipf, Harreveld, & Harrison, 2011). Merton (1972) referred to this as an insider and outsider continuum as you are never completely an insider or an outsider. This mirrored my experience in these second-chance ALEs. As both guidance officer and researcher, I frequented each site on a weekly basis, but

was not there experiencing the learning phenomenon as a student of the program, or as a teacher, a volunteer, a facilitator/youth worker or an administrator. I operated on the fringe, not belonging to any site but on the periphery of all. I was neither an insider nor an outsider.

Ensuring the credibility of the data was essential given my insider status. Through reflexivity I was able to reduce any "halo effect" that may have affected my judgements (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 362). By critiquing how my experiences, values and beliefs shaped my research interests I was able to navigate the ethical dilemmas that came from playing the multiple roles (Fisher, 2012; D. Mills & Morton, 2013). This notion of reflexivity was described by Lichterman (2015) as a way to "invite readers into a critical dialogue about our claims" (p. 5). It was through this process that I examined, recognised and acknowledged issues within the research process, particularly concerning power relationships, as well as accountability in both data collection and analysis (Fisher, 2012; Floyd & Arthur, 2010). This was done through an initial critique of my biography followed by regular reflexive journal entries. These entries were discussed and analysed with the research supervisors. It was essential for me to acknowledge how my "personal biographies, experiences and politics" shaped my research interests (D. Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 34). This provided recognition that the knowledge construction was partial and from a particular perspective.

Maintaining professional boundaries was a personal ethical dilemma present in this study due to the level of prior interaction within the culture-sharing groups. Both Whyte (1943/1993) and Willis (1977) in their two classic ethnographies provided insight into the ethical dangers of researcher immersion in ethnographies. Through critical reflection on this ethical dilemma, the existing professional boundaries that I had established as the guidance officer supported me in being able to maintain the clinical distance from the participants that was necessary to collect and analyse the data ethically (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989). It is also acknowledged that this prior immersion holds a potential risk as prior knowledge could be inadvertently used to read into the interview data and observations (Mercer, 2007). This risk was managed through member checking as an internal validity tool by "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). This was conducted with all staff participants, but only three of the eight youth participants were able to take part. Reasons for this were varied and will be discussed in Section 4.5.2.

The benefit of being an insider researcher was that risk of "going native" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96), which is often associated with ethnographies, was significantly reduced. The risk of my immersion in the field leading to me becoming so much a part of the culture-sharing group that I was unable to complete or be compromised in the study was not as high a risk as it can be for ethnographers who venture into an unfamiliar cultural group or system (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This

risk was further delimited, through reflexivity, however, it was identified that the power of being an insider with a formal position as a school employee, even though a support role, being an adult, and employed by an education institution would have influenced how the research process was experienced by participants and therefore had an effect on the data that was collected.[28]

The benefit of being a researcher who was biographically situated in the field as a youth counsellor was that my existing counselling skills could be transferred to the interview context. My pre-existing interview skills and relationships with participants served as an asset to the data collection process, however it is acknowledged that this came with its own inherent risk. The risk was that neither my interview participants nor I would always be able to distinguish between my role as guidance officer with counselling duties and my role as researcher with data collection duties. For this reason, I interviewed only those students with whom I did not have a counselling relationship with. For the other groups of participants (teachers, youth workers/facilitators, volunteers, administrators), my different role was clarified in writing prior to interviews, and I confirmed that verbally at the commencement of each interview. This meant that consideration of the ethical acceptability of exercising these skills was taken into account. Section 3.1.2 of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research was consulted prior to the applications for ethics approval were submitted (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2018). This was due to the power that would pre-exist from a counselling relationship, hence why this ethical dilemma was addressed by ensuring that no counselling clients were involved in the interviews. While the power of the insider role was acknowledged, it appeared to be juxtaposed with lack of power in the recruitment of the young people for the interviews.

4.5.2 Power and control in the research process

Discourses of power and control exist not just within the social field of these second-chance ALEs but also within the research process of this study. The positional power of me being an insider researcher working in a leadership role for the school of distance education has influenced this study. Recruitment of young people as participants was also affected by their lack of power to give their own consent to be interviewed, needing consent from their parents to participate. The control over both the recruitment and interview processes were shared by the school, which has also influenced the direction of the study.

The power of the insider role was acknowledged in the study's ethic application, yet this insider power was juxtaposed with lack of power in the recruitment of the young people for the

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[28] The effect of having a position of power as an insider will be considered further in Section 4.5.2.

interviews. This difficulty could be seen as a negative effect of insider status and positional power or being due to not researching with but conducting researching on participants. Even though I had three years' worth of insider status, more if you consider that many of the young people had known me as their guidance officer in their previous schools, the roles of guidance officer and of a university researcher both held positional power of institutional authority. Responses may have been very different if the interviews had been conducted by an external researcher with no affiliation to the school. This positional power did not just affect the young people where the role of guidance officer represented the education institution from which they had been marginalised, teachers' responses may also have been affected by my leadership position with the school's institutional hierarchy.

Participant recruitment difficulties were not just relating to ethical recruitment but trying to make it a priority for the young people to take home the information sheet and consent letter to be signed by a parent or caregiver was also fraught with complications. Many of the potential youth participants were living transient lifestyles, not always living at home or with strong positive relationships with their parents. Even though the age of these young people (15-18 years) meant that they could be deemed to be capable of informed consent (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2018), it was necessary to gain parent permission due to this research being conducted in a DET school context, where the department's ethical clearance meant parent permission was required in addition to the young peoples (Queensland Department of Education, 2017). This led, out of necessity, to the assigning of agency to the school, a group that was not the focus of the research.

Assigning agency to the school as an institution of power became a necessity, which in turn, shaped the stories that were told. This was illustrated not just in participant recruitment but also in the interview process where access to youth workers was conducted when it was operationally convenient for the school. Interviews were conducted at the school during the youth workers professional development time and since the school had agreed to release me from guidance officer duties to conduct the interviews, I felt obligated to meet the needs of the school and used the time and the location that were provided. My concern was that the interviews would be taking place in an institutional setting that the youth workers associated with the power of their manager and the higher levels of administration. This assigning of agency led to the analysis and critique of the institutional power of the school over the learning experiences of these young people.

There are a range of ethical considerations when conducting insider research with marginalised young people. This section explored the ethical and logistical issues that come with researching this field and considered the impact they have on participant voice. A major logistical

issue that had to be addressed was the need for parent consent due to the school context. The roles of guidance officer and of a university researcher both held positional power of institutional authority. Positional authority within the broader education institutional context had the potential to create another barrier due to these young people and their parents' mistrust of education institutions that they have been previously marginalised by.

4.6 Limitations and validity of the design

This study was conducted in five second-chance ALE sites that offered an alternative learning program using a hybrid of face-to-face and online curriculum delivery and were geographically located within regional Queensland. It investigated the relationship and connections between participants in the five participating sites and their perceptions of whether the learning program met the young people's learning needs. The first subsection will outline the limitations of this study and the delimitations that have been identified. The impact of these limitations and delimitations on a researcher's ability to achieve the research aim will also be discussed. This will be followed by a subsection that focuses on the validity of the research design.

4.6.1 Limitations and delimitations of the design

This study investigated a unique education delivery mode. It is also acknowledged that the opinions of participants may not reflect those of all members of the culture-sharing groups and I, as the researcher, could not control the level of partner organisation staff participation, nor did I have any direct influence on the type of curriculum delivered, the pedagogy used to teach, or the students' willingness to participate. It is however acknowledged that this researcher choice has dictated how this study has been designed without the knowledge or input from the young people it is described to be empowering. It is also acknowledged that the research questions that guided this study were also constructed without consulting any potential participants. While the research questions and choice of methodology align with contemporary literature pertaining to second-chance ALEs, the staff and young people who participated in the study were not afforded the power to negotiate how and what was being researched. The collected data was analysed using CDA and this was again a researcher choice.[29] While there were limitations that were out of my control, the chosen methodology suited this type of research context with these types of limitations.

What could be delimited was the sample size, the recruitment of participants, geographic locations to conduct observations, the methods used for data collection and analysis, and the timeframe of the project. As already noted in Section 4.5.2, the number of young people who

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[29] Critical Discourse Analysis was examined in detail in Section 4.4.1.

participated in the interview phase was less than anticipated, but overall numbers were similar with most qualitative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The choice of geographical locations to conduct observations was affected by budgetary constraints, but also selected for the richness of the potential data collection. These choices were made transparent throughout this chapter and acknowledged as choices based upon insider knowledge. In addition to this being submitted to CQUniversity's HREC, research clearance was also approved by DET through the school of distance education's principal. The methods, and methodology, were selected as a best fit with the research aim; the context of the study; and the researcher's social-constructivist perspective, interpretivist axiology, and critical theorist world view. The following subsections will define how this study can be evaluated for validity as an ethnographic study.

4.6.2 Validation strategies for the study

Perspectives on and approaches to validation of qualitative studies are varied and evolving (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to evaluate the research design of this study in a manner that aligns with the research paradigm that informs it, and the methodology used to direct it. This study will use the validation strategies as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) in Table 4.1, to "check the accuracy of a qualitative account" (p. 259). This will be followed by Angen's (2000) perspective on validation in interpretivist studies, where validation of research is based on negotiation and dialogue with participants; and that interpretations are always open to reinterpretation (Angen, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Richardson's (2000) evaluative framework for ethnographies will also be considered in Table 4.2 with Angen's (2000) strategies to further situate the validation of the study within the research design of the study. By considering all of these perspectives on validation, the scope and limitations of the design of this study will have been substantially assessed for inherent validity.

Table 4.1

Qualitative validation strategies

Validation strategy	Methods to address validation
Triangulation	Triangulation was evident in the research design using participant observation, interviews, artefacts, and the reflexive journal as data sources (see Section 4.3).
Discovering negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence	While the methodological approach taken in this study meant that having a preconceived hypothesis did not fit the research design, inquiry advances were made at multiple junctures throughout the study. These led to refinement of the research questions, to the analysis of the data using CDA, and the iterative nature of the research process (see Section 4.4.2).
Clarifying researcher bias or engaging in reflexivity	Reflexivity in relation to the research process has been explored in Section 4.3.4. In regard to any researcher bias coming from my insider status, Section 4.5.1 and the evidentiary chapters of this thesis provide evidence of the balanced approach that has been taken in the search for improvements in learning.
Member checking	The use of member checking in this study is evidenced throughout this chapter (see Sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5).
Persistent observation in the field	This validity strategy is embodied through the use of ethnography as the chosen methodology for this study with a total of three years in the field and six months of recorded observation (see Section 4.2 where this is explored).
Collaborating with participants	This validation procedure was accounted for to some degree in the member checking process where participants would verify interview transcripts and initial analysis codes and discourse development, however not to the extent that would have occurred if say Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) was used as a methodology for the study instead of critical ethnography (Zeller-Berkman, Muñoz-Proto, & Torre, 2015).
Enabling external audits	External auditing of the research process and product are addressed through the external examination of this thesis for PhD conferral purposes and complemented by peer-reviewed publications and presentations based upon this study's research design.
Generating a rich, thick description	This validity strategy is also embodied through the use of ethnography as the chosen methodology for this study (see Section 4.2).
Having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process	Creswell and Poth (2018) describe this strategy as having "someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomenon explored" (p. 263), to review the data and research process. This has been conducted throughout the study by both research supervisors.

The nine validation strategies provided by Creswell and Poth (2018) serve as a solid basis for evaluating qualitative studies. Table 4.2 below, examines this study more closely by presenting

strategies specific to a research paradigm that includes an interpretivist axiology and uses critical ethnography as methodology. The first two strategies listed in the table relate to the interpretivist axiology as outlined by Angen (2000) while the remainder contribute to validation of an ethnography that were posed by Richardson (2000).

Table 4.2

Validation strategies for an interpretivist critical ethnography

Validation strategy	Methods to address validation
Ethical validation	This study addresses the ethical validation criteria through the design being geared towards providing an emic perspective where the voices of youth participants are valued as much as those of staff. The design also ensured that the staff participants were from various roles to provide diverse perspectives on how learning is experienced.
Substantive validation	The validation through the multiple perspectives of participants was further substantiated by the systematic consideration of other points of view on alternative learning and more specifically second-chance ALEs in the contextual literature review contained in Chapter Two, as well as researcher reflections entered in the reflexive journal. These qualities of affording reinterpretation and transformation are inherent within the critical ethnographic methodology of this research design.
Substantive contribution	It is intended that this study will make a significant contribution to knowledge in a number of fields including: • Empirical knowledge - Alternative Education, Youth Studies. • Methodological knowledge – Critical Ethnography. • Theoretical knowledge – Critical Theory, Discourse Theory.
Aesthetic merit	This has been addressed in this study through the use of CDA to analyse the data and present the evidentiary chapters and findings of the research in an interpretive way (see Chapters Five, Six, and Seven).
Reflexivity	The use of reflexivity in this study has been well-documented in this chapter (see Sections 4.3.5 and 4.5.1 specifically).
Impact	The impact of this study will be assessed by the research supervisors and thesis examiners in the first instance, and then by the readers of the ethnography when the study is written for a wider audience.
Expresses a reality	Expressing a reality entails the measuring of the effectiveness of the study in embodying sense of lived experience, where the ethnography provides a true and credible account of a culture. This aspect will be addressed through the evidentiary chapters of this critical ethnographic study.

The framework provided by Creswell and Poth (2018) allowed the validation of this research design as a qualitative study. The considerations for interpretivist studies posed by Angen (2000) also provided guiding questions to validate how the study aligns with an interpretivist axiology. The evaluative aspects posed by Richardson (2000) related to the validation of the ethnographic product of the research. While the use of Richardson's (2000) validation techniques are essential in reflection on how this study operates as an ethnography, they are geared towards what is produced from the study rather than focusing on how the study has been designed. As such, these considerations will be addressed in more detail in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined my interpretivist and critical theorist perspectives within a social-constructivist worldview. It has linked this with the research aim, context, and choice of critical ethnographic methodology. The data collection methods have been explained and justified under this methodology and the choice of CDA for data analysis also aligns with the critical ethnographic approach. Plausible links have been made between methodology and methods of data collection, and in turn the analytical processes. Discourses of power and control inherent within the research design have manifested in access to participants, especially recruiting marginalised young people, and the implications of being an insider researcher with positional power. The ethical considerations relating to these discourses have also been acknowledged and addressed in this chapter. The validity of the study, has been reflected upon, as have the scope and limitations of the research design. This chapter also outlined how the design of this study has been driven by the contextual and conceptual fields of knowledge, established in Chapters Two and Three respectively, to address the research questions posed in Chapter One. Chapter Five will now address the first research question by explaining the features of these second-chance ALEs as the first of three evidentiary chapters within this thesis.

Chapter Five: Features of the Hometrees

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three evidentiary chapters that presents the findings of this study. It addresses Research Question One by exploring the features of the five second-chance ALEs herein known as Hometrees. Firstly, an explanation the research context and why the pseudonym of Hometree has been assigned to each of the second-chance ALEs will be explained in Section 5.1. This chapter then presents the analysis of the coded data relating to this research question through a detailed account of the contextual features of each of the five Hometree sites (Section 5.2).

5.1 The research context

This study's research context was a group of five community-based and publicly-funded second-chance ALEs. A school of distance education provided teacher oversight of an online curriculum where students worked independently through self-paced courses in literacy and numeracy via a platform of laptop learning. Figure 5.1 shows how the school is represented as the hub with each site operating as a satellite spoke. This representation aligns with the perception of the school at the centre and holding the most power in how the features of the learning environments impact on both learning and transition pathways.

The pseudonyms in Figure 5.1 are derived from "The Outsiders" (Hinton, 1967/2003) with each second-chance ALE or Hometree named after a location from the novel. The pseudonym of Tulsa was chosen as the name for the school of distance education, implying that the regional town in which the school is situated is called Tulsa. While the town of Tulsa was not being mentioned in "The Outsiders" (Hinton, 1967/2003) as a location, it was the hometown of S.E. Hinton and served as the contextual basis for the novel. In Figure 5.1 each of the five sites are framed as culture-sharing groups, with 2017 student numbers listed, around the school. Different community groups that partnered with the school to form the Hometrees are positioned outside of them. This hub and spoke diagram portrays each Hometree location as a culture-sharing group, a concept that will be explored in depth in Section 5.2. Tulsa School of Distance Education (TSDE) as the central partner or hub of the diagram was a conscious choice based on how the school was represented in the data, however it is acknowledged that positioning the school in this way can represent a power relationship within this field of sociocultural practice.
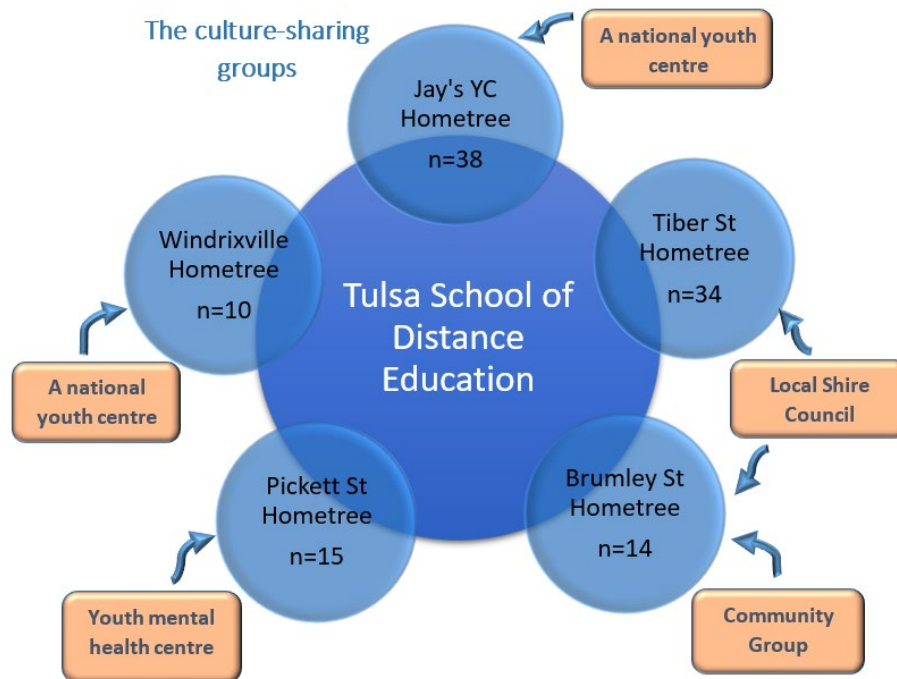
Figure 5.1 – The Research Context

An important contextual feature of these second-chance ALEs was the partnerships TSDE and not-for-profit community groups, local councils, or nationally administrated youth centres as was outlined in Figure 5.1. These partnerships meant that the design of each site was unique with each having a separate culture-sharing group within a wider social ecosystem connected through TSDE. The partnerships provided access to not just the formal curriculum offered by TSDE but a range of supplementary curriculum activities that were specific to each site, adding to the richness of the data collected. The fieldwork component of this study collected further detailed information of geographic location, partnership arrangements (including funding arrangements), the curriculum offerings including the online delivery options, technologies, and other physical resource architectures unique to each site, staffing mixes, student numbers and participation patterns to build descriptive commentary depicting each site's specific learning environment and inform its analysis.

Being based in community spaces these Hometrees also provided on-site access to a range of youth-focused support services and informal learning opportunities available through the different community organisations (see Figure 5.1). These not-for-profit community organisations provided physical infrastructures i.e. the community spaces for the Hometree sites on their premises with the commensurate facilities that entail, as well as youth workers and volunteers to support the young people with their learning. This model utilised TSDE's laptop learning curriculum and had community-based youth workers at the centre of the support and learning for these young people.

There were youth workers employed as facilitators who were on-site with the young people each day, while the teaching staff, referred to by participants as educators, visited the spaces 1-2 days per week, depending on the number of students needing learning support and physical distance from the school. These Hometree sites, while having common features, had an identity of its own and operated as individual Hometree within the broader field of sociocultural practice.

5.1.1 The pseudonym and metaphor of Hometree

The choice of Hometree as the pseudonym for the second-chance ALEs in this study came from Illich's (1973) epilogue to "Deschooling Society". In this epilogue, Illich (1973) made a conceptual link between the aim of deschooling in returning a balance of power and control to the human condition and the Greek mythological story of Pandora. Illich (1973) retells the story:

The original Pandora, the All-Giver, was an Earth goddess in prehistoric matriarchal Greece. She let all ills escape from her amphora (pythos). But she closed the lid before Hope could escape. The history of modern man begins with the degradation of Pandora's myth and comes to an end in the self-sealing casket. It is the history of the Promethean endeavour to forge institutions in order to corral each of the rampant ills. It is the history of fading hope and rising expectations (p. 105).

The promethean ethos that Illich (1973) refers to can be viewed as what he saw as the impending rise of neoliberal ideologies in society that have now eclipsed his notion of Epimethean hope.

The use of the story of Pandora as a metaphor for Illich's (1973) call for the deschooling of society led to my conceptualisation of Pandora from not just the ancient Greek mythological stories but the contemporary storytelling of James Cameron through his 2009 film "Avatar", set on the planet of Pandora. The film centres around a man, employed by a corporate institution, infiltrating a cultural group that is foreign to him and comprised of people who have a deep hatred of the institution that he represents, with the main goal of better understanding how this community or culture-sharing group lives. While there is more to the narrative than this brief summation, it shows some similarity to undertaking an ethnographic investigation with marginalised groups. This story also held an affinity with this study as it was my role to become a part of the culture-sharing group to better understand how they experienced their learning environment, while being employed by the education institution that many of the group held animosity towards. At the centre of the film's story was the community space of this culture-sharing group, a place called Hometree. Upon further musing, the idea of each learning space being described as a Hometree came from an Avatar fan website definition:

Hometree is […] comprised of a grove of intertwined trees of the same species that have grown together, providing for mutual strength and structural reinforcement. […] Hometree is a constant reminder that a community is stronger and more resilient than the sum of the individuals who comprise it (Fandom Games Community, 2019).

This definition seemed to sublimely describe the values and beliefs that were being extolled by participants when describing their experience within these learning spaces. For many, the community space where they went to learn felt more like a home than a school.[30]

The idea to use Hometree as a pseudonym for these second-chance ALEs led to seeing the sites as metaphorical trees. Figure 5.2 represents the support organisations as the root systems which was described in Cameron's (2009) film as a network of energy. The interconnection of the various support organisations provides the foundation, or roots, for the program. The staff, depicted as branches, provide the direct support to the young people. To continue with the analogy, the young people would be the fruit of the Hometree, representing the future growth of the forest/community.

Figure 5.2 – The structure of a Hometree

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[30] Examples of this home-like environment will be discussed in detail in Section 6.2.1.

The context of these Hometrees being connected via TSDE in the hub and spoke model of Figure 5.1 fails to depict the interdependence of the groups described in Figure 5.2 (the support organisations, the staff, and the young people). While TSDE provided the formal curriculum, they needed the host NGOs to provide the face-to-face support to maintain student engagement. Student engagement was needed for TSDE to continue to be funded for the enrolments each year. The host NGOs provided the location and face-to-face support but needed a formal curriculum to attract the marginalised young people as these outsiders also became clients of other programs that the NGOs procured their funding through. The young people served as clients to both TSDE and the NGO to ensure their recurrent funding and gain support and qualifications along with meeting education legislation requirements, and in many cases, maintaining their study benefits from the Department of Human Services. This Hometree metaphor provides an ecosystemic depiction of the interdependence of these community-based learning spaces where power and reliance were shared.

5.1.2 The marginalised young people within the Hometrees

The young people of these Hometrees were aged between 15 and 18 years and represent a population of regional youth who were considered to be significantly disadvantaged. In a fairly recent study conducted by The Smith Family (2014), it was identified that 59.7% of this regional population fell into at least two categories of disadvantage on the SEIFA compared to 40% of the Queensland population. Queensland Government Statistician's Office data suggests that 17.9% of the young people (aged 15-24) in this regional area were unemployed compared to the state figure of 14.0% (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2019). The young people who participated in the study, were not only representative of a significantly disadvantaged regional population but were also representative of a group of young people who had disengaged from conventional schooling. These young people had either chosen or had been forced to leave their previous schools. They attended their Hometree sites for various reasons including mental health issues, bullying, low literacy and numeracy, pregnancy, poor attendance, and exclusion (Hometree Webinar, Artefact, 2017). The Hometrees provided a second chance, or sometimes a last chance, for these marginalised young people to stay in formal education and avoid NEET status through continuing their progression in the senior phase of learning and offering a transition bridge to vocational training and/or employment.[31]

Transition pathways for school leavers in this region tended to focus on vocational pathways rather than into higher education. Data from the Queensland Department of Education (2018c) Next

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[31] Limited transition pathways from second-chance ALEs has been discussed in Sections 2.2.1 and 3.3.3. How the Hometrees impacted on transition pathways will be explored in Chapter Seven.

Step Survey[32] identified that the majority of those young people who responded as working went into part-time employment in the Accommodation and Food Service industries. Within the region only 47.2% of Year 12 completers were eligible to apply directly to university due to their curriculum choices at school (Queensland Department of Education, 2018c). While many of these young people chose a vocational education pathway rather than a tertiary education pathway, within this region there was a drop in the number of apprenticeships, traineeships and full-time employment options since 2008 (-4.4%, -4.1%, and -8.7% respectively) (Queensland Department of Education, 2018c). It is important to note that given the relative scarcity of high-skill vocational pathways i.e. apprenticeships and traineeships, the percentage of marginalised young people (most disadvantaged quintile as measured by the SEIFA) gaining apprenticeships or traineeships is less than half of all other Year 12 completers (Queensland Department of Education, 2018c).

A comprehensive approach to learning, instead of focusing solely on vocational transitions, was described by participants as being essential in engaging the young people of the Hometrees. Ann, the program administrator from TSDE referred in her first interview, to how the Hometrees were designed to reduce the opportunity gap for students via a "*holistic approach* [that] *helps them grow because they're building resilience in capacity in all aspects of their life, not just the academic side*" (Ann, IT, 2017). In addition to the formal curriculum provided by TSDE there were other programs that could offer informal learning opportunities for these young people. The fact that the Hometrees operated within physical spaces dedicated to community support rather than a place for formal schooling, the focus of learning in these environments appeared to be more comprehensive in definition where community engagement and personal growth were considered as important as developing educational capital.[33] Education capital was still a major focus with a formal, yet self-paced education program being provided by TSDE. The laptop learning that TSDE were able to offer the young people of each Hometree complemented the community-based model of learning where the learning environment did not come with the traditional features of a classroom with a teacher providing the learning delivery and dictating the pace, but rather a less-structured learning environment where participants suggested that young people chose to engage in learning at their pace and therefore enhanced their engagement in comparison to their experiences in conventional schooling institutions (PO/1, 2017; PO/2, 2017; PO/3, 2017, PO/4, 2017; PO/5, 2017).

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[32] The Next Step Survey annually analyses the post-school destinations of all young people in the region who completed secondary school to a Year 12 standard during the data collection phase of this study.

[33] Both community engagement and personal growth will be explored in Chapter Six, with consideration for how they might impact transition pathways being examined in Chapter Seven.

5.1.3 Tulsa School of Distance Education as the common partner

TSDE was the partner common to each of the Hometree sites and as such its representatives had the potential to make positive contributions to each, but also to exert power over how learning was experienced within each of the Hometrees. The central role that the school had, as depicted in the hub and spoke diagram of Figure 5.1, comes from TSDE serving as the initiating organisation arranging partnerships with five different community organisations that led to the creation of each of the Hometrees. In addition to brokering the partnerships and providing the laptop learning curriculum, TSDE also provided the teaching and administrative staff, which included a guidance officer to support and case manage those young people identified as having high and complex needs.

In addition to these contributions to the Hometrees, TSDE had also directed funding towards the partner organisations for the employment of youth workers to manage the Hometrees as facilitators. The fact that these people had qualifications and experience in social work rather than in education, was described by participants as a positive feature of the Hometrees that helped to re-engage these young people with learning (Margaret, IT, 2017; Chloe, IT, 2017; Raine, IT, 2017). The youth workers (facilitators) and teachers (educators) were both employed to support the young people with their learning and wellbeing. TSDE also ensured that there was a low student to facilitator and educator ratio to allow time for the facilitators and educators to better support these marginalised young people. Ratios observed in the different Hometrees averaged 1:5 adult to young person (RJ/22, 2017).

This section has provided a rationale for the choice of pseudonyms and their metaphorical significance, along with contextual information on the regional area of this study. The description of the research context included highlighting how the Hometrees were comprised of youth marginalised by the conventional schooling system and were residing in a regional location that had a population of significantly disadvantaged people when compared to the state's average. Each of the Hometrees were community-based learning environments where young people could choose to engage in the formal, but self-paced, learning program provided by TSDE or choose to engage in other, more incidental learning experiences that were offered in each space i.e. cooking, art activities, career guidance, individual counselling, and personal development programs. The following section will examine the features of each Hometree and provide a contextual basis for addressing the research questions.

5.2 The contextual features of the Hometrees

Each Hometree site, while having common features, was unique and had its own way of doing things. The Hometree sites examined in this study are depicted in Figure 5.3 below to provide some geographical context of where they were physically located within the district, they include Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, Tiber Street Hometree, Brumley Street Hometree, Windrixville Hometree, and Pickett Street Hometree.
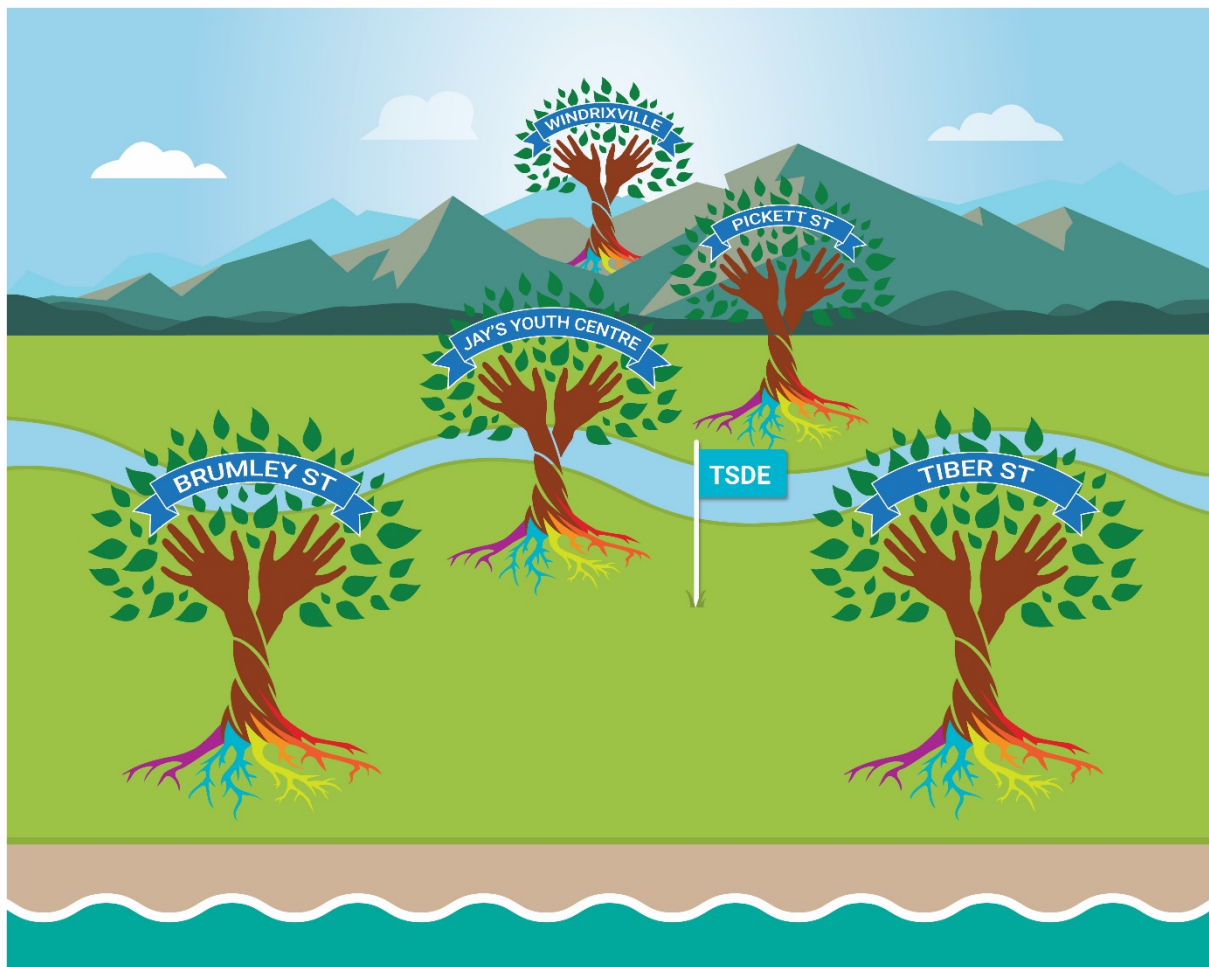
Figure 5.3 – The geographical context of the Hometrees

Windrixville Hometree is shown in Figure 5.3 nestled within a mountain range that overlooked the valley of the Tulsa District. The undulating blue line that divides the diagram is the river that runs through the town of Tulsa, with TSDE and Jay's Youth Centre Hometree being on the opposite side of the river to Pickett Street Hometree. TSDE is depicted as a flag rather than a tree as TSDE was not a site of a second-chance ALE. Brumley Street Hometree and Tiber Street Hometree are shown directly above a sand colour that rests along a light blue ribbon at the bottom of the diagram, that depicts the Pacific Ocean, as they were both located in coastal towns that were approximately half an hour drive from Tulsa.

The following subsections will present the five Hometree sites in order of when they were established. Each will be explained in regard to how their features relate to an institutional spectrum[34] by considering how relaxed or how structured the atmosphere was compared to a conventional school; how much choice and flexibility was exercised by the young people i.e. how strictly TSDE institutional policy was enacted and how much choice individuals had; and the level of access the site offered young people to engage in a range of community-based learning, social and support services.

5.2.1 Jay's Youth Centre Hometree

Jay's Youth Centre is the pseudonym for the community organisation that partnered with TSDE to create the first Hometree site in 2014. At that time, the Jay's Youth Centre Hometree had access to a large number of youth workers who case managed the young people enrolled in this Hometree site through a federally funded youth support program.[35] When this funding stream was discontinued, TSDE decided to employ a guidance officer to handle the case management of the young people with complex needs. During observation sessions, Jay's Youth Centre Hometree appeared to have a relaxed atmosphere where outsiders were made to feel welcome by both staff and students. Offers of cups of tea or coffee were plentiful and Georgina, the facilitator who was a qualified youth worker and studying a Diploma of Counselling, appeared highly experienced in relating to these marginalised youth. Participant demographic information for Jay's Youth Centre Hometree is provided in Table 5.1 to aid in connecting the participants with their stories that are presented as data in these evidentiary chapters. A comprehensive list of participant demographics for all Hometrees is provided in Appendix C. Participants have been presented alphabetically in both tables to remove any power imbalances created by listing them in order of roles. Sample observation notes, and the photos of Jay's YC Hometree provided by TSDE, are also included in this subsection and show the layout of the space and activities being undertaken at those times (see Figures 5.4, 5.5 & 5.6).

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[34] Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum was explained in Section 2.1.1 as a theoretical framework to represent the degrees of conviviality and manipulation an institution may have.
[35] This program was part of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions which was intended to improve educational outcomes and transitions for young Australians from school to further education, training or employment and focused on supporting young people aged 15–24-years deemed to be at-risk (Dandolopartners, 2012).

Table 5.1

Jay's YC Hometree Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background
Carl	Late 60s	Volunteer 3 hours per week (3 years in role)	Carl was a retired mathematics teacher, volunteering to support young people with their numeracy learning.
Carly	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree (3 years in role)	Carly came to Jay's YC Hometree from a state secondary school. She was living independently from her parents and was living with her boyfriend. Carly was studying a Certificate III in Community Services – Aged Care. She was planning to transition to a paid role in the Aged Care facility where she was volunteering.
Gary	Late 40s	Jay's Youth Centre administrator (15 years in role)	Gary was a serving Police Officer and working in a youth support role as the administrator in charge of Jay's Youth Centre.
Georgina	Late 40s	Facilitator 25 hours per week (4 years in role)	Georgina was studying a Diploma in Counselling. She had not completed senior schooling and described this a commonality she shared with the young people at Jay's YC Hometree. During the data collection phase she was the sole income for her family and upon completion of the diploma she was transitioning to a counselling role in Youth Support Services, another program offered at Jay's Youth Centre.
Joel	16	Student at Jay's YC Hometree (2 years in role)	Joel came to Jay's YC Hometree from a state secondary school. He was living with his mother and younger brother. His parents were divorced, and he indicated that he rarely saw his father. Joel's transition plan was to enlist in the Australian Defence Force as a general infantry soldier.
Stephanie	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree (3 years in role)	Stephanie came to Jay's YC Hometree from a state secondary school. She stated that she left conventional schooling due to social anxiety. Upon graduating at the end of 2017 Stephanie said that she did not have any transition plans other than to get a driver's license.
Sven	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree (3 years in role)	Sven came to Jay's YC Hometree from a state secondary school. He was living independently from his parents in shared accommodation with friends. While he had an opportunity to transition into an apprenticeship with his father as an electrician, he was unsure what his next step beyond Jay's YC Hometree would be.
Kylie	42	TSDE Educator (1 year in role)	Kylie was an experienced primary school teacher. She had been working at TSDE for one year but had extensive experience teaching in state schools within the region.
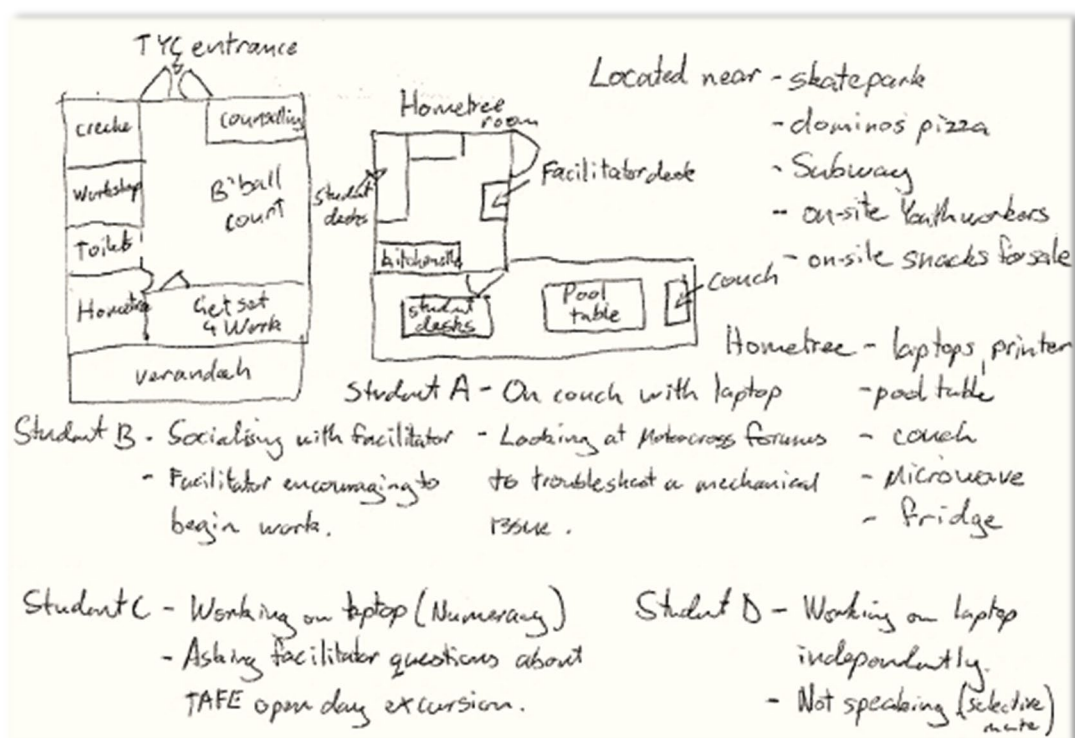
Figure 5.4 – Observation notes Jay's Youth Centre Hometree

The observation notes shown in Figure 5.4 describe the physical layout of the space but also the interactions of the people. While words like "working on laptop" and "asking facilitator questions" describe the educational experience in the space at the micro-level; other notes identify the relaxed atmosphere through statements of "on couch" and "socialising with facilitator". The young people have been labelled Student A, B etc. This was to maintain anonymity during the notetaking. Student A appeared from across the room to be working on his school curriculum on a laptop computer, he was actually using the resource to solve his real-life problem of fixing his motorcycle. While Student B was socialising with Georgina who was encouraging him to begin some work, Student C was undertaking some numeracy work on the laptop and asking Georgina about the upcoming TAFE (Technical and Further Education) open day that the group where to be attending.[36] Student D was working independently on a laptop and not speaking. Georgina later advised that Student D had selective mutism.

The Jay's Youth Centre Hometree was adjacent to the local skate park and within walking distance of fast-food outlets. The youth centre comprised of an indoor basketball court that students could use, as well as toilets and snack foods for purchase. Two additional youth workers were also on-site for one-on-one support and a range of community programs for all ages used the building.

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[36] TAFE refers to TAFE Queensland, the largest vocational training provider in the state of Queensland.

Within the Hometree room and veranda[37] (approximately 65 square metres) students had exclusive access to basic kitchen facilities, laptop computers, as well as a lounge and pool table (see Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.5 – Inside Jay's Youth Centre Hometree

The contrast between the images in Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6 show the balance between a study-focused space and a social or recreational space. While Figure 5.5 is comprised of symbols of TSDE's curriculum with laptops, stationery, motivational posters, and notice boards, Figure 5.6 shows a student in casual clothes playing pool in a space consisting of a couch and plywood sheets being used for graffiti art. These images, as texts, can be representations at the meso-level as tools of meaning distribution where the study-focused space and social space operate to describe how each image depicts the school and recreation centre features of Jay's Youth Centre Hometree.

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[37] A veranda is similar to a porch or balcony that is attached to the outside of a building.
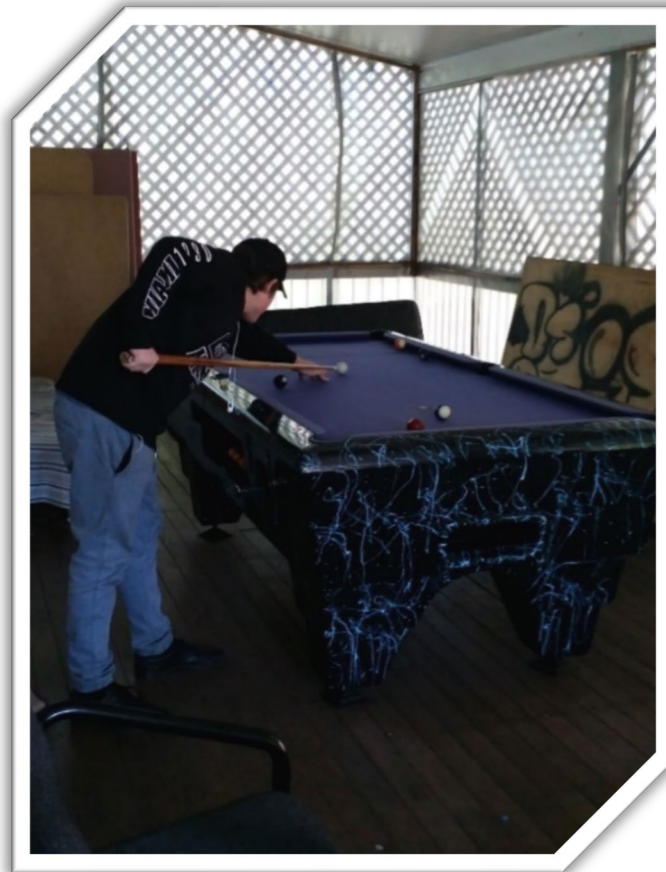
Figure 5.6 – Jay's Youth Centre Hometree veranda

Jay's Youth Centre Hometree operated five days per week (Monday to Friday) from 8:30am to 2:30pm. At the time of data collection in 2017, there were 38 students enrolled. However, most days the actual number of students in the space ranged from 3-15 (PO/1, 2017; PO/8, 2017; PO/10, 2017). Additional information gathered during the observations were that with the large veranda off to the side of the room, it rarely felt cramped, but Georgina, who was there every day as the Hometree facilitator, was acutely aware that if all students showed up on their allocated days, access to laptops and physical space could be an issue; however, the impact of this was never witnessed in observations (PO/1, 2017; PO/8, 2017; PO/10, 2017). Students were observed working through their self-paced learning independently, sometimes socialising with each other or the adults in the room. The facilitator always had either an educator, volunteer, or the guidance officer with her in the space. Students had access to a wide range of support services and youth-focused activities on offer within the youth centre including a Get Set for Work program to support young people entering the workforce; Braking the Cycle, a support program designed to help young people get their driver's license; Youth Support Service, providing individual support and case management; along with eight different sporting activities; and a Men's Shed dedicated to improving men's mental health and basic trade skills to enhance employability.

Within Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, students were observed at break times playing games on the laptops, or playing pool, or working on a group puzzle. These break times were individually chosen by the young people to suit their needs and sometimes music would be playing on the radio, and other times students would be listening to their music with headphones. It seemed as though the decision for collective or independent listening to music was a group decision each day, but with Georgina still having the final say on the matter. The majority of students would regularly leave the building to have a cigarette and talk without adults around. They would always sign in and out of the space to do this or to leave to get food. While maintaining this attendance register was the responsibility of the facilitator, the attendance data was collected and stored by TSDE. TSDE used this data for reporting to the Department of Education and for attendance tracking purposes outlined in the school's attendance policy (RJ/8, 2017). In addition to the attendance policy, the newly introduced mobile phone policy was also discussed by participants during observation periods. This policy was also developed by TSDE with the intent of improving student engagement in learning. At Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, the mobile phone policy was not as strictly enforced as the attendance policy, but students would be reminded of the policy by the educators more so than the community-based facilitators or volunteers.[38]

Both facilitators and educators would encourage the young people to work on their assigned curriculum, but this was done in a calm and relaxed manner. Joel, the young man interviewed at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, described the calm and relaxed atmosphere by saying that "*I feel like there isn't much pressure*" (Joel, IT, 2017). His statement was supported by Carly, another young person interviewed who said that "*here they're so supportive*" (Carly, IT, 2017). Jay's Youth Centre Hometree appeared to have convivial approach to learning through creating a space where learning occurred in a relaxing environment where young people chose to engage in the formal learning offered by TSDE. Access to recreation activities, personal development programs, and individual support either within the space or its immediate surrounds meant that these young people could engage, on their own terms, with a range of informal learning opportunities. Carly described the freedom to engage on their own terms when she said, "*I used to go out and play basketball all the time like just so I can just get out from work sometimes […] this school is so flexible, you can leave anytime, anywhere, like you don't have to feel trapped*" (Carly, IT, 2017). The level and type of flexibility that Carly referred to was observed as changing over time and was different in each of the

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[38] The implementation of the school-directed Attendance Policy and Mobile Phone Policy serve as markers of change that were occurring in the Hometrees. These two policies and their effects will be explored in Section 6.3.

Hometrees. The differences in each Hometree are highlighted herein while the changes to all Hometrees observed over time will be explored in Section 6.3.

5.2.2 Tiber Street Hometree

The second Hometree site to be established was located in a local government precinct on Tiber Street in a coastal town. This precinct included the town library and community support services and was 36 kilometres away from TSDE. It opened at the end of 2014. Tiber Street Hometree was the second most highly populated site, with 34 students enrolled during the data collection phase. A full list of participant demographics for Tiber Street Hometree are provided in Table 5.2. As in all Hometree sites, one facilitator was employed to manage the space for each of the days of operation, with visiting educators, guidance officer and volunteers. Arthur was the facilitator for Tiber Street Hometree, a qualified youth worker and had a background training as a Youth Pastor at his church. Arthur was a very welcoming man in his late twenties who appeared to have an assertive yet respectful relationship with the students. His approach was echoed in statements from the youth participants about being treated as a person first rather than as a student. An example of this approach came from an interview with Raine, a young person from Brumley St Hometree where she stated that *"The teachers here talk to you like you're a normal person… they actually treat you as a person more than they do as a student"* (Raine, IT, 2017).

Table 5.2

Tiber Street Hometree Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background
Arthur	Early 30s	Facilitator 25hours per week (2 years in role)	Arthur had a Bachelor of Business (marketing) but had pursued a career in youth services. While working as the facilitator at Tiber Street Hometree he was also volunteering as a Youth Pastor at his church. At the end of 2017 he left Tiber Street for a Youth Pastor job in another region.
Bella	17	Student at Tiber Street Hometree (1 year in role)	Bella came to Tiber Street Hometree from a state secondary school. She had relocated from another regional context and re-engaging in another state secondary school presented barriers. Bella was unsure of her transition pathway beyond her Hometree.
Marilyn	70	Volunteer 3 hours per week (3 years in role)	Marilyn was a retired bookkeeper and was volunteering at Tiber Street Hometree, helping the young people with their learning. She was also an active volunteer in the broader community, serving as a Justice of the Peace at the local Court House.
Jarrod	41	TSDE Educator (2 years in role)	Jarrod had taught in high schools and tertiary education prior to working for TSDE. He was also studying to be guidance officer.
Troy	15	Student at Tiber Street Hometree (1 year in role)	Troy came to Tiber Street Hometree from the local state secondary school. He was living at home with both parents and younger siblings.

While being situated on a picturesque coastline (see Figure 5.7), the space itself was located in the centre of the town, in one of the local council's community centre buildings. While the room was large (approximately 90 square metres), it had a cavern-like feel (see Figure 5.8) with all window curtains closed allowing no natural light to enter other than through the glass doorway, which was often locked. The beauty of the location, as shown in Figure 5.7, was not a feature of the space's location that was used to any advantage. There were no field trips walking the 200 metres to the beachfront where outdoor learning activities could occur.

Figure 5.7 – Beach near Tiber Street

Even though the focus of the space appeared to be on individual progression through the laptop learning materials, evidenced in the positioning of the desks shown in Figure 5.8 and Figure 5.9, music was often heard being played. The music gave a more relaxed feel to the space, but it appeared to often be Jarrod, the educator for the space, playing the music to educate Arthur on rock and alternative music of the late 20th century; the students did not seem to mind. The atmosphere seemed jovial on most occasions, where Arthur would use humour when encouraging students to work, as documented in Figure 5.9. The notes in Figure 5.9 detail how the features, observed at the micro-level of text, were then interpreted at the meso-level of discursive practice where actions were described as young people being "interested in learning" and describing how the space had a "relaxed feel".[39] These statements were juxtaposed with other notes on the lack of curriculum beyond what TSDE provided. Extracurricular activities i.e. those learning experiences beyond the formal literacy and numeracy courses, were those that the TSDE educators offered in art and cooking when they made their visits to the Hometree.

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[39] Please refer to Figure 3.1 for reference to the micro, meso, and macro levels of CDT.

Figure 5.8 – Inside Tiber Street Hometree

Figure 5.9 – Observation notes Tiber Street Hometree

The space, being located on the community centre precinct, did however give the young people ready access to youth workers and counselling services. It was adjacent to the town library, close to food outlets and the beach. Tiber Street Hometree operated five days a week, the same as Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, but there was a different learning culture expressed by participants in interviews. While Arthur tried to make the space more relaxed through the use of humour (PO/7, 2017; PO/11, 2017), he made a comment in the facilitator group interview that there was less freedom to be vulnerable at the Tiber Street Hometree compared to what Georgina described at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree:

> *There's probably not as much of a freedom to say out loud, "I don't get this," where other students can hear because we've got a couple of students that are bit know it all and instead of going, "Oh yeah I didn't get that either," they'd go, "Oh that's really easy," like and they'd kind of rub it in* (Arthur, IT, 2017).

This quote from Arthur highlights the difference between the culture of Tiber Street Hometree and Jay's Youth Centre Hometree. Not only did the structural features of each site affect people's experiences, but the behaviours of those who were members of the culture-sharing group affected the experiences of all in the learning space. Each Hometree site was different even though their structural features and population demographics were relatively similar; they all had a "unique feel" (RJ/12, 2017).

Even with Arthur's jovial approach, Tiber Street Hometree appeared to lack the freedom of choice and flexibility for the young people that was experienced in other Hometrees. When discussing the freedom that the flexible structure provided, Arthur stated that "*As much as I'm 100% behind* [Hometree]*, I, I'm also not so much behind it that I'd say that this is necessarily a structure that all education should look towards*" (Arthur, IT, 2017). This comment aligned analytically with observations of Arthur's preference for a more authoritative than free learning environment. The existence of this preference was evident at the micro-level in observations of Tiber Street Hometree. Observations recorded how the attendance of students was strictly monitored, and Arthur would be vigilant of the sign-in/out register to ensure that it accurately measured the time students spent in the space (PO/4, 2017). Arthur, unlike facilitators at other Hometree sites, ensured that the mobile phone policy was strictly enforced as per the requirements dictated by TSDE (PO/7, 2017).

Tiber Street Hometree appeared more structured than Jay's Youth Centre Hometree as there was less freedom and flexibility for the young people, which could be seen as attributes of conviviality. While the institutional policies that TSDE were imposing on the Hometrees were the same for all of the Hometree sites, how they were enacted appeared to vary (PO/1, 2017; PO/2,

2017; PO/3, 2017; PO/4, 2017; PO/5, 2017). [40] The young people at Tiber Street Hometree were experiencing their Hometree differently to how young people in other sites were experiencing theirs. While access to additional learning opportunities also affected how each Hometree site was experienced, the impact of behaviours of those in positions of power i.e. facilitators, also appeared to affect the experiences of the culture-sharing group in each of the Hometree sites.

5.2.3 Brumley Street Hometree

Brumley Street Hometree was the next space to open at the beginning of 2015. It was located in a small coastal township south the town where Tiber Street Hometree was situated and was supported by the same local council. Brumley Street Hometree took full advantage of its coastal location, providing a relaxing view for students while they worked (see Figures 5.10 & 5.11). The building was provided as in-kind support from a local volunteer community group that worked with the local council and TSDE to ensure that the building had the necessary technologies to support the laptop learning program.

Figure 5.10 – View from Brumley Street Hometree veranda

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[40] These institutional policies will be explained in Section 6.3.

Figure 5.11 – Brumley Street Hometree: The Shack

This location certainly made for a relaxed atmosphere; the only drawback was the lack of air-conditioning that all other spaces had which could be seen as a necessity in the region's climate. Brumley Street Hometree was located close to food outlets and was also adjacent to a skate park. This space had smaller student numbers than the previous two, 14 at the time of data collection, and only operated four days per week. Students had access to laptops, internet, and a kitchenette (see Figure 5.12). Music would often be heard playing inside the building that was affectionately called 'The Shack' by both staff and students. Unlike Tiber Street and Jay's Youth Centre Hometrees, there were no lounges to sit on, only blow mould tables and plastic chairs to work at, which gave the space more of a spartan feel than those spaces with areas to lounge around. However, the basic beach shack style of this learning space appeared the least institutional from a locality standpoint. The learning space was originally a sea scallop shelling hut, hence its prime beach-side location. The ocean breeze could be felt within the building and the sounds of waves crashing could be heard from the veranda overlooking the parkland and sandy beach.
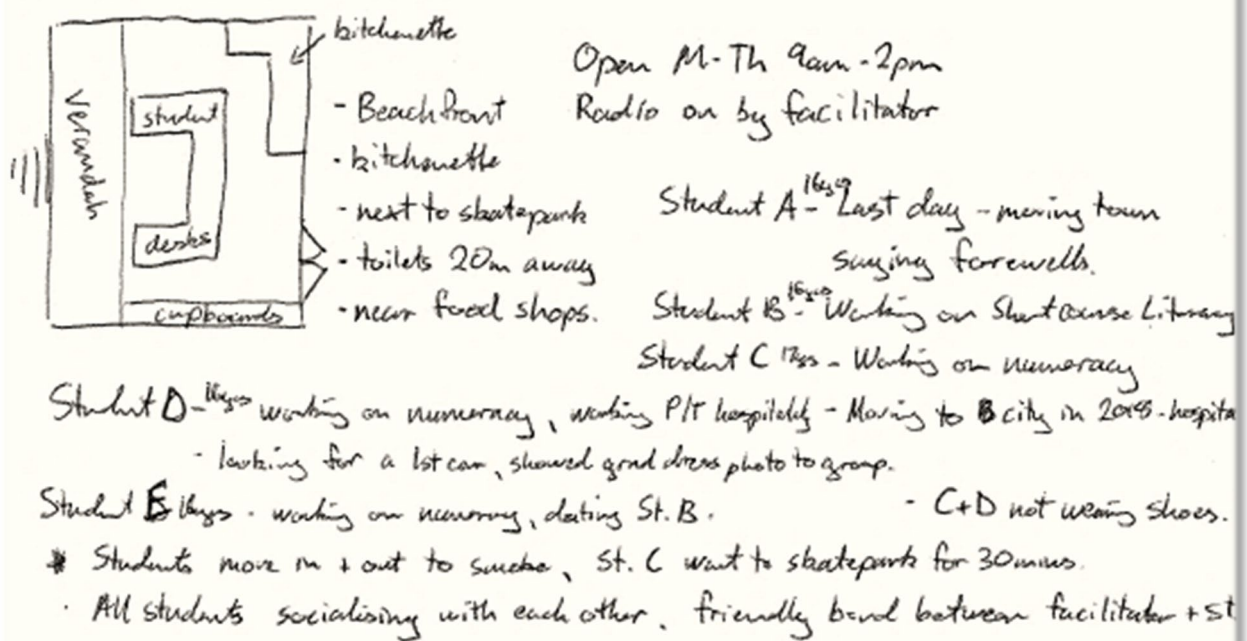
Figure 5.12 – Observation notes Brumley Street Hometree

Access to services and activities outside of the curriculum was however more limited than in the other Hometree sites. Tremaine, the facilitator at Brumley Street Hometree, encouraged art within the space, but access to organised social recreation or support services came from either TSDE (40 kilometres away) or local council staff located at Tiber Street (20 kilometres away). This meant that access to youth workers and counsellors were by appointment rather than on a drop-in basis as at the other Hometree locations where external support staff could be phoned and if available be at the space within minutes.

Even though the level of support from services was less than in other Hometree sites the behaviour of Tremaine as the facilitator made for a relaxed and supportive learning environment where the young people felt both at ease and respected (PO/2, 2017; RJ/4, 2017). Tremaine was observed to be very calm with the students and the high level of respect that they had for her was obvious. During observations you could see how she would support each young person individually in a way that encouraged them to push themselves (PO/2, 2017; PO/6, 2017). A list of both young people and staff participants is available in Table 5.3. While the young people had the freedom to come and go from the space as they chose, the space never appeared disorganised or lawless. In regard to the level that the TSDE institutional policy was adhered to at Brumley Street Hometree, the signing in and out of students was only loosely adhered to and the mobile phone policy appeared to be disregarded (PO/2, 2017; PO/14, 2017).

Table 5.3

Brumley Street Hometree Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background
Grace	17	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (2 years in role)	Grace came to Brumley Street Hometree from a state secondary school. Her parents were on disability and carers pensions and she was unsure what she would be transitioning beyond Hometree.
Justine	16	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (2 years in role)	Justine came to Brumley Street Hometree from the local state secondary school. She was living with her Aunty and was unsure of her transition pathway beyond Hometree.
Kirsten	15	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (1 year in role)	Kirsten came to Brumley Street Hometree from the local state secondary school. Her parent's occupations were a construction labourer and cleaner. She was considering returning to the local state secondary school for Year 11 and 12.
Raine	15	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (1 year in role)	Raine came to Brumley Street Hometree from the local state secondary school. Her father was working in construction and Raine was a mother to be.
Simon	18	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (3 years in role)	Simon was excluded from the local state secondary school. His father worked in the mining industry and his mother was a shop assistant. Simon was interested in transitioning to being a mechanic or chef but had been working casually as a car detailer.
Sophie	Late 30s	TSDE Educator (3 years in role)	Sophie started her teaching career in 2015. She was a part-time artist and had previously worked as a graphic designer.
Tremaine	Late 30s	Facilitator 20 hours per week (2 years in role)	Tremaine was an English citizen living in Australia since 2014. In addition to her role at Brumley Street Hometree she had a small business providing children's face painting at local events and shopping centres on school holidays.
Val	17	Student at Brumley Street Hometree (3 years in role)	Val came to Brumley Street Hometree from the local state secondary school. She was living independently of her parents and had transition hopes to study creative writing at university.

The young people at Brumley Street Hometree showed respect to Tremaine and to each other because of the respect that they felt they received. These behaviours appeared to build a strong sense of belonging in this space with positive relationships between the young people and with the adults in the space. The following is an exchange between two of the young people from Brumley Street Hometree during their group interview:

Val   *They* [facilitators and educators] *treat you with respect and the other students here are all nice.*

Kirsten   *I am?* [laughter from group].

<table>
<tr><td>Val</td><td>*Yeah, they don't, like, purposely come over and start brawling you, and crap, and causing drama.*</td></tr>
</table>

This conversational turn highlights the relaxed and jovial nature of Kirsten, and real sentiment that Val felt for others in the Brumley Street Hometree. The way that Val has referred to staff as "*treating you with respect*" and students as "*nice*" communicates messages of how her Hometree site was non-adversarial or a safe place emotionally. At a macro-level of analysis these statements contribute to a discourse of supportive environment where young people feel acceptance within this field of social practice.[41]

Observations of these girls, and of other participants at Brumley Street Hometree, supported a statement made by Jerry about the sense of belonging within the Hometrees (PO/2, 2017; PO/6, 2017; PO/14, 2017). Jerry, one of the administrators from TSDE, called this the almost "*tribal nature*" (Jerry, IT, 2017) of these young people, where they were bonded through the adversity that they had faced, often sharing tales of their negative experiences in conventional schools that have led to them being marginalised. This sense of belonging was witnessed on many occasions at Brumley Street Hometree and in some of the other Hometrees but was most evident at the 2017 graduation night where all of the young people from all of the Hometrees were invited to celebrate the successes of those who were graduating from their Hometree. At the end of the night's official celebrations the Brumley Street Hometree students were the only group to bring everyone from their space together with their facilitator for a photo (PO/16, 2017). Conversations on the night elicited that the comradery of these young people from Brumley Street Hometree would continue beyond their time in the space. Two of the participants were planning to travel overseas together, while another two had begun a family with their new-born baby attending the celebrations with them (PO/16, 2017).

Brumley Street Hometree had a relaxed atmosphere that could be attributed to its picturesque location and level of student autonomy in choosing when to engage in learning. However, there was a lack of easy access to other services that offered additional learning and support. Tremaine appeared to compensate for this lack of support extremely well by building a space that, while more isolated than some of the other Hometrees, was a space where young people said they felt respected by the adults and by each other.

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[41] The discourse of supportive environment will be explored in Section 6.2.1.

5.2.4 Windrixville Hometree

Windrixville was a small town situated in the mountain ranges approximately 50 kilometres from Tulsa (see Figure 5.13). While the view from the edge of the ranges was quite picturesque, overlooking the Tulsa Valley, the town of Windrixville was set back further into the ranges. The Windrixville Hometree, which was opened at the beginning of 2015, was located in what was called the Community Hub on the main street of the town and could not take advantage of the views shown in Figure 5.13. The space itself was extremely small, occupying one of the counselling room, less than ten square metres in size and only opened for three days per week (see Figures 5.14 & 5.15).

Figure 5.13 – View of Tulsa Valley from Windrixville ranges
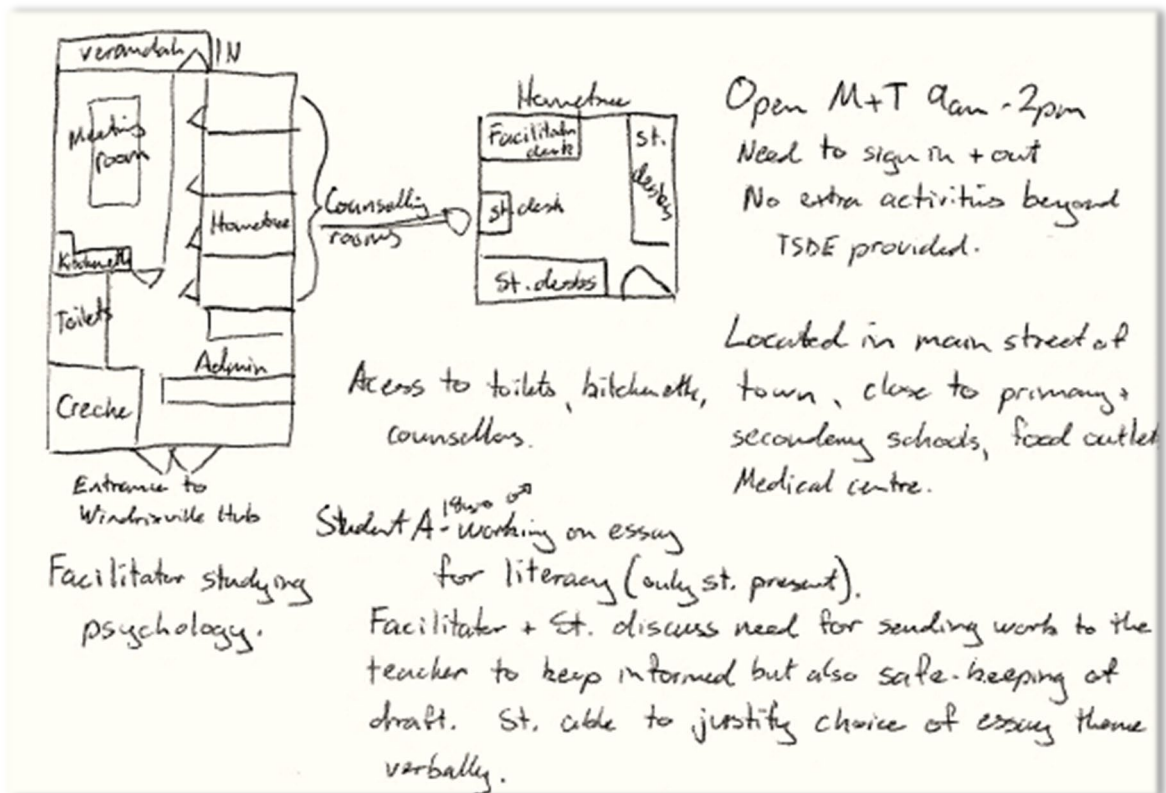
Figure 5.14 – Observation notes Windrixville Hometree

Figure 5.15 – Inside Windrixville Hometree

People who worked within the Community Hub were always welcoming. A cup of tea was offered on first visiting, but this came with a caveat that after that first offering you were to help yourself anytime. This gave the space a sense of family nurturing, as did the fact that some of the students enrolled were children of support workers in the hub. Table 5.4 listed the participant demographics of the Windrixville Hometree however the Community Hub included other staff, volunteers and community members who have not been listed as they were not directly associated with the Hometree, but participants regularly interacted with these people who took a peripheral role in supporting the learning and development of the young people of Windrixville Hometree. There would often be babies being cared for by whomever was available, and the young people were made to feel useful as members of the community. This could be doing some of the babysitting in the hub or helping to prepare community floats for street parades or even volunteering at community celebrations on the weekends (PO/3, 2017; PO/13, 2017).

Table 5.4

Windrixville Hometree Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background
Holly	Early 20s	Facilitator - 15hrs but full-time role with the host NGO (1 year in role)	Holly was studying a Bachelor of Psychology while working for the host NGO. She was keen to progress her career within the organisation wanting to gain employment in a counselling role in the future.
Jarrod	41	TSDE Educator (2 years in role)	Jarrod was also the educator for Windrixville Hometree. He had taught in high schools and tertiary education prior to working for TSDE. He was also studying to be guidance officer.
Jimmy	15	Student at Windrixville Hometree (1 year in role)	Jimmy came to Windrixville Hometree after being excluded from the Windrixville state secondary school. He was living with his mother and younger sister. Jimmy had a keen interest in becoming a chef and was active in looking for work as a kitchenhand.
Keith	16	Student at Windrixville Hometree (2 years in role)	Keith came to Windrixville Hometree from a state secondary school in Tulsa. He was living with his mother in Tulsa but travelled to Windrixville each day with one of the staff at the Community Hub. Keith's attendance at Windrixville Hometree was sporadic and he had no transition ideas or plans.
Trisha	Late 40s	Host NGO administrator (5 years in role)	Trisha was a New Zealand citizen with over 20 years' experience in community services. Her background was working as a Social Worker in a range of settings both in New Zealand and Australia.

The young people at this Hometree site did have access to a kitchenette, but it was located in another room that often had other groups conducting meetings or workshops, so student access was limited. However, being in the main street of town most students would buy food from nearby shops. There were no lounges or recreation areas to speak of for the young people and when there

were more than four people in the space the room was very cramped, the photograph in Figure 5.13 was taken from the doorway. Students would often leave if they felt overwhelmed by others in the tight space, "*Jimmy fidgety and left room saying going to work at the* [town] *library instead*" (PO/13, 2017). Due to the limited physical space available, individual support often had to take place on the veranda located at the rear of the building (PO/3, 2017; PO/9, 2017). Adherence to institutional policy as the signing in and out to record attendance was diligently reported by Holly as the facilitator, but often not until it was noticed that a young person had already left. The mobile phone policy was observed, but often not adhered to by the young people or policed by the facilitator (PO/3, 2017; PO/9, 2017; PO/13, 2017).

There seemed to be a lack of structured activities being made available to these young people. The young people had access to counselling services provided on-site by the community organisation, however specific youth development activities were limited to school holiday programs or activities offer by TSDE. This was acknowledged by Trisha, the administrator of the Community Hub when she identified in interview that "*I think that together as partners we can do a lot more, provide a lot more*" (Trisha, IT, 2017). While Trisha's point is valid and this lack of organised support was observed, it appeared to have a positive impact on the levels of conviviality of the space. The lack of structure appeared to elicit behaviours from those in Windrixville Hometree that were more akin to being in a family environment than an institutional one. Being located within a community support hub that lacked formal and organised connections for the young people, they were not positioned as merely recipients of support but at times as active community members supporting others. This Hometree displayed elements of conviviality through unstructured and often impromptu opportunities to be involved in the Windrixville community. Windrixville Hometree provided these young people a way to feel connected. The small town of Windrixville appeared to be making the best of what they had to support these outsiders in belonging and being useful members of their community.

5.2.5 Pickett Street Hometree

Pickett Street Hometree was the last Hometree site that was included in the study. The space opened towards to end of 2015, operating only three days per week and in 2017 was catering for approximately fifteen young people. The space was located in a room approximately 50 square metres in size within a youth-focused community organisation called South Tulsa Youth Connect. This organisation was a youth mental health support agency and was in the central business district of Tulsa. It had ready access to public transport and food outlets (see Figure 5.16 below), but when compared to Jay's Youth Centre Hometree which was also located at a youth-focused community

organisation, the Pickett Street Hometree did not have the same broad range of ages of people from the community using the organisation's facilities. The adjacent building was also youth-focused, housing the offices of the Department of Youth Justice.
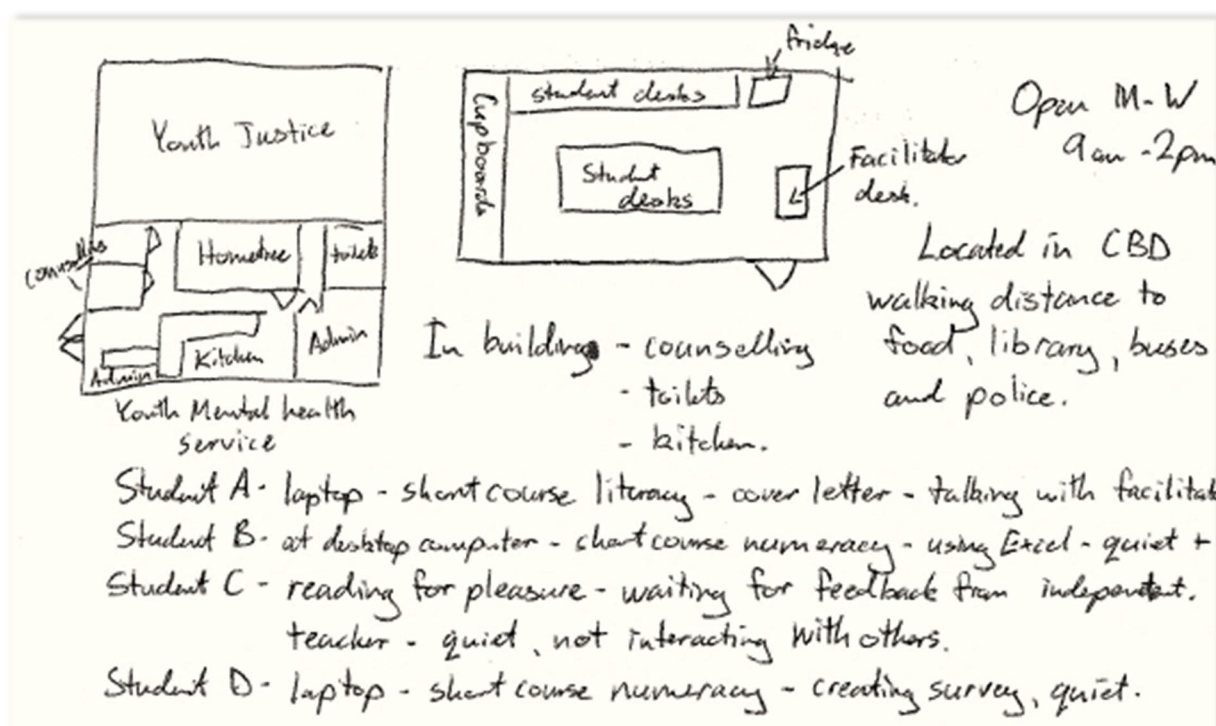
Figure 5.16 – Observation notes Pickett Street Hometree

The atmosphere tended to be relaxed, sometimes exceptionally quiet, which was referred to three times in the sample observation notes in Figure 5.16, and other times full of energy depending on the personalities and groupings of young people in the space at the time. Table 5.5 outlines the participant demographics at Pickett Street Hometree.

Table 5.5

Pickett Street Hometree Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background
Liz	Early 20s	Facilitator 10 hours per week (2 years in role)	Liz was studying Bachelor of Social Work. In addition to her role with Pickett Street Hometree she also worked part-time for another organisation in youth sector.
Kelly	17	Student at Pickett Street Hometree (2 years in role)	Kelly came to Pickett Street Hometree from a state secondary school in Tulsa. She was also working on a casual basis in the hospitality industry and living independently.
Oscar	16	Student at Pickett Street Hometree	Oscar came to Pickett Street Hometree from TSDE. He was struggling to engage in online learning from home. He lived with

Participant	Age	Role	Background
		(1 year in role)	his mother and younger brother and had a desire to study design and establish a small business building bespoke timber furnishings.
Raymond	Early 50s	South Tulsa Youth Connect administrator (4 years in role)	Raymond had worked his whole career in primary health care and had been the general manager of South Tulsa Youth Connect for four years.
Sophie	Late 30s	TSDE Educator (3 years in role)	Sophie was also the educator for Pickett Street Hometree. She started her teaching career in 2015. She was a part-time artist and had previously worked as a graphic designer.

The room was spacious and like Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, Tiber Street Hometree, and Windrixville Hometree, included student artwork on the walls accompanied by inspirational quotes that were produced by the students. Figure 5.17 shows how the space was warmly lit, clean and organised study space. Given that the room had no windows, being in the centre of the building (see Figure 5.16), the lack of external light did not have the cavern-like feel that was used to describe Tiber Street Hometree.

Figure 5.17 – Inside Pickett Street Hometree

Liz, the facilitator, was in her early twenties and studying a Bachelor of Social Work at the time. Some of the young people appeared to be more accepting of her leadership in the space than others but the signing in and out for student attendance and adherence to the mobile phone policy were respected. Any divergence from these requirements by the young people was addressed by Liz, as were any support needs. The young people had ready access to individual health support and personal development at Pickett Street Hometree, being based in a youth mental health support agency, and they were encouraged to participate in the range of youth development activities that

the centre ran. Art therapy was also a part of the Hometree schedule with each afternoon set aside for the young people to choose between continuing with their TSDE curriculum or doing art in the space as shown in Figure 5.18.

Figure 5.18 – Art therapy at Pickett Street Hometree

Pickett Street Hometree provided a convivial space for the young people to re-engage in formal learning. This Hometree could be considered to have also provided a learning web of personal development and therapeutic interventions to support these young people in overcoming barriers to learning. The group social and emotional development programs, combined with the opportunity for targeted individual therapeutic support, meant that Pickett Street Hometree was well-positioned to provide young people with a comprehensive learning environment.

5.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the features of the Hometrees to answer Research Question One. Features that were identified were the physical architecture, geographic location, partners and partnerships, policies, curriculum (both formal and informal), learning technologies, and the social relationships within each Hometree. Similarities and differences were noted and in CDA terms. These features described and explained the micro and meso features of each Hometree (Figure 5.2) i.e. the support structures for the young people, and how TSDE operated through a hub and spoke model (Figure 5.1) with the Hometrees and partner organisations. While each of these Hometree sites had both common and distinct features, the people within each Hometree impacted on the culture of the space through the individual behaviours that they displayed. The following chapter will explore the impact of both the cultural and structural features of the Hometrees on learning.

Chapter Six: Learning within the Hometrees

6.0 Introduction

Chapter Six presents findings that relate to the second portion of Research Question One by focusing on how the features of the Hometrees supported the learning of the young people. Across all Hometrees, features impacted student learning through a range of discourses that operate within the discursive themes of structure (Section 6.1), culture (Section 6.2), and change (Section 6.3). Each discursive theme has been constructed through evidence from the findings by considering the dimensions of each discourse that contributes to the themes. Figure 6.1 shows how each discursive theme has been constructed and how they impact on student learning.
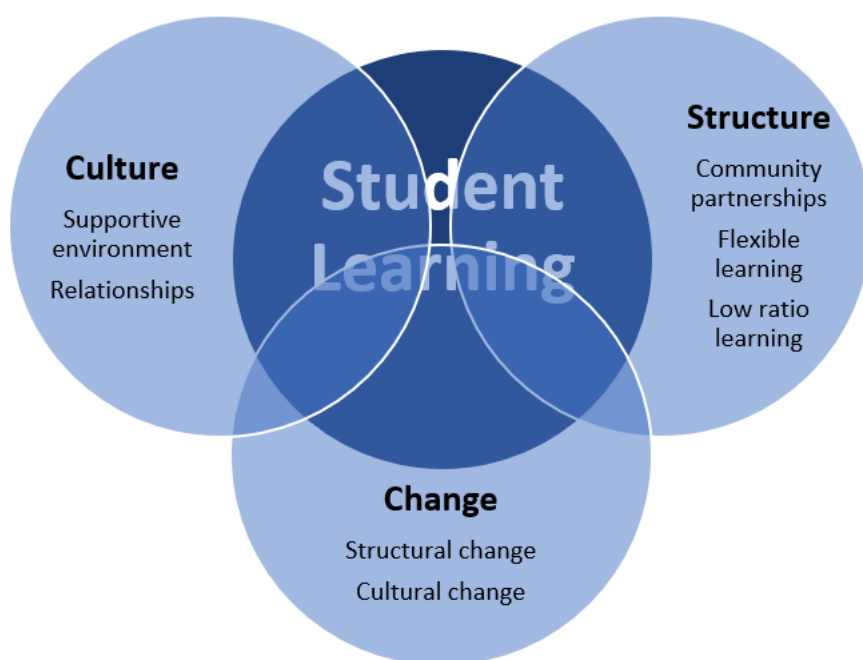
Figure 6.1 – The impact of features on learning

Figure 6.1 shows in the inner circle the concept of student learning being impacted upon by the discourses represented in the lighter shaded outer circles. Each outer circle includes the name of each discursive theme in bold with the discourses that operate within these themes, or orders of discourse, listed below them. The dimensions of each of these discourses are examined through the use of CDA in each of the subsections herein.

6.1 The impact of structural features on learning

The discursive theme of structure, that has been constructed through considering the impact of the structural features of the Hometrees on student learning, is defined through the discourses of community partnerships, flexible learning, and low ratio learning. A community partnerships discourse foregrounded notions of community, ownership, access, and relationships together with ideas relating to holistic or comprehensive learning, that was defined in Section 2.1.2, and shared responsibility for learning. The structuring of the self-paced flexible learning discourse was considered by participants as less pressure, where the young people had control of when they engaged in learning. The low ratio of young person to adult provided both a small group and one-on-one learning discourse, with participants citing more help and time to talk.

6.1.1 Community partnerships

Community partnerships was considered an integral feature of the Hometrees by the various administrators that were interviewed (both school and community representatives). The impact of community access on learning, as well as community ownership of the need to support these young people with their learning, were central to participant stories of their partnerships. The following subsection examines the stories told by the administrators of the different organisations.

The Hometrees were interconnected through the partnerships between TSDE and community organisations. Jerry, one of the administrators from TSDE, described the shared ownership of the program in how "*It's the whole community that has responsibility for raising a child, and that's the* [Hometree] *philosophy* […] *everyone is doing their little bit. That's what makes it different, distinctive, and unique*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). The uniqueness that Jerry referred to was later directly attributed in his interview to the partnerships. He identified how the community partnerships were indeed a point of difference and the key feature that made these second-chance ALEs a success was, "*It's a community-based program* […] *it only works because* [of] *the partnerships*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). When questioned further he elaborated on this statement by saying that because "*the youth workers support them not only in the centre but in the community as well, because the youth workers are employed some time for us and some time for the community*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). Jerry's comment demonstrates how through this partnership arrangement, youth workers supported these young people in both their learning in the Hometree site and in their lives in the broader community. This would appear to be a point of difference for these second-chance ALEs. It highlights the sharing of responsibility for supporting these young people and the importance of strong working relationships between TSDE and the community organisations.

The need for sustainable relationships between the partner organisations was an essential feature. Ann, the administrator whom TSDE had in charge of the Hometree program, identified in her interview how the community partnerships that she oversaw required the creation and sustention of high-quality relationships if the program was to survive, "*It's really important for us then to build those community relationships so that those organisations want to stay in partnership with us*" (Ann, IT, 2017). She went on to describe just how crucial the relationships with the partner organisations were to the structural needs of the Hometree program and how without their commitment, there was a negative impact for the young people:

> *It's a bit of a complex kind of structure, particularly when those community organisations are responsible for delivering some of the things that are crucial to the program, like internet, and so when you have poor internet that can then make it hard for students to engage, it's a huge risk factor for further disengagement if they can't access the program* (Ann, IT, 2017).

Here Ann highlights how the Hometrees depended on the financial commitment and deliverables from the community partners. The example that she gave of internet access being crucial to engagement was witnessed at Brumley Street Hometree. When the internet access was unreliable, young people left the space (PO/6, 2017). Since their formal learning was provided through TSDE's laptop-based curriculum, without internet access there was little that the young people could do in terms of formal learning of literacy and numeracy. Even though Tremaine tried to keep them motivated by offering other activities to occupy them, four of the six young people left (PO/6, 2017). During these observations both Tremaine and Ann told of how internet access had been an ongoing issue at Brumley Street Hometree and that the partners were doing their best to arrange reliable access. In this case, the partner organisations had a shared understanding of how this structural feature, or lack of, was impacting the re-engagement of these young people in formal learning.

Access to re-engage in formal learning was accompanied by access to support services in the Hometrees. Raymond, who oversaw the organisation where Pickett Street Hometree was located, described how it was interconnected with the other face-to-face programs and services that the community organisation provided:

> *Young people who are enrolled in the* [Pickett Street Hometree] *to also have access to services if they need them* [..] *young people who may be struggling and may have mental health concerns are already in the building,* [..] *they become aware of activities that have a therapeutic component or have a – again, a structured component to them, so there's a benefit in their association with the centre because they become aware of activities that they may not otherwise know about* (Raymond, IT, 2017).

This interconnectedness of programs available to young people at Pickett Street shows elements of holistic or universal learning where students can access learning development opportunities not just from school but from community as well. However, upon deeper analysis of this passage the institutional structures that influence how this organisation operates become apparent. By examining the text at a micro-level, it depicts a strong focus on "*access to services* […] *they become aware of activities*" (Raymond, IT, 2017). While the initial reading of Raymond's interview transcript may see this as a feature of support, when critically interpreted the inherent power structures at play within this statement, at the meso-level of analysis, were indicative of South Tulsa Youth Connect staff using the Hometree program as a client base for the other programs that the organisation provided. When considered at a macro-level, this Pickett Street Hometree was providing the client base for the community organisation to better meet the state funding imposed key performance indicators (KPIs). Therefore, the Pickett Street Hometree could be viewed as inadvertently meeting the system's needs—or simply ensuring its own survival. The discourse of community partnerships could therefore be not merely describing how the organisations were addressing the needs of the marginalised young people, but also how these outsiders were providing the opportunity for the community organisations to maintain the employment of their staff who serviced the needs of the wider community of Tulsa District.

The power of community partnerships was also identified at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree. Gary, the administrator of Jay's Youth Centre saw the value of a community-based learning program. In his interview Gary spoke of how young people attending their Hometree site had full access to the youth centre's Youth Support Service (individual case management and support) and Get Set for Work (small group employability skills training) programs. He went on to say that "*we've had a couple of young people out of* [this Hometree] *that get some casual work as a childcare worker with our school aged care service*" (Gary, IT, 2017). This is an example of how access to community has enriched the formal learning experience for the young people at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree. These opportunities for young people to build capital align with Illich's (1973) concept of learning webs. Gary also spoke of other ways Jay's Youth Centre's learning web supported young people with overcoming barriers:

> *Learner licencing stuff, too* […] *these kids have got genuine issues, they wouldn't be able to access a car or, you know, some of the kids in the program say their parents don't give a shit. So, you know, get the hundred hours* [of supervised driving] *up, definite barrier to employment without a licence, so we can offer them that as well and that's all at no cost, so, that's funded. Yeah. So, and that's what I mean, the programs you can offer, I think they just feed off each other. It's… it's good* (Gary, IT, 2017).

Gary's comment that the learning experiences at Jay's Youth Centre *"just feed off each other"* (Gary, IT, 2017) supports the above critique of the data from Pickett Street Hometree that the community partnerships supported the individual young people as well as supporting the community organisations.

The holistic approach to learning within the Hometree sites was not limited to young people re-engaging in formal learning and support programs. Gary spoke of how being based in a community setting *"enhances their learning experience* [and] *exposes them to* [..] *life"* (Gary, IT, 2017). Gary's view of holistic learning also included building their abilities to effectively navigate and contribute to the community:

> *It's their interaction with everyone in the community. They will see the whole spectrum of it* […] *you normally don't get that in school* [...] *Like to get to the* [Hometree] *room from the front of the building, they have to walk past a kindy gym session where there's young mums and young bubs and… and kids playing around, so, they're used to that now. And, then downstairs you've got the Men's Shed, you know, they'll see them and the dementia group, the disability access recreation … and it's about giving them the opportunity to … to socialise* […] *just be around different people, the way they normally wouldn't be* [in a conventional school setting] (Gary, IT, 2017)*.*

Gary identified the ways in which Jay's Youth Centre Hometree was different, and not just about providing access to structured support programs that offered an artificial connection to community. The "*whole* spectrum" of the community that Gary referred to in this statement highlights how, at the micro-level of analysis, the community-based learning environment meant that the young people were exposed to people with various perspectives on life. At the meso-level, the young people had opportunities to communicate, interact with, and be influenced by people who were not in institutional roles of teacher, principal, or counsellor. The community-based nature of the Hometrees enabled the disruption of power of TSDE as an education institution to impose or indoctrinate their organisation's dominant values and beliefs on these young people.

By having the Hometree based within this community setting these young people were being physically immersed in the community.[42] The community partnerships therefore provided opportunities for the Hometrees to meet the various needs of these marginalised young people. By being situated within community settings the young people had immediate access to support, a range of informal learning opportunities, as well as immersion within a social environment that more closely mirrored the whole spectrum of that community than what was offered in the conventional

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[42] This was also witnessed at Windrixville Hometree (see Section 5.2.4).

schools that they attended previously. The discourse of community partnerships describes an alternative way to structure a learning environment.

6.1.2 Flexible learning

The discourse of flexible learning represents a major structural feature within each Hometree site. This discourse had a direct impact on student learning through the features of flexibility of attendance requirements; the self-paced nature of the curriculum; and how the flexibility provided a more relaxed atmosphere where young people could feel less pressured and have more choice in when to learn.[43]

The flexible learning structure of the Hometrees was described by participants as helping the young people to engage in learning. Georgina, the facilitator of Jay's Youth Centre Hometree described the features of flexible learning in the following interview extract:

> *Kids are having issues that don't allow them to go to school every day so then* [Hometree] *gives them an option of still gaining some kind of education. They don't have to attend five days a week, it's only a minimum of two, they can attend more if the capability's there, but not the whole day, they only have to attend four hours a day. They can work at their own pace* […] *it takes a bit of the pressure with the deadlines off, and so it frees the kids up to make better decisions, like their choice to do the work. They sign in when they come in,* […] *they sign out to go for a smoke, and then they sign back in when they come back in* (Georgina, IT, 2017).

Here Georgina highlighted the impact of the flexible attendance requirements, "*they don't have to attend five days a week"*; the self-paced nature of the curriculum meant less pressure, "*they can work at their own pace*"; and that the young people had a sense of agency "*their choice to do the work*" (Georgina, IT, 2017). These statements, at the micro-level, describe the structural features that contribute to the discourse of flexible learning. "*Their choice to do work*" (Georgina, IT, 2017) highlights a shift in power where young people have an element of control in the learning environment where learning is structured with potential for agentic engagement.

The program design meant that attendance was a structural feature that contributed to the discourse of flexible learning. Since the students were enrolled through a school of distance education in Queensland, the state legislation measured attendance for these learners based on work return, or progress through the curriculum rather that physically being at school (Queensland

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[43] Concerns related to the lack of choice of what to learn are addressed in Section 7.1.1.

Parliament, 2006). Section 177 of the Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 states that attendance is:

> *(1) A child attends a State school or non-State school only if the child complies with the school's requirements about physically attending, at particular times, its premises or another place.*
>
> *(2) However, despite subsection (1)—*
>
> > *(a) a child enrolled in a program of distance education is taken to attend the school of distance education offering the program by completing and returning the assigned work for the program (Queensland Parliament, 2006).*

Since they were enrolled in a program of distance education, and not learning on a school site but at a community site, they were not restrained by the same legislative requirements that govern attendance at conventional schools. The enrolment in formal schooling through TSDE disrupted the control of the state at a macro-level by measuring attendance differently and thereby contributing to the discourse of flexible learning.

The young people also made comparisons with conventional schooling models and invariably portrayed the flexible learning structure of Hometree as a positive attribute. Carly, a student from Jay's Youth Centre Hometree who lived independently of her parents said, "*This school is so flexible, you can leave anytime, anywhere, like you don't have to feel trapped, you've got your individual, like you know, life*" (Carly, IT, 2017). The group of young people interviewed at Brumley Street Hometree had a lot to say about the flexible learning structure of their Hometree. The group had all attended the same local secondary school before coming to Brumley Street Hometree, with Val being in the grade above Raine, Kirsten and Justine (for participant demographics see Table 5.3 or Appendix C). Justine was the quietest of the girls, she appeared to feel less confident in speaking about her experience, only offering insights when directly questioned by the researcher. She was very much overpowered by the bravado being displayed by Raine and Kirsten, who were best friends and enjoyed talking about their experiences at Brumley as well as in conventional schools. These two would often speak over the top of what either Justine or Val would be trying to say. Val could readily be seen rolling her eyes, waiting for a break in Raine and Kirsten's dialogue to voice her opinion on the issue or tell her story, whereas Justine would sit there sheepishly, not wanting to speak. Val, being that year older was more confident, was able to assert herself and get her story told despite the constant interjections from Raine and Kirsten. An exchange between the young people occurred where they discussed how the flexible learning structure provided them with freedom and supported their choice to engage in learning:

Kirsten	*Well, there's no point in wagging here, so …*
Researcher	No point in wagging?
Kirsten	*No. If you don't want to go, you don't have to go, so, like …*
Val	*Flexible hours.*
Raine	*You don't have …*
Kirsten	*Come in, do your work, go home.*
Raine	*… a certain time to rock up, as long as it's, like, in between 9:00 and 11:00 it doesn't really matter. I'm so glad there's no homework here. You don't have certain, like, uniforms, you just wear whatever you want to wear… yeah, there's not as much rules here, like, you either do your work or you piss off, whereas if you don't do your work in school, it's either detention or suspension.*

The flexible attendance requirement, as described by Kirsten, Raine and Val, highlights the different consequences in this alternative to conventional school where "*there's no point in wagging*" because "i*f you don't want to go, you don't have to go*" (Kirsten, IT, 2017). The notion of "*flexible hours*" (Val, IT, 2017) meant that the young people had the freedom to choose when they would attend without pressure from TSDE.[44] These girls have interpreted, or consumed, the discourse of "*flexible hours*" (Val, IT, 2017), at the meso-level, as a feature that represents student agency and produces a contrast with what they had experienced in conventional schools.

The concept of freedom through flexible learning structure was described by all participants. However, the perceptions of the concept did vary. Marilyn, a volunteer at Tiber Street Hometree, whom at the time of interview had just celebrated her 70th birthday, described her conceptualisation of the discourse of flexible learning in the passage below:

> *"I think like they've got a lot of freedom in* [Tiber Street Hometree] *but they've still got structured freedom, you know, that they've still got rules they've got to abide by no matter, like the coming in two days or something like that, so they're still kind of in a routine* […] *but they can make decisions"* (Marilyn, IT, 2017).

Through the flexible structure of the learning environment it appeared that "*they've* [the young people have] *got a lot of freedom*" (Marilyn, IT, 2017). This sense of freedom, from the perspective

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[44] This pressure to attend is explored further in Section 6.3 as a changing structure in the Hometrees.

of the young people at Brumley Street Hometree, was focused on what they did not have to do, or be or become; while from the perspective of Marilyn it was described more as "*structured freedom*" where they had a *"routine"* and *"rules"* but more agency on how they navigated the doxa of the sociocultural field (Marilyn, IT, 2017). While the Hometree sites may have been more convivial than highly structured conventional schools there were still structures that influenced how learning was experienced.

Even though elements of a structured learning environment existed, the more relaxed atmosphere that each Hometree provided meant that these young people felt less pressure in relation to their formal learning. For Val and Kirsten at Brumley Street Hometree the flexible learning model meant that their mental health needs as well as their learning needs could be met:

Val
If you have anxiety and you're having an anxiety attack, you don't have to worry about, "do I have to go in". You can just call up and say, "hey, no, I can't come in at the moment", just take the time off.

Kirsten
You can get through your work without having all the stress.

The effects of the reduced pressure on the mental health and wellbeing of the young people were echoed by Raymond, the South Tulsa Youth Connect administrator. Raymond provided a detailed reflection on how he saw the discourse of flexible learning at Pickett Street Hometree. He noted that some type of structure was integral to meeting both the needs of the individual young persons and society at large, however there also needed to be understanding of the needs of these young people:

So, I see it in sort of two sides. I see there's a – the need for them to understand that in life, it's not just about education now but it's about life, there will be a structure of some sort and an expectation of young people, but I also appreciate that the very reason they are disconnecting, or just not learning, needs to be addressed as well with some sense of flexibility and understanding (Raymond, IT, 2017).

Raymond's definition of flexible structure highlights the immediate need for a flexible model to help re-engage young people as well as the longer-term need for structure and routine in order to help these young people become active, healthy contributors to society.

From the perspectives of the participants in this study, the flexible hours, through the alternative way of measuring attendance, freedom of choice about how and when to learn what through the self-paced curriculum, provided a structure that allowed these young people to re-engage in learning on their own terms. The discourse of flexible learning was contributed to at the

micro-level by the participant statements of "*flexible hours*" (Val, IT, 2017), "*structured freedom*" (Marilyn, IT, 2017), and "*a sense of flexibility and understanding*" (Raymond, IT, 2017). These examples of discourse at the micro-level have produced, at the meso-level of analysis, messages of reduced pressure on students. The discourse of flexible learning, when considered at a macro-level, contributes to a convivial sociocultural context where engagement in learning is not impeded by rigid structures of traditional schooling institutions.

6.1.3 Low ratio learning

The discourse of low ratio learning has emerged from participant descriptions of the structural features of their Hometrees. Low ratio learning describes the impact of low student to adult ratio on their learning where small group settings provided more time to talk and more help could be afforded to the young people, sometimes in a one-on-one capacity. When participants spoke about how their Hometree supported them, they consistently referred to the capacity to have one-on-one or small group support (Georgina, IT, 2017; Holly, IT, 2017; Jarrod, IT, 2017; Joel, IT, 2017; Kirsten, IT, 2017; Kylie, IT, 2017). Participants spoke of the low young person to adult ratio, generally observed at 1:5 (PO/1, 2017; PO/2, 2017; PO/3, 2017; PO/4, 2017; PO/5, 2017), as providing additional academic and emotional support to the young people within the Hometrees.

Sophie, one of the educators who supported students at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, compared the Hometree program to conventional schools by referring to how with the lower student numbers they had more time to "*just work one-to-one, we can go back and catch up on the areas that are missing*" (Sophie, IT, 2017). She went on to speak on the importance of this not only for their academic development but for their emotional wellbeing "*keeping up in a classroom or continuously being humiliated because they're not bright enough, is an issue so* [Hometree] *supports them in that way*" (Sophie, IT, 2017). This statement was supported in the group interview by Kylie, one of the other educators. Kylie saw the impact of the low ratio on emotional support for the young people:

> *It alleviates a lot of anxiety* […] *because we're in an environment where we can just sit one-on-one with the student. It's a safe environment, there's, you know, not much risk of humiliation if they get the answer wrong. I think we support them very well and the ones that do need more one-on-one support, you can give that to them, you know, so yeah, I think* [Hometree] *has a very supportive environment for our students* (Kylie, IT, 2017).

Kylie expressed how the Hometree sites were "*supportive environment*[s]*"* where "*the ones that do need more one-on-one support, you can give that to them*" (Kylie, IT, 2017). This view of the low ratio learning environment of the Hometree sites supporting young people with complex needs was

corroborated by Holly, the facilitator at Windrixville Hometree. Holly described in the passage below how the low ratio meant that she could intervene in a timely manner to get struggling young people the support that they needed:

> *I think* [Hometree] *provides an opportunity for extra supports, so these are disengaged kids from mainstream school and with that more, not one-on-one attention, but like one, like a facilitator to a small group of students you can identify needs before it's kind of too late so we can put things in place for them to support them if they are starting to disengage from the* [Hometree] *so* […] *it's more contact more one-one-one contact … with the student, it's not thirty in a classroom* (Holly, IT, 2017).

Holly identified how the low ratio learning not only supported the young people through more help in their formal learning, but also assisted her to provide social support "b*efore it's kind of too late*" (Holly, IT, 2017). Tremaine, the facilitator at Brumley Street Hometree, supported Holly's opinion and added that there was also a positive effect on student self-efficacy regarding learning ability, "*With the smaller groups it's a safer environment for them to feel that they can say, "Yeah I don't get this," absolutely and not feel like they're going to get left behind because everyone else is racing ahead*" (Tremaine, IT, 2017).

The young people interviewed agreed with the notion that the discourse of low ratio learning was a supportive feature of their Hometrees. One-on-one support was identified when analysing the interview data at a micro-level for this participant group as well. Kirsten, one of the young people from Brumley Street Hometree identified that "*you do get a heap more one-on-one time than you do in mainstream school*" (Kirsten, IT, 2017). She explained this statement by saying:

> *Teachers at mainstream schools have got so many students that they can't help you all individually if they're teaching the class, whereas everyone is doing different units and whatever, and it's just easier for the teacher to help you, and you do get more help, that's why some of the people come here* (Kirsten, IT, 2017).

Kirsten's standpoint on how "*more help*" (Kirsten, IT, 2017) was made possible through the low ratio learning was also recognised by Bella, a young person from Tiber Street Hometree, who agreed with how the low ratio increased the academic support available "Y*ou can easily get the teacher's attention* […] *without having to be, like, sitting there with your hand up waiting for ever*" (Bella, IT, 2017). Raine, who was in the Brumley Street Hometree interview with Kirsten, explained that the low ratio meant that she could get help with her transition to employment "*Like, I came in on Monday and did my resume with* [Tremaine]*, and you can't do that at a normal school, like … it makes life easier*" (Raine, IT, 2017). While young people can of course get assistance with writing a

resume at a conventional school, this would usually be as part of a work readiness curriculum or by appointment with a career's practitioner. The low ratio learning would appear to allow for more agency on the part of the young person in choosing when was a purposeful time to develop skills and knowledge that they deemed most essential.

The low ratio learning made it possible for young people to get more help, both with their formal learning and social support. An important feature of this discourse of low ratio learning was that more help was often achieved by having time to talk. Carl, the volunteer at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, explained how the lower ratio meant that educators and facilitators had more time available to talk with the young people:

> *The lower student ratio and the flexibility, this sort of thing cannot happen in the class, even if the teacher's willing, the teacher is just obliged to follow the structure, they just haven't got the time to even listen much less talk you know, yeah, yeah. Students have got lots of time to talk to each other and to us, which, but they talk to us anytime about anything, whereas you can't do that in, in formal school, you know, because of the, of the structures of school but I think that's very important for them to be exposed to other, other students and then to be exposed to the adults here, let them talk, yeah they talk about anything* (Carl, IT, 2017).

While Carl explained how the "*low student ratio*" gave the young people "*lots of time to talk*" he did not necessarily expand on what effect this had on the young people (Carl, IT, 2017). Carly, a young person from Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, provided her opinion on how the ratio improved access to emotional support by giving the adults more time to talk with the young people:

> *Yeah, with like if I have problems or something like that. You know, like normal teachers wouldn't be able to just, you know, pull you over on the side when you really need them, but here they're so supportive they, you know, drop everything to go help you because you are important here* (Carly, IT, 2017).

Here Carly placed value on how the low ratio learning freed the adults in the space to offer individual support and demonstrated how this made her feel "*important*" (Carly, IT, 2017).

Carl and Carly's emphasis on how the "*low student ratio*" in the learning environment provided "*time to talk*" (Carl, IT, 2017) and made young people feel "*important*" (Carly, IT, 2017) could be considered as a feature that enhanced the young people's learning experiences. Carl referred to how teachers in conventional schools do not have the time to really listen and that they are "*obliged to follow the structure*" of the institution (Carl, IT, 2017). Carl highlighted how the structural features of the Hometrees provided opportunities to deeply engage with young people

through providing time to talk. The one-on-one nature of learning was, at a text-level, used by both staff and young people to describe the discourse of low ratio learning (Bella, IT, 2017; Carl, IT, 2017; Holly, IT, 2017; Kirsten, IT, 2017; Kylie, IT, 2017; Sophie, IT, 2017). At the meso-level, Holly described how the one-on-one support available through the low ratio learning meant that it was safer for the young people to be vulnerable learners with less judgement from a larger class group. Bella's perception of the low ratio was that it meant that she did not have to wait for help. Carl indicated that there was more time to talk with the young people. This implied a strengthening of relationships that Carly described as a sense of feeling important.

The impact of the structural features of the Hometrees on student learning have been represented through the discourses of community partnerships, flexible learning, and low ratio learning. These discourses sit within an alternative order of discourse within the sociocultural context of senior secondary schooling, where learning is experienced differently to that in conventional schools. Participants identified that the features relating to community partnerships were the importance of community access for the young people as well as community partners sharing responsibility to support these young people. The discourse of flexible learning was represented by participants through features of flexibility of attendance requirements that was communicated as providing a more relaxed atmosphere, where young people could feel less pressured and have more choice in their learning. The low ratio learning discourse emerged from features of time to talk which led to more individual help and a feeling of importance. The discursive theme of structure has had direct influence on how the learning environments were experienced. The level and types of support that these young people had access to depended on the structural features, but the behaviours of the people within these culture-sharing groups also affected how supportive the young people perceived their learning environment to be.

6.2 The impact of cultural features on learning

The cultural features of the Hometrees can be described as the behaviours of the people within the culture-sharing groups from the emic perspective of the participants. While culture itself is an abstraction and cannot be directly observed, it is the descriptions made by participants of "culture at work" within the Hometrees and their impacts on learning will be further explored within this section (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 319). The discourses of supportive environment and relationships have emerged at the micro-level from participant descriptions of culture and observed behaviours. These discourses have been subjected to an iterative process of constant comparison where key aspects of the culture of the Hometrees have been developed and analysed.

6.2.1 Supportive environment

The supportive environments of the Hometrees were described by participants through the caring staff and their availability to provide individual support. References were also made to how the culture of the Hometrees could often support the young people to become more mature where they were treated more as adult learners than as children. The data relating to these aspects of Hometree culture combine to create a representation of culture, that contributes to the discourse of supportive environment.

The young people were able to identify, through their individual experiences, just how supportive the Hometree culture could be. Carly and Joel, two young people interviewed at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, highlighted the level of care and support through their experiences learning in their Hometree:

Carly   *I come here not just to learn, but – because you know help, support. There's people here that actually care.*

Joel   *I like the Hometree […] the staff members at ours also care about your personal problems that you may be having at home if you have a family problem. I can't really think of anything bad that happens here.*

Carly   *Georgina, she is really good, like whenever you need … whenever someone needs help she comes straight as … like ASAP, like as soon as possible.*

Joel   *The good thing I like again here is you can be yourself and there's less pressure on you and, yeah, I guess that helps boost a lot of kids' self-confidence.*

Carly stated how people at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree "*actually cared*" (Carly, IT, 2017) and referred directly to the supportive approach of Georgina, the facilitator in her space. Joel also mentioned how caring staff members was something he liked about being at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree. He was able to differentiate between staff caring about student learning and caring about the young people's "*personal problems*" (Joel, IT, 2017). This ties in with the aforementioned holistic approach to learning (see Sections 2.1.2, 5.1.2, and 6.1.1) and the perspective on learning development that some participants, particularly those from youthwork backgrounds, have described.

There was a high importance placed on having youth workers as the facilitators who were supporting the young people within the physical environment of each Hometree. Ann, the program administrator from TSDE, described a culture of care within the supportive environment in each

Hometree when she identified the value of having caring and approachable facilitators. She explained in her interview just how crucial the facilitators were:

> *Our facilitators, are there the full-time that the space is open, so they have the opportunity to have those even deeper relationships with the students, and they can offer that additional support, but then that also comes back to the school to offer support to them so that they know the kinds of things to say to kids when they come up to them and say, hey, I've lost my housing at the moment, or my payments have been cut, what do I do? So, we need to make sure that the facilitators have the support and knowledge and capacity to be able to support those kids* (Ann, IT, 2017).

Ann highlighted how "*additional support*" was not just a structural feature of the low ratio learning, but the way that facilitators built "*deeper relationships*" with the young people provided opportunities to create a more supportive environment (Ann, IT, 2017). The supportive environment that the facilitators created within each Hometree may have been grounded in their "*knowledge*" from their youthwork experience, but it was also their "*capacity*" to care that supported these young people (Ann, IT, 2017).

The capacity of staff to care and provide emotional support to the young people was viewed as essential. The ability of caring staff, like Georgina, was described by Carly and Joel, and Ann elaborated on how this was made possible through the opportunity for deeper relationships. While this could be seen as elements of the structural features (low ratio learning, flexible learning), the staff's ability to connect with the young people and their ability to identify needs and address them highlights how the behaviours of the staff contributed to the culture of each of the Hometrees. This was supported in a statement about staff from Gary, the administrator of Jay's Youth Centre:

> *They're the right people … you really need the staff that are nurturing, but not to the point where they're wet fish and they're just going to be a … a pushover, and … and if they … I believe it enhances, again, enhances their educational experience, young people, by having those staff there and the – the environment they create there, simply because it's smaller, it's theirs and they get on well with the supervisors* [facilitators] *and the volunteers* (Gary, IT, 2017).

Gary's conceptualisation of the Hometree staff being the "*right people*" emerged from his description of them as "nurturing", as people who "*enhance*" the learning experience for the young people and create an environment where the young people feel supported (Gary, IT, 2017). This caring approach to supporting the young people was witnessed in all the Hometrees (PO/7, 2017; PO/8, 2017; PO/9, 2017; PO/12, 2017; PO/14, 2017).

The concept of having caring and knowledgeable staff supporting these young people was not just at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree but was observed in all of the Hometree sites and supported by the three community-based administrators who were interviewed. Gary, Raymond, and Trisha all mentioned how the discourse of supportive environment impacted on student learning, but in various ways. Gary focused on the culture of maturity that developed within the young people in the space and its link to employability:

> *They realise that they're getting an opportunity and I think it's very mature…* [Their] *maturity, gives a bigger scope to be able to employ them, to impress an employer, if you know what I mean* (Gary, IT, 2017).

Gary highlighted how, from his perspective, learning in the Hometree environment could be seen by the young people as an "*opportunity*" rather than an obligation (Gary, IT, 2017). He saw this perspective on learning as reflective of the maturity that came from learning in this way and emphasised how critical this maturity was for transitions to employment.

In Raymond's interview, he spoke of how the discourse of supportive environment emerged from the culture of understanding and advocacy he had witnessed at Pickett Street Hometree:

> *We have a youth reference group member who is employed by us* […] *as the* [Hometree] *facilitator. She's* [Liz, the facilitator,] *the ear for the young people and a voice for the young people as well* (Raymond, IT, 2017).

This excerpt from his interview provides another dimension to the discourse of supportive environment. Raymond identified how support from staff was not solely about being "*the ear for the young people*" and solving their problems, but that there was also potential for staff to be "*a voice for the young* people" by Liz advocating for youth needs at an organisational level (Raymond, IT, 2017).

Trisha also identified how the supportive environment created by staff operated on both a micro and meso level within Windrixville Hometree:

> *In a big group of kids, the focus is the group, whereas with the small cohort, the focus can be more one-one-one and, with their specific needs. With each one, with different needs at different times. I really love the way in which the program incorporates the life skills as well as the emotional wellbeing support* (Trisha, IT, 2017).

Trisha noted how the young people were supported "*with their specific needs*", but that the "*emotional wellbeing support*" was actually incorporated at a program-level (Trisha, IT, 2017). The individual approach that Trisha referred to was also mentioned by Jerry, a school administrator,

when he compared the culture of support in the Hometrees with what he had witnessed in conventional schools:

> *So, the difference for us is that we're taking these students and repairing them socially, emotionally, academically so that they can re-engage with, not just a regular high school but society as a whole* […] *So, for us, it's about gently rebuilding them, and that's not something that's done well in most high schools, I believe* […] *We're managing each of these students individually with a personalised learning program* (Jerry, IT, 2017)*.*

Here Jerry described a student-centred, holistic approach to learning where staff were "*repairing* [young people] *socially, emotionally,* [and] *academically*" was done "*individually with a personalised learning program*" (Jerry, IT, 2017).[45] This locates these staff behaviours within a culture of support and directly contributes to the discourse of supportive environment.

The discourse of supportive environment was comprised of the features of the Hometrees that contributed to a culture of support. At a micro-level, the young people identified that staff genuinely cared and displayed behaviours that supported this i.e. dropping everything to help on an individual level with a young person's personal problems (Carly, IT, 2017; Joel, IT, 2017). At the meso-level Ann and Gary identified that the type of training that staff had was a feature of this supportive environment. Ann spoke of how the facilitators were trained youth workers who had both the knowledge and capacity to support these marginalised young people (Ann, IT, 2017). This was reiterated by Gary when he spoke of having the "*right person*" for the job, emphasising the need for not just staff with appropriate qualifications but also with the necessary disposition to support these young people (Gary, IT, 2017).

Raymond and Trisha also identified how the discourse of supportive environment was present at the meso-level when they both spoke of the way emotional support, life skills development, and advocacy were all part of the program of learning. Jerry's statement regarding the discourse of supportive environment dealt with the culture of support at both the meso and macro levels. Jerry alluded to how the "*personalised learning program*" that the young people experienced was a supportive feature and addressed their social, emotional and academic needs (Jerry, IT, 2017). The student-centred and holistic approach to learning allowed young people to learn in a support-focused environment that was "*nurturing*" (Gary, IT, 2017).

In this environment, the dominant power dynamic of teacher over student that is often present in conventional learning institutions could be seen as being disrupted. The young people

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[45] The need to "*repair*" young people will be addressed later in Section 8.1.2.

appeared to be viewed as social service clients as well as learners of formal qualifications. In this supportive learning environment, a culture of support seemed to be established through the staff behaviours that displayed a reduction in the power-imbalance of student-teacher relationships and align with supporting young people with all aspects of their lives, not just their formal learning.

6.2.2 Relationships

The discourse of relationships within the Hometrees was described by participants through the welcoming and friendly personalities of support staff, which led to feelings of mutual respect and a sense of family or tribe for those within each Hometree. These features related to behaviours of participants that represented the culture of the Hometrees and the importance of relationships in this learning environment. The discourse of relationships demonstrates the impact of positive relationships on developing a culture conducive for learning.

Being able to establish and maintain positive and effective relationships with the young people was an important skill in supporting them with their learning. Marilyn, the volunteer from Tiber Street Hometree, highlighted the importance of having the right approach when supporting these young people, "*Ratio's got a lot to do with it, but I think also the personality*" (Marilyn, IT, 2017). She explored this further by explaining the calm and relaxed transition for young people as they entered the space:

> [It's] *just easier for the, for the kids to come in. It's not structured so when they open the door it's always, "G'day, how are you today?" It's more friendly, user friendly,* [Hometree]*, [compared] to a normal student relationship in a* [conventional school] *class and […] I think that it's more welcoming* (Marilyn, IT, 2017).

Marilyn identified how morning greetings are "*friendly*" and "*welcoming*" (Marilyn, IT, 2017). The young people interviewed at Brumley Street Hometree agreed that the adult-young person relationships were friendlier than in their conventional schooling experiences, but they elaborated on this when they referred to how they felt treated as a person rather than as a student:

Val	*The teachers here are nice, like, they don't – they're very – they talk to you as if you're a human being, not just a three-year-old. Asking for your opinion. Yeah. They treat you with respect and the other students here are all nice.*
Raine	*The teachers here talk to you like you're a normal person.*
Kirsten	*Yeah, not down to you like they're your…*

Val	*Like they're our superior.*
Raine	*Yeah, we're all equal here.*
Val	*Yeah. Like you're just dirt in normal school.*
Raine	*The educators help a lot more than normal teachers, they just treat you like a student, whereas they actually treat you as a person more than they do as a student.*

This sense of being treated "*as a person more than as a student*" (Raine, IT, 2017) was also brought up by other young people interviewed (Bella, IT, 2017; Carly, IT, 2017; Joel, IT, 2017; Troy, IT, 2017). It aligned with the holistic and student-centred approach to learning mentioned by adult participants (Ann, IT, 2017; Margaret, IT, 2017; Jerry, IT, 2017). Through the less authoritative nature of how the adults interacted with the young people when compared to what participants reported that they had experienced in conventional schools, a sense of being a respected member of the culture-sharing group had been established. This would appear to be in contrast to feelings of being human capital in conventional schooling institutions. Jerry built on this concept of seeing the whole person not just the student in his interview:

> *It's just about having someone who cares… going to school was actually a painful experience for them or going to school was an experience that was antisocial. So, in an environment where the youth workers and the teachers and myself actually know these students on a first name basis and can actually talk and engage with them about what they do, not just at the centre but in real life, I think this actually shows the students that someone actually cares. And I think as soon as you can show them that you actually care about their learning and care about them as a person, I think that engagement is what actually starts to turn them around* […] *Yeah, it's about relationships and the influence that those relationships have in a positive way* (Jerry, IT, 2017).

Jerry commented on how staff "*actually care about their learning and care about them as a person*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). He highlighted the "*influence that those relationships have in a positive way*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). It is through these deeper relationships that staff were able to "*engage*" with the young people, and this "*engagement is what actually starts to turn them around*" (Jerry, IT, 2017). These statements could be viewed as descriptions of caring and respectful behaviours displayed by staff in the Hometree sites that contributed to a culture of positive relationships used to support the young people to engage in learning and in life.

The impact that respectful relationships had on learning was not limited to those between the student and the educator or facilitator, but with all within the culture-sharing groups. The relationships between the young people also contributed to the culture of positive relationships in each of the Hometrees, where young people felt respected and to some extent understood by their peers. Trisha's perception of the interactions between young people at Windrixville Hometree was that "*There's less of the bullying*" (Trisha, IT, 2017). This was supported by comments made by young people at Tiber Street Hometree (Bella, IT, 2017; Troy, IT, 2017), as well as by facilitators, Georgina and Tremaine who provided their reasoning for the sense of belonging and even comradery:

Georgina	*And it doesn't worry them that there are other kids there, they're all there for the same reason* [non-engagement in conventional school]*, so it's like the kids…*
Tremaine	*Quite often they help each other as well and they get yeah… and then they instantly get on like.*
Georgina	*But they're all practically in the same boat, some may have mental health issues that you know, for one reason or another have caused them to pull away from school or they may have family issues going on that didn't allow them to go to school every day of the week but it's just you know, some of them have even had traumatic experiences where they, you know, pulled away and then now are finally re-engaging, it can be a variety of, but they're all, the majority of the kids feel they're in the same group of people where they've been disadvantaged… they get comfortable in the place they get comfortable with the other kids there.*

Georgina and Tremaine described a certain sense of connection through the adversity that each of the young people had experienced. The description of the behaviours of the young people made by both Tremaine and Georgina highlight how they "*get comfortable*" (Georgina, IT, 2017) and "*instantly get on*" (Tremaine, IT, 2017). These relationships forged on adverse experiences seemed to create a sense of belonging in each Hometree where the culture-sharing group behaved in ways that were associated more with a family unit than a school class group. Jerry also identified this as an element of the culture of positive relationships when he referred to how peer relationships can build an almost tribal culture:

It's tricky, but I think that there's almost a cultural thing with the [Hometree] *kids. I think*

they're almost comfortable with each other's company in that they all seem to understand
that they're all there for a reason. It mightn't be a common reason but they're all there for a
particular reason, and that reason is that they haven't been able to engage with
mainstream. It's almost tribal. So, from what I've seen, just externally, it almost seems tribal
for them, so they've got that in common that this is sort of another chance for them, you
know? (Jerry, IT, 2017).

Jerry highlighted how while the types of past adversity experienced by these young people was varied, the adversity had led to the common outcome of disengaging in conventional school. He also identified how the Hometrees gave them all another chance at formal education. His perception was one of how this solidarity made for a more cohesive culture-sharing group. While this sense of belonging was described by participants as a positive aspect of the Hometree culture, it also needs to be considered as a potential limiting effect i.e. does this sense of belonging normalise the marginalised experience; do the young people gain a sense of empowerment through their Hometree experience; or does their marginalised position in society simply become reinforced?[46]

The discourse of relationships has been described through the impact that these cultural features have had on learning represented in the behaviours of participants and their stories. At the micro-level, participants spoke of the welcoming and friendly personalities of support staff. This contributed, at the meso-level to feelings of mutual respect, and a sense of family or tribe for those within each Hometree. Administrators also spoke of how vital it was to have the right people to staff the Hometrees, who had the ability to connect with the young people; with the young people referring to being treated with respect. These examples of the findings relevant to the discourse of relationships demonstrate how, at the macro-level, the "*positive influence of relationships*" (Jerry, IT, 2017) influences the culture of these Hometrees and directly contributes to the discursive theme of culture.

The discursive theme of culture has influenced how the young people experienced this learning environment. Findings suggested that there was a culture of caring, that had been established through the discourse of supportive environment where a student-centred and holistic approach to learning was evident. This approach from staff allowed young people to learn in a support-focused environment. Young people were considered by staff as social service clients as well as learners of formal qualifications, where staff supported young people with all aspects of their lives. The dimensions of the discourse of relationships were explored through the behavioural features identified by participants in the culture-sharing group. By having support staff with the

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[46] These critical questions will be explored in Chapter Eight.

knowledge and disposition to build positive relationships with these marginalised young people, the Hometrees appeared to provide an experience that was effective in re-engaging young people in learning. The discourses of supportive environment and relationships sit within an order of discourse that is representative of the discursive theme of culture. However, these discourses, just like the discourses relating to the discursive theme of structure, were not static. The culture-sharing groups of staff and students interacting within the Hometrees changed often and so too did the impact of those who exerted power on how the Hometrees were experienced. During the time that I was immersed within the five Hometrees, structural changes and their impact on Hometree culture were witnessed. The next subsection will focus on how changes in structure influenced a change in Hometree culture.

6.3 Changing structures and their impact on the learning culture

The changing structures of the Hometrees have impacted on how the culture-sharing groups (i.e. the young people, staff, and administrators), experienced learning in these second-chance ALEs. The discourses of structural change and cultural change will be explored through their micro, meso, and macro dimensions (see Figure 3.1) with evidence from interviews, aretafacts, and observations. The discourse of structural change will be considered from the perspective of how the need for accountability by TSDE has led to policy developments that have impacted on the flexibility of the learning environments and the academic focus on QCE attainment. The discourse of cultural change explores how behaviours of participants in reaction to the structural changes have impacted on how learning in the Hometrees was experienced. Concerns were raised by participants that the Hometrees, as a learning environments, were starting to feel more like schools. These concerns, that the vision and purpose of the Hometrees had changed and no longer met the needs of marginalised young people, were supported with data from observations and arefacts and will be discussed within this section. This final section of Chapter Six will address how changes to structural features impacted on the culture of the Hometrees and therefore on how learning was experienced by the culture-sharing groups of each Hometree.

6.3.1 Structural change

Changes in the structural features and their impact on the culture of the Hometrees were being described by participants during the data collection phase between June and December 2017. The two participants who had the most to say about these changes were Margaret and Ann, both administrators from TSDE. While both had different perspectives of the effects of the changes on the culture of each of the Hometrees, the changes were evident in the stories that they both told as well as in observations and the artefacts collected. The change in culture appeared to be showing a shift

along Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum where the Hometrees were moving from the convivial end of the spectrum to the manipulative or authoritative end, or simply put they were becoming more like conventional schools.[47] Structurally, the Hometrees were becoming less flexible. The state system's power, through education policies, was manipulating the structure of the Hometrees. The young people were feeling the impact of pressure on the educators for data improvement in the form of QCE attainment. This was embodied in stricter attendance policies and policies to ensure that the attainment of this formal qualification sat as the primary goal. Within this subsection data derived from interviews, artefacts and observations will tell the story of these changes to the structural features and consider the impact that it has had on the Hometrees as convivial learning environments.

Ann, one of the school administrators, spoke freely about her concerns for the Hometree program due to the powerful influences of the state's schooling system:

> [It's] *because of the need for data from regional office, there's been a lot more structure put in, so it does feel very, very structured now compared to what it was. So, now we have the no mobile phone policy* […] *when you've got a job you can't just have your phone on you all the time, you only get to check it at meal breaks, that kind of stuff. But, for some of our kids, I think that pushes them too far, too fast* (Ann, IT, 2017)*.*

While Ann acknowledged that the mobile phone policy did align with a desire to make the young people job-ready, she also emphasised that this is an example of the tighter grasp that the school system was having on how the Hometrees were experienced, with negative comments being made by the young people during the policy's implementation (PO/07, 2017; PO/10, 2017; PO/13, 2017). The decision to implement a mobile phone policy appeared to be a decision made by the school administrators, without consulting the young people, the staff, or the community partners and therefore highlighting the shift in power from the culture of the tribe to a data-driven culture of the institutionalised education system (RJ/16, 2017).

It was not only changes in mobile phone usage in the Hometrees that impacted on the young people. Tensions in the Hometrees also related to changes to expectations regarding attendance and academic progression. Margaret, as a school administrator, raised her concerns on these matters during her interview:

> *A 55-hour course shouldn't take two years to complete* […] *we're seeing is some students aren't completing* […] *what they're getting done is very minimal.* [It's] *a concern for me*

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about the amount of time they're actually engaging in the curriculum (Margaret, IT, 2017).

Margaret continued questioning the self-paced nature of the Hometree curriculum highlighting her perception that increasing the time students were required to attend their Hometree would support them in their Year 12 completion. With this perspective, the concept of learning equated to academic progression through the formal education of a state-provided curriculum. Margaret continued to share her thoughts on how the Hometree learning experience could be enhanced by questioning the current practices of the facilitators and educators:

> *"So how come this kid has only one hour?" or "How come this kid has only done one activity, what's going on?" We need to come back and just review all of the kids, review all of their progress and then make sure that we've got those things in place, academically. So, that's a concern I've got at the moment around how it's rolling out, but also our accountability to the system* (Margaret, IT, 2017).

Margaret's concerns appeared to focus on academic progress, however the final statement in this passage indicated that this desire stemmed from an accountability to the state education system, not from a desire to help marginalised young people succeed in their learning for improved transition pathway options. This "*accountability to the system*" (Margaret, IT, 2017) can be viewed as an example of pressure being placed on TSDE staff to adhere to state reporting procedures and their associated school performance measures.

The emphasis on academic progression shows a definite shift away from the program's holistic approach to learning. Originally, the Hometree program was structured to support marginalised young people choosing to re-engage in learning on their terms (Ann, IT, 2017; RJ/9, 2017). Georgina, the first and longest serving facilitator, described this ethos in her interview when she said that "*They're not being pushed* […] *and it's their decision to do the work*" (Georgina, IT, 2017). However, through the discourse of structural change, the purpose of the formal curriculum provided by TSDE can be questioned.

The dominant perspectives from TSDE, provided by artefacts and through interview data with staff, was one of supporting these young people by preparing them for a transition to a vocational pathway. Another reason for the short courses in literacy and numeracy was provided by Margaret when she stated, "*I believe that giving them a short course in literacy and numeracy is a good option because it gives them one point, it's not just busy work, they are moving towards getting a QCE*" (Margaret, IT, 2017). While this aim appears legitimate as the short courses do provide points towards gaining a QCE (An explanation of the QCE points system is provided as an artefact in Appendix D), an alternative perspective would suggest that this aim is actually tied to the fact that

the school is being measured by the state education system on the number of students exiting Year 12 with a QCE. An oppositional perspective would go as far as to view the attainment of the two QCE points a farcical endeavour.

The whole academic endeavour of attaining two QCE points would appear pointless, as in order to achieve a QCE, twenty credit points are required. The Hometree curriculum offered by TSDE allowed students to graduate Year 12 with two points, along with the potential to gain more points through VET courses offered by other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The young people of these Hometrees would however have struggled to completed the core subjects necessary to be eligible for a QCE (Queensland Department of Education, 2018a). The chasing of QCE points was not about preparing these young people for their future pathways but may be perceived as an easy mark to measure the success of a program and success of a school, in this instance TSDE.

Flexibility appeared to no longer be a desired feature of the Hometrees used to re-engage these young outsiders. Margaret explained that the flexibility was a barrier to the increase in academic progression and felt that they could be doing more, but so too could they as providers of the program and its structure. She said "*It's around building that routine. And I don't know that we've got the routine for a lot of the kids nailed down, again, that flexibility*" (Margaret, IT, 2017). This statement of Margaret's shows, at the micro-level, how the words routine and flexibility are positioned to be in opposition to each other. From this perspective, flexibility is positioned as a negative feature of the Hometrees, with routine being implied, at the meso-level, as a way to improve academic engagement. While this is a plausible and even commendable change when considered from an education capital-focused perspective, the power of who decides on this routine appeared to sit firmly with TSDE and being forced upon the young people and staff of the Hometree sites without consultation.

Routine was considered an important aspect of improving the educational service being provided, but Margaret also considered the level of access the young people had to their educators as another crucial dimension:

> *Logistically, for us, though,* [educators] *having to travel to the different spaces, co-ordinating that I think, can, at times, be a little bit tricky, but having the consistency of the same educator go to the spaces on the same day, builds consistency. If I'm talking about, at some point, increasing the amount of time that those kids are going in, I think the model we need to look at is, "Do we have that* [educator] *in the space more, and less of the work being done back here on-site* [at TSDE]*?"* (Margaret, IT, 2017).

Having the educators in the spaces more often than 1-2 days per week would mean a significant

change to the structure of the Hometrees and impact on the convivial nature of each Hometree's culture. It would make the Hometrees more like schools. This structural change would provide more control to Margaret and other school administrators (Jerry and Ann), increasing their power to influence how each Hometree was experienced with increased pressure for academic outcomes.

Structural changes to the Hometrees served the aim of attempting to increase academic outcomes. This was also evident in the artefacts gathered at the end of the data collection phase in December 2017. The following was found within the updated Hometree policies and procedures created by TSDE:

> *To enhance the outcomes of both programs, the following procedures should be adhered to:*

1. *Signing in – students are required to sign in and out of the space each day. There are rows allocated for students to sign out for lunch and return in the afternoon. Facilitators are required to ensure that anyone in the space is signing in – times should be checked by facilitators, calculated at the end of the workday and scanned through to the* [TSDE] *educator each week. The sign-in sheets are legal documents and are not be destroyed under any circumstances. They will be kept in the back of the facilitator folder; this will not be available to students – it is to be locked securely each day.*

2. *Attendance – Students are asked to attend the space two days per week. This is their minimum requirement. Students are allocated days upon enrolment to ensure that there are enough resources for all students. Educators at TSDE are required to maintain accurate attendance records based on the sign-in sheets. Students who fail to attend the two-day minimum are flagged with the educators, who will follow up with students by the end of the fortnight. Facilitators who are concerned about a students' absence should flag their concerns with the educators – this is not to be followed up by the facilitator themselves. In order to maintain regular attendance, accurate sign-in sheets are imperative* (Policies & Procedures, Artefact, 2017).

The concept of it being a legal requirement for the school to maintain these attendance records sits in a grey area. Since the young people were enrolled as distance education students in Queensland, the actual requirement for student to sign-in comes into question. If students were required to sign-in, then it would seem logical that they signed in to the community site and therefore attendance would be managed by community representatives not state education ones. Yet the TSDE driven policy clearly stated that the facilitators, those employed by the community organisations and those

with the closest relationships with the young people, were not allowed to follow up on lack of attendance. If we hypothesise that section 177.2.a of the Education (General Provision) Act 2006 means that there is no legal requirement for these distance education students to have their physical attendance at a community space tracked, then this policy may be viewed as an unnecessary exercise in state data tracking.[48] It could therefore be viewed as a measure of state control with TSDE exercising this control as a technology of governance.

The issue of measuring attendance would appear to have stemmed from the fact that there were only a limited number of students able to be enrolled in the program based on the availability of space in each community-based site. This has meant that the Hometree program had a waiting list of disengaged young people (RJ/04, 2017). This appeared to impact on how non-attendance was dealt with as a young person who was enrolled in a Hometree but not attending regularly or not engaging in the curriculum, was pressured to exit from the program, "*Ann spoke of having to issue departure letters to Year 12 students at Margaret's request… she seemed unhappy about this but said that there was a huge waiting list, and these students weren't engaging*" (RJ/07, 2017). Originally there was no monitoring of attendance when the program began in 2014, "*you didn't know when they were going to turn up*" (Ann, IT, 2017). However, in 2017, consequences for noncompliance with the school's attendance policy were taken seriously by school administrators and were outlined in the Hometree Handbook:

> *Additional lack of attendances without explanation will result in a meeting and may result in the student being departed from the school. Students will then be ineligible to reapply for the programs within the school.* […] *Failure to attend the* [Hometree] *and complete the short course programs will result in students being removed from their certificate courses* (Handbook, Artefact, 2017).

This document dictates that if a student was not attending or progressing through the TSDE provided short course curriculum but was engaged in learning through their vocational training pathway i.e. school-based apprenticeship or traineeship, the system would not allow them to continue with either course of study.[49] The seriousness of the issue of attendance became even more evident in

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[48] Section 177.2.a of the Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 states that: *a child enrolled in a program of distance education is taken to attend the school of distance education offering the program by completing and returning the assigned work for the program* (Queensland Parliament, 2006). There is no stipulation within this legislation that schools of distance education are required to track physical attendance of their students.

[49] The effects of this policy will be explored in detail in Section 7.1.2.

the letter template used to engage with parents of students who had consistently been noncompliant with the Attendance policy. The letter outlined how "*the formal truancy process will commence which may potentially result in a fine of up to $800*" (Attendance Letter, Artefact, 2017).

The changing level of conviviality of the Hometrees extended in 2017 to the social networks of friends that supported these young people. The 2017 edition of the Hometree Handbook outlined how the school did not appreciate friends of the students in or around the community spaces:

> *Loitering teens – some students have been bringing friends to the spaces and either bringing them into the* [Hometree] *room or leaving them outside of the space. Students are not to have friends in the space or on the* [Hometree] *grounds. Facilitators are within their rights to ask the friends of students to move along. If they refuse to do this, the student can be asked to leave with them. Failure to do this can result in the police being called to escort them from the premises* (Handbook, Artefact, 2017).

This statement embodies the shift from the Hometrees being a network of convivial institutions to becoming more like conventional schools. With policy statements like these, the Hometrees appeared more as schools than as a community learning spaces. Young people who were not enrolled in TSDE were being asked to move on rather than being encouraged to enrol. These friends of existing students were not engaged in conventional schools and were already connected to a Hometree by having a relationship with an existing student, but instead of trying to engage them in learning, the response was to request police intervention to remove them on the basis of loitering in a community space (Handbook, Artefact, 2017).

The less flexible nature of the structural features of the Hometree program, created by school-driven policies designed for accountability purposes, was making the Hometree learning experience appear less convivial. TSDE's "*accountability*" (Margaret, IT, 2017) to the education system to increase the academic attainment levels of the young people, had led to a desire for a stricter "*routine*" (Margaret, IT, 2017); a "*no mobile phone* policy" (Ann, IT, 2017); a strengthened attendance policy, with punitive measures for both the young people and their parents; along with a clause in the policy that referred to the young people's friends as "*loitering* teens" (Handbook, Artefact, 2017). These textual examples highlight how the discourse of structural change had a direct impact on how each Hometree was being experienced by its culture-sharing group.

6.3.2 Cultural change

The features relating to the discourse of cultural change were observed during the initial data collection phase (June to December 2017), but it was through the cyclical data analysis process

that the impact of structural changes on the Hometree culture became evident. The impact that the structural changes had on how the culture-sharing groups experienced learning became clearer during the analysis of the data. Due to the iterative process of data analysis in this critical ethnography it was decided that a second interview be conducted with school administrator, Ann, to see if her concerns had in fact come to fruition. The follow up interview was conducted in May 2018, after an initial phone call to determine the participant's willingness and all appropriate ethical documentation was completed and approved.

Ann's 2018 interview started with her description of how the Hometrees were feeling more like conventional schools than they previously had:

> *I think there's less and less flexibility as* [Hometree] *goes on. The push from regional office has definitely been about the outcomes of academic standard, not necessarily outcomes around student success* […] *it's solely and wholly about QCE* (Ann, IT, 2018).

This statement describes a change of purpose for the program, where at the meso-level, the statement communicates a perspective of Hometree culture becoming more data-focused instead of being predominately student-focused. This supports the previously held concerns about the Hometrees shifting further to the right, or more manipulative end of Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum. Ann went further by describing the impact that the changes were having on the young people:

> *The feedback that we've had from students is that this term* [January – June 2018] [Hometree] *feels like school* […] *it's so structured. Because, they're being told they have to be there by nine o'clock, they have to stay there 'til two,* […] *we've then put in seating plans. They don't even get to choose where they sit. It feels more school-like, because the teacher is standing up the front going, "Here's the PowerPoint, we're gonna* [sic] *read through it, you're gonna* [sic] *write the answers in the book". It's not what they signed up for.* […] *I've been told it's not to be a self-paced program, anymore* (Ann, IT, 2018).

The removal of the flexible hours, self-paced curriculum, even the choice of where to sit highlighted the change in pedagogy under the state education system's influence. The young people were being forced to fit the school-like structure of the program rather than having the program meet their learning needs as described in Subsection 6.1.2. The young people were "*being told*" (Ann, IT, 2018) when to learn and were being subjected to a more traditional classroom culture of the "*teacher standing up the front*" (Ann, IT, 2018) delivering content.

Ann went on in this interview to describe how hopeless she felt the battle to keep the Hometrees as convivial community-driven learning spaces. She went as far as to say that the only

hope would be for the Hometree program to be divorced from the state control and operate independently like other ALEs in the region "*I think the only way that this would succeed is if it was not attached to the school anymore or if it was its own school in a way, like it wasn't with the state system*" (Ann, IT, 2018). The state education system's control over the learning environment was creating a situation where the Hometrees were perceived by Ann to be no longer meeting the needs of the young people:

> *If the kids could sit in the classroom for four days a week from 8:30 to 3:00 or 9:00 'til 2:00 or whatever the timeframe is, they wouldn't be with us in the first place.* [...] *Our role was to build up these kids to a point where they could actually be functioning human beings and not be just little wrecks over in the corner that couldn't function at all and be able to go out into society and contribute in a sustainable manner* (Ann, IT, 2018).

The original purpose of the Hometrees was to embrace a holistic approach to supporting marginalised young people in order to re-engage them in learning with an end goal of them being "*able to go out into society and contribute in a sustainable manner*" (Ann, IT, 2018) or simply avoiding NEET status. The academic achievement of qualifying for a QCE upon exiting the senior phase of learning does not necessarily mean successful transitions to further education, training or sustainable employment and as evidenced in Section 6.3.1, QCE attainment was not a realistic possibility with the curriculum that TSDE provided their Hometree students. Academic achievement was being privileged over meeting the needs of the young people. This exposes the shift in culture, where a narrow, education-focused discourse relating to the purpose of the Hometree program was rising in power.

The interview ended with little hope for the future of Hometree. Ann told of the uncertainty of the school's support for the program to continue:

> *What is held over my head at the moment – is that if I don't get the results, if regional aren't happy, if upper management aren't happy,* [Hometree] *won't exist next year* [...] *which is a shame* [...] *The community loves the program, the partners love the program, probably up until this term the kids loved the program. But it's just regional office that don't love the program* (Ann, IT, 2018).

When asked why the school and regional state education office weren't being supportive, she explained that it was due to the poor academic attainment data being produced:

> *'Cause, academically, we don't show them in a good light, and we continue to be their big red blip in the system and I think that would be part of why upper management in* [TSDE] *is not very pleased with the program, because they've been told that they can no longer split*

the data. So, it can't be senior secondary data and [Hometree] *data, but all Year 12s, so they put them altogether. So, my data brings down the rest of the school* (Ann, IT, 2018).

Ann's statement about bringing down the rest of the school's data shows the influence that a data-driven culture was having on the Hometrees. The type of data that the Hometrees were being measured by may not be have been the best indicator of what was success for the Hometree program and the young people they served.[50] From Ann's candid remarks on the health of the program it would appear as though she strongly believed that the people within the community wanted the Hometrees to continue but those representing the state education system may not have. If the indication given by the community organisation administrators in their interviews in 2017 hold true, then Ann's belief in the community partners seeing the value of the program is justified (Trisha, IT, 2017; Raymond, IT, 2017; Gary, IT, 2017). The discourse of cultural change appears to have been driven by pressure placed upon TSDE staff to improve student data, even if other needs of the young people were sacrificed in the process.

The structural changes to policies for the purpose of "*accountability to the system*" (Margaret, IT, 2017) have impacted on the flexibility of learning offered through the Hometrees. This has affected the learning experiences of the young people and the convivial culture of the Hometrees. The discourse of structural change and cultural change have been explored within this section and the impact that both have had on how the culture-sharing groups of each Hometree experienced learning has been evidenced through the artefacts relating to TSDE policy, observations of participant behaviours in reaction to these changes, and the perceptions of participants provided in interviews. While different perspectives on how these discourses impacted learning in the Hometrees were presented, there was a serious concern that the very purpose of the Hometree program to support marginalised young people to re-engage with learning may be lost.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how the features of the Hometrees, through the discursive themes of structure, culture, and change, impacted on the young people's learning experiences. The discourses and their dimensions that comprised these discursive themes affected how participants experienced learning in their Hometrees. The structural discourses of community partnerships, flexible learning, and low ratio learning emerged from observations, artefacts, and participant stories about their Hometree experiences. The Hometree program provided marginalised young people with both formal curriculum through TSDE and community access through community-based

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[50] Participant definitions of success will be examined in Section 7.2.

learning environments who shared the responsibility for re-engaging these young people in learning. Participants from these culture-sharing groups described, at a micro-level, the features of flexibility of attendance and a self-paced curriculum as providing, at a meso-level, a more relaxed atmosphere and less pressure where young people had more choice, with more individual help and a feeling of importance. The access to support via the structural features of the Hometrees was interwoven within the stories of the participants. However, the behaviours of the people within this culture-sharing groups also affected how supportive the young people perceived the learning environments to be.

Concerns were raised regarding the systematic removal of some of the more convivial structural features of the Hometrees. The discourses relating to the structural features of the Hometrees were not static. Structural changes and their impact on Hometree culture were witnessed by both participants and myself during my period of immersion in the Hometrees. The cultural changes as described by Ann, and evident within the artefacts and observations, showed how the Hometrees, as examples of second-chance ALEs, had moved towards to right of Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum to be more like conventional schools. The structural changes to policies impacted on the convivial nature of the Hometrees by enforcing a reduction in flexibility of the learning experience. The Hometree program was originally co-created by TSDE and the community organisations as learning spaces where marginalised young people were supported to re-engage in learning and help them to successful transitions beyond NEET status. How this vision was enacted was being affected, at a macro-level, by the changing discursive practices that had the power to both support and challenge how learning was experienced.

Chapter Seven: Transitioning from the Hometrees

7.0 Introduction

This chapter will explore the impact of the features of the Hometrees on the young people's post-ALE transition pathways (Research Question Two). The perceived institutional control enacted through TSDE that was described in Chapter Six, had a direct influence on the transition pathway options of these young people. TSDE held the power in the Hometrees to govern how learning was experienced and how the young people were supported in their choice of potential transition pathways. The features of the Hometrees impacted their young people's post-ALE transition pathways through discourses functioning within the discursive themes of institutional influence (Section 7.1) and supporting successful transitions (Section 7.2). As described in Chapter Six, the discursive themes have been constructed through evidence from the findings by considering the dimensions of each discourse that contributes to the themes. Figure 7.1 shows how each discursive theme has been constructed as an order of discourse and how they impact on post-ALE transition pathways.
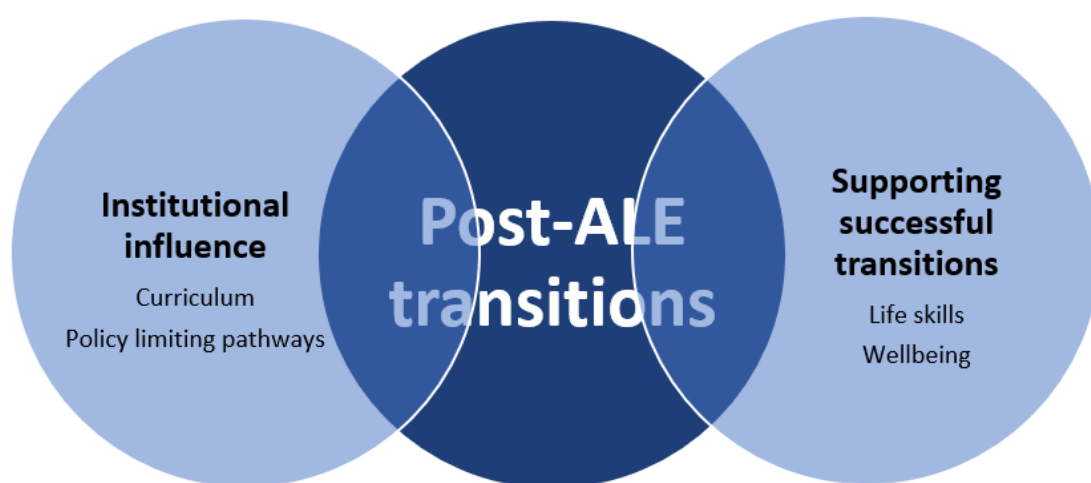
Figure 7.1 – The impact on student transitions

Figure 7.1 shows in the inner circle the concept of post-ALE transitions being impacted upon by the discourses represented in the lighter shaded outer circles. Each outer circle includes the name of each discursive theme in bold with the discourses that operate within these themes, or orders of discourse, listed below them. The dimensions of each of these discourses are examined through the use of CDA in each of the subsections herein.

7.1 Institutional influence

The discursive theme of institutional influence is representative of the power of the state education system in influencing the post-ALE transition pathways of the young people in these Hometrees. This institutional power included what curriculum they were afforded and how they were supported to transition beyond NEET status. [51] Taking Mitchell's (2006) perspective on the concept of "technologies of governance" (p. 389), TSDE was an example of an education institution being influenced by state policy measures to achieve certain education outcomes.[52] One example of state influence on TSDE was the unrelenting focus on achieving education outcomes in the form of QCE points. This was evidenced not only in the statements from interviews with TSDE staff, i.e. *"our accountability to the system"* (Margaret, IT, 2017); *"The push from regional office has definitely been about the outcomes of academic standard, not necessarily outcomes around student success* […] *it's solely and wholly about QCE* (Ann, IT, 2018), but also in official statements from the Queensland Department of Education. One media release stated that "*We want every student succeeding*" (Queensland Department of Education, 2018a). While this is a general statement, that does not define what success entails, another state policy document directly relating to senior secondary schooling defined success as a young person's engagement in education or training, through a focus on building a "*strong Year 12 apparent retention record* [and] *delivering outcomes* [attainment of formal qualifications] *for all*" (Queensland Department of Education, 2017). This aligns with the concept of trying to avoid NEET status, through the continued attainment of formal qualifications, but does not consider other forms of requisite capital needed for social mobility beyond NEET status to occur.[53]

This perspective on institutional influence shows how TSDE was operating as a technology of governance by enforcing state-driven system demands on how the Hometrees were experienced. From a CDT perspective, the dominant ideology of attainment of academic certification served as the purpose of senior secondary schooling, influencing how TSDE enacted power as an education institution and technology of governance over how learning was experienced and measured in the Hometrees. The focus on academic achievement as a primary measure of the Hometrees was

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[51] Existing concerns relating to curriculum affordance in second-chance ALEs can be found in Section 2.2.

[52] Existing concerns relating to technologies of governance enacted through education institutions can be found in Section 3.1.

[53] Capital and the journey of capital accumulation becomes limited for those who have struggled to navigate the social field of education institutions (Bourdieu, 1970/2018; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Willis, 1977). This affects the economic capital that these young people are able to accumulate as their access to education capital (symbolic, cultural, and social) is diminished.

described in further depth by Ann when she tried to emphasise that the personal growth of these young people was even more vital to their successful transition:

> *I think with the school it's all about academic. It doesn't matter what the kids have overcome, it doesn't matter what they've achieved, it's about what result they got at the end of the day,* […] *but that's not recognised* (Ann, IT, 2017).

This passage from Ann's 2017 interview reflects the popular William Bruce Cameron (1963) quote that is often attributed to Albert Einstein, 'not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted'. Trying to measure the human experience within the Hometrees and how this leads to personal growth and successful transitions would potentially provide more meaningful data than academic achievement alone.

The focus on academic achievement rests within the discourse of curriculum that was constructed from the data. Curriculum was described by participants and identified in artefacts as the formal education curriculum provided by TSDE (details provided in Subsection 7.1.1) that led to the symbolic capital of education certification. From this perspective curriculum was narrowly focused, however, by considering the Hometree curriculum through a broader lens the learning activities available through the community organisations could be part of a community curriculum designed to address the learning needs of these young people beyond just formal education certification. From Brady and Kennedy's (2018) perspective on curriculum construction, the school curriculum that is provided by TSDE covers the vocational and economic curriculum orientations, while the community curriculum addresses student learning needs through cultural, personal and social curriculum orientations. The power of production of the school curriculum resided with TSDE, however the community curriculum was co-constructed with input from experts in education, primary health, and community services. However, the only curriculum that counted was the school curriculum as it was the only one that was measured for successful progression and completion.

Measures of success were strongly grounded in academic achievement data. The focus on the quantitative measuring of academic outcomes does not necessarily consider the context of Hometree sites and the relative gain that these marginalised young people have made. As Jerry eloquently put, "[In Hometree] *every success is a success that these students would not have achieved at a regular school* (Jerry, IT, 2017). The concern lies not with just how TSDE was operating as an institution for enforcing state aims but also with how TSDE held the power over how the Hometrees were experienced. TSDE controlled what curriculum was afforded to the young people, which had a direct impact on the potential transition pathways beyond senior secondary schooling. The following two subsections will provide a critique of the data relating to this discursive theme of

institutional influence and how the discourses of curriculum (Subsection 6.1.1) and policy limiting pathways (Subsection 6.1.2) influenced the transition pathways of these young people.

7.1.1 Curriculum

The curriculum being afforded to the young people by TSDE consisted of two short courses, one in literacy and the other numeracy, as well as the Basic Key Skills Builder (BKSB) course.[54] These were offered in a flexible online learning platform which meant that the young people could work through the curriculum at their own pace and independently of a structured classroom teaching model common in conventional secondary schools. However, students were required to progress through each course in a linear fashion. This meant that the flexible nature of the curriculum was limited to the online learning platform. The flexibility was limited to choice of where to learn and when to learn; not of what to learn (PO/14, 2017; Program Overview, Artefact, 2017). TSDE claimed students were assisted "*to increase their skills in the core subjects of literacy and numeracy*" (Program Overview, Artefact, 2017). Literacy and numeracy were considered to be "*essential for students who would like to reintegrate back into mainstream schooling, are looking to further their education or are seeking greater employment opportunities*" (Program Overview, Artefact, 2017). Even though the option of re-engaging in conventional schooling was given, the Program Overview document provided further explanation of the curriculum, as being designed to "*prepare them for future employment*" (Program Overview, Artefact, 2017).

Other senior secondary school students have the opportunity to learn through the state's online and distance education curriculum encompassing more subjects than the short courses in literacy, numeracy and BKSB. For instance, those who are not able to attend a conventional school due to illness, or distance by being in rural and remote locations; or even those in small regional schools that do not have appropriate staffing mix or resources to offer a range and balance of senior secondary subject offerings to meet specific students' needs are able to access online and distance education curriculum. Yet those who attended the Hometree sites as students of TSDE were restricted to accessing what participants referred to as basic learning only (Jarrod, IT, 2017; Justine, IT, 2017; Kirsten, IT, 2017; Sophie, IT, 2017; Val, IT, 2017). The online distance education curriculum that was accessed by the other demographics mentioned above could have been afforded to these marginalised young people as well. This was acknowledged by Margaret in her interview where she stated that TSDE needed to offer more. She reflected on the basic learning being offered saying,

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[54] Basic Key Skills Builder is an online skills review tool, developed in the UK and used by education providers across the globe. It determines a student's reading and numeracy level from 1-5 and aligns with the Australian Core Skills Framework. The tool also identifies gaps in skills and provides a learning resource with practical exercises and answers to help students with the skill attainment at that level (TAFE Queensland, 2018).

"*vocational pathways, I think we can do more around that though, so we're really just a basic literacy and numeracy program*" (Margaret, Interview, 2017).[55]

The issue of curriculum affordance was a serious concern to the girls at Brumley Street Hometree. When questioned on how the curriculum helped them, Val stated how *"we've only got basic stuff* […] *Like, we're just learning the basics, and while that's good it – I feel like it's not enough"* (Val, IT, 2017). Both her, Raine and Kirsten's concerns rested with the fact that the Hometree curriculum *"Gives you the stuff that you need to have that job. Like, it will show you how to get it, but…"* (Kirsten, IT, 2017). This train of thought was interjected by Raine, who explained that *"they can help you get a job, all sweet, but what if you get to your job and you don't know…. [what to do, or how to behave] … I don't feel like I actually learn anything, I just feel like I'm just doing – I don't know. I feel like there needs to be more"* (Raine, IT, 2017). While they acknowledged in this conversation that the vocational focus of the curriculum was helpful to them in their immediate future they hinted at concerns that it did not necessarily prepare them for being employed, but only for gaining entry-level employment. It may have assisted them with making a transition post-secondary schooling but did not ensure that this transition was sustained.

Another concern that was aired in this interview was that a number of transition pathways were potentially being closed to them because of the curriculum affordance of only BKSB, and literacy and numeracy short courses. A pathway flowchart was produced by TSDE that demonstrated the possible transition options for the young people in the Hometrees. This has been included as an artefact in Figure 7.2 where the only adjustment from the original is the replacement of actual names with pseudonyms.
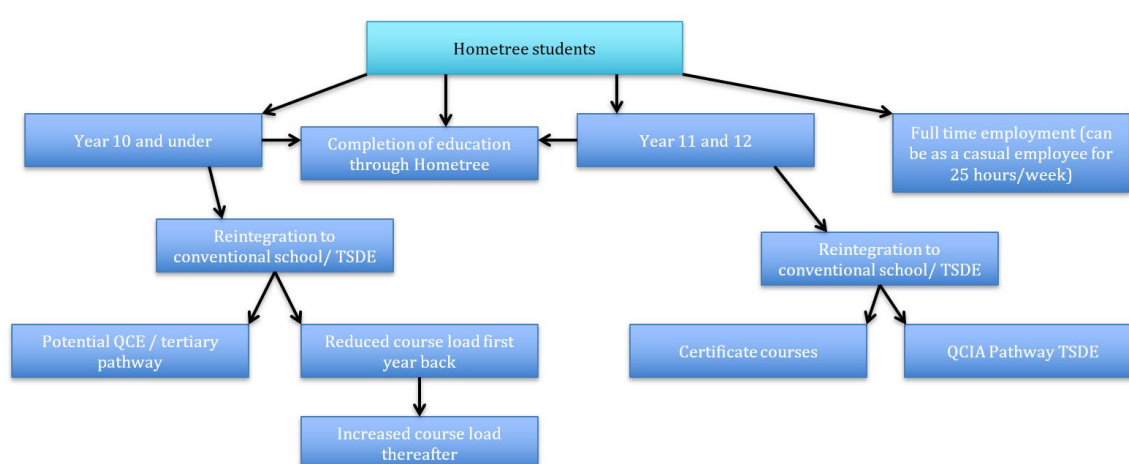
Figure 7.2 – Transitional pathways for Hometree students (Artefact, 2017)

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[55] The curriculum opportunities that TSDE could afford to their students in the Hometrees was considered a major finding from this study. This has led to a follow up interview with Margaret in 2020. Outcomes of this will be presented in Section 8.1.

In this flowchart TSDE indicated opportunities for young people to take curriculum pathways (1) back into conventional school or TSDE with the full curriculum offerings before starting Year 11 and 12 where a QCE and tertiary education pathway were possible; (2) continuing with the Hometree curriculum to the end of Year 12 with the opportunity to study certificate level courses auspiced by TSDE but delivered by an external RTO; (3) re-engage in conventional senior secondary school during Year 11 and 12 with certificate level courses or potential attainment of a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA); or (4) leave Hometree for employment opportunities. The formal qualification of a QCE was the focus of TSDE's efforts even though attainment was out of reach for many of the Hometree's young people (see Subsection 6.3.1 for details of the pressure on TSDE for QCE attainment).

For many of the young people the short-term goal of paid employment was a necessary pathway rather than the completion of academic qualifications. In her first interview, Ann provided an overview of the most typical pathways that young people take when transitioning out of the Hometree program:

> *I think the most common pathway for students has been straight into full-time work, so they haven't even been finishing off year 12, they've got their literacy and then they found a job while they've been doing numeracy and they just leave, and I think that part of that is because of the background that a lot of the students come from. They understand that having money is important, and so that becomes the primary need at that point in time, rather than – oh, well numeracy will benefit me later on. They just see the immediate benefit, so they leave* (Ann, IT, 2017).[56]

Ann went on to describe how the type of work that most of these young people were engaging in was "*casual* [and] *typically the hands-on kind of industries,* […] *hospitality, mechanics, farmhands, those kinds of things where the kids are busy and they're not spending a lot of time doing administration type work that relies on their literacy skills*" (Ann, IT, 2017). Sophie, one of the educators, agreed when she said how "*they often do end up going and getting work, sometimes getting part-time work*" (Sophie, IT, 2017). Specific examples from participant observations of the types of transitions that these young people were making included Scott, who was working casually with his cousin putting roofs on houses (PO/8, 2017); Remi, who was working casually at a take-away pizza shop (PO/11, 2017); and Simon who was working at a car detailer but got in an argument with his boss and was fired. At graduation Simon was considering looking for work as a mechanic or chef

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[56] The artefact presented in Figure 7.2 demonstrates the possible transition pathways beyond Hometree as defined by TSDE.

but said he would most likely start out as a kitchen hand (PO/12, 2017). Simon was a young father trying to support his family, living with his partner's parents.

Socially mobile pathways did not appear to be easily achieved in the Hometrees. In the interview with the four girls at Brumley Street Hometree, Kirsten was unsure if she would meet the prerequisite qualifications for a Diploma of Beauty Therapy. Kirsten did however realise that the Hometree curriculum *"doesn't actually give you, like, the full…* [QCE]*"* (Kirsten, IT, 2017). Kirsten went on to speak of the greyness that she has experienced understanding transition pathways through formal qualifications:

> *Well, I need to finish year 12 before I can go into the beauty course that I want to, because I wanted to do my diploma in beauty therapy. But I couldn't do that until I finished grade 12, but I'm not sure if I can do it because I've only done the basics of year 12, literacy and numeracy, but they just said I need to pass grade 12 to be able to do it but by passing grade 12, you need to do all your other subjects, don't you?* (Kirsten, IT, 2017).

Kirsten was unsure of the system requirements regarding the type of curriculum was required. She questioned whether her level of qualification would meet the requirements to continue her learning journey. In fact Kirsten could have started a Certificate II in Retail Cosmetics or Salon Assistant while at Hometree for free through the Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) program as TSDE had a partnership with a local RTO that had these on their scope of courses.[57] This would have meant that Kirsten did not have to return to conventional school to complete Year 12 but could have taken a VET pathway and progressed to the Diploma of Beauty Therapy through the VET articulation system with credit for her learning in the Certificate II. Kirsten was uncertain of her pathway options and had a lack of knowledge as to whether the education system would support her to make a successful transition.

Val, as opposed to Kirsten, had a solid grasp on whether the curriculum affordance in Hometree would support her transition (see insert below). Val told her story of wanting to pursue a career in creative writing, but she was not able to easily transition to her chosen field as she did not meet the prerequisite for studying a Bachelor of Arts.

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[57] VETiS was designed to provide senior secondary students with the skills and knowledge required for employment in specific industries and count towards the Queensland Certificate of Education (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2017). Details of this program are provided in Subsection 7.1.2.

Val's Story

Val wasn't eligible to apply for early enrolment into the tertiary course she wanted to study while still at Hometree as the curriculum offering did not allow her to meet the prerequisite.

"*It's very basic and it's not enough to get me up to the level that I want to be at to go into my career choice* […] *It was not an option and they were saying I'd need more, and I was like, that's gonna* [sic] *be a long pathway to get there*" (Val, IT, 2017).

The challenge for Val was that if she was attending a conventional secondary school in Queensland, she could have gained direct entry into the university course in creative writing, with a fee waiver, as a Year 11 student in 2016. As a student in a Hometree, the curriculum she has been studying did not meet the prerequisite for entry through this pathway. For Val her Hometree journey added another two years of study (Year 12 at Hometree followed by a tertiary preparation course) before entry into her chosen degree. Instead of pursuing her dream of transitioning from senior secondary school to a tertiary degree in creative writing, Val transitioned to casual employment in hospitality.

Raine was also considering returning to a conventional secondary school. She, unlike Val, was unsure as to what career pathway she wanted to take: *That's part of the reason why I do want to go back to mainstream school and shit, because I know what I want my career to be and mainstream* [conventional] *school would probably benefit me for that. Hometree would too, but being in a mainstream school, it'd probably be easier and I'd get there quicker than I would at Hometree.* (Raine, IT, 2017).

While the Hometree program may have been more appealing from a social and emotional development perspective, Raine's statement shows Hometree to be a double-edged sword where post-secondary school options were limited by the curriculum affordance.

The discourse of curriculum was represented more positively regarding transition pathways by Ann. As mentioned in Chapter Six, Ann was the administrator who directly oversaw the program implementation from TSDE. She had been with the Hometree program since its inception and was the driving force behind its growth and refinement. Her background was in health and she was a registered nurse as well as a registered teacher. This gave her a more holistic perspective on youth development which had a positive effect on the work she did to build the partnerships with community agencies. In regard to curriculum affordance, Ann referred to how:

We try and get them into that [Certificate II in Hospitality] *while they're with us so that they have support in doing the schoolwork, and then they can move onto a cert three after year*

12 when they finish with us, so that they have a pathway to go onto when they finish official schooling. (Ann, IT, 2017).[58]

In this 2017 interview Ann saw a supportive, smooth transition from secondary schooling in the Hometree environment into further vocational training, but it was TSDE that maintained the control over what certificate courses were made available to these young people. Kirsten showed some awareness of this control when she described how the Hometree curriculum, "*Here they're telling us what we need for the real world*" (Kirsten, IT, 2017). While Ann, and to a lesser degree, Kirsten saw the Hometree curriculum as supporting a transition pathway, Kirsten's statement highlights the power that TSDE possess as the curriculum provider in controlling what was learned by the young people and what transition pathways were therefore made readily available to them.

Joel, a young man attending Jay's Youth Centre Hometree made a similar reference to the curriculum when he talked about how in his Hometree the focus was "*on your future and your career".* When asked specifically about transitions and vocational pathways, the language choices that Joel made did not share the same modality as Ann's statement, *"if you want to get into the mechanical business eventually a mechanical certificate may come around that you could do and that could help you to further your career*" (Joel, IT, 2017). While Joel was very supportive of his Hometree, *"I can't really think of anything bad that happens here"* (Joel, IT, 2017), his level of confidence or hope in the support from the education system in making a successful transition appeared more cautious than Ann's, but still serves the counter narrative to the perspective given by the girls from Brumley Street Hometree on this discourse of curriculum.

Ann's perspective on the issue of curriculum affordance appeared to change in her 2018 interview where she detailed how decisions being made by administrators above her were limiting the curriculum being offered:

I've been told that Hometree is to remain completely separate from the remainder of senior secondary [at TSDE]. *So, we can't access the Cert II in Business, the Cert II in IDMT* [Information, Digital Media and Technology], *we won't be able to access the Cert II FSK* [Functional Skills for Work and Vocational pathways] *once it's under the school's scope* (Ann, IT, 2018).

Ann went on to explain that the decision to marginalise Hometree students from the other students in TSDE was not just limited to the curriculum. In her 2018 interview, Ann described how the young

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[58] Certificate II and Certificate III refer to levels of education certification within the Australian Qualifications Framework (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013). Details of the levels and their locations within the framework are available at https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-levels

people were not allowed to attend school events, like sporting carnivals, had a separate graduation ceremony and "*We have been told that they're not allowed to have a school shirt, because it's not a good look, you see, for my kids to be wearing a TSDE shirt*" (Ann, IT, 2018). The Hometree sites may have been supportive learning environments for young people marginalised by the conventional schooling system, however, the limited curriculum affordance from TSDE, as a schooling institution, continued the marginalising of these young people.

The 22 interviewees had differing perspectives on the curriculum's job-ready, somewhat utilitarian focus of providing basic literacy and numeracy which was identified as both positive and negative by both the adult and youth participant groups. Joel, while offering the example of having to wait for a mechanics course to come along, was at the time of interview considering a pathway in the military. He said, "*The literacy course really kick-started me, helped me prepare*" (Joel, IT, 2017). Joel was referring to preparing him for entry into the general infantry. Arthur, the facilitator of Tiber Street Hometree, had a similar view on how the vocationally focused literacy and numeracy curriculum prepared students when he referred to the curriculum content as "*preparing for life*" (Arthur, IT, 2017):

> *A lot of these kids that are mainly interested in work, they just want to go out and do life and I think their educational content, the real strength of it, is that they can meet educational standards but the, the work can be tailored to job interviews, to things that are good about me, to things that are relevant to resumes and, and cover letters and yeah* (Arthur, IT, 2017)*.

Even though Arthur's perspective shows the value in the curriculum, when viewed as preparing students for avoidance of NEET status, there is a vocational ceiling that a low-skill basic learning curriculum like this creates. It is however acknowledged that without basic skills in literacy and numeracy, the ability to function in any modern society is significantly reduced. The main concern raised here was that the curriculum discourse was setting up these young people for either limited or lengthy transition pathways.

The curriculum was challenged by students who highlighted the inadequacies of the TSDE provided curriculum for access to tertiary education and future career options. Val's (2017) statement that "*we've only got basic stuff*" and Kirsten's (2017) statement that *"they're telling us what we need"* encapsulates the institutional influence of TSDE in affording a limited curriculum to these young people. While some participants viewed the curriculum as providing vocational opportunities, others like her saw it as a limiting factor in their choice of future pathway. The basic curriculum that Val and others referred to at the micro-level was the literacy and numeracy short courses that supported the acquisition of basic skills, did not allow for extension of the young

people's learning. This basic learning was communicated, at the meso-level, by the young people as forcing them into marginal transition pathways. This discourse was reducing the young people's hope for a socially mobile future. The discourse of curriculum could therefore be a contributor to the social stratification of these twice marginalised young people.

7.1.2 Policy limiting pathways

In the previous subsection Val's story was presented as an example of how the discourse of curriculum was limiting the choice of transition pathways for these young people. However, it was also institutional policy that was limiting Val's options. In her story it was the tertiary institution's rigid entry requirements that controlled her future pathway. This subsection's focus is on VET pathways and will present findings relating to the discourse of policy limiting pathways by considering how the state's education and training policies can also limit the transition pathways afforded to these young people. Both the Queensland Department of Education's policies on VETiS and Certificate 3 Guarantee for school leavers will be considered in relation to the needs of marginalised young people and how these policies have affected the transition pathways of those attending the Hometrees.

VETiS was introduced to Queensland in 1996, with similar education and training plans in other Australian states, to deliver nationally recognised qualifications to school students. VETiS was designed to provide senior secondary students with the skills and knowledge required for employment in specific industries and count towards the QCE (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2017). The Queensland Government continues to prioritise what courses are funded through VETiS by consulting with industry and the national skills shortages identified by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2017; Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018). The chosen courses are added to the Queensland Training Subsidies List which is reviewed annually by the Queensland Government and industry leaders (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2017).

In a DET issued factsheet, there are a variety of options available to students to undertake VETiS:

1. as part of their school studies, delivered and resourced by a school registered training organisation (RTO)
2. through fee-for-service arrangements where a parent/student pays for the qualification with an external RTO

3. enrolling in a qualification with an external RTO which is funded by the Department of Education and Training's (DET's) VET investment budget.

(VETiS Factsheet, Artefact, 2017).

The young people in the Hometrees had access to Option Three even though TSDE was an RTO and offered a range of certificate courses (Certificate I and II in IDMT, Certificate I and II in Business, Certificate I in Agrifood Operations). TSDE students who were enrolled in the Hometree program did not have access to these courses but instead Ann had brokered a partnership with an external RTO to provide the courses (Ann, IT, 2018). Even though this VETiS Factsheet states that the final choice of RTO should be made in consultation with students and their parents (VETiS Factsheet, Artefact, 2017), this was not the case for the young people or their families at the Hometrees; TSDE held the power to choose the RTO and what courses were provided (RJ/6, 2017). Decisions on which RTO to partner with where made not on what courses the RTO had available but on how willing they were to meet the learning needs of the young people i.e. providing face-to-face support at the Hometrees instead of online only or at their training premises (RJ/6, 2017).

The Queensland Government's Certificate 3 Guarantee supports young people to transition from senior secondary school to employment through funding, to varying levels, their first Certificate III level qualification (Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018).[59] Under the Certificate 3 Guarantee, the Queensland Government provides a subsidy for a range of Certificate III level vocational qualifications that again come from the industry approved Queensland Training Subsidies List (Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018). One concern that came from discussions with staff about RTOs and the Certificate 3 Guarantee was how important it was that the young person chose the right Certificate III course for them, as eligibility for the funded qualification relied on not having previously enrolled in another Certificate III level or higher qualification (Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018). Staff, who were protective of the young people in their care, were wary of RTOs coercing marginalised young people into their courses without the young people being certain that they wanted to pursue a career in that field (RJ/6, 2017). The eligibility parameters had serious implications for young people with limited financial capital who were still developing their career interests and capabilities at this age.

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[59] It is acknowledged that the Certificate 3 Guarantee eligibility is for any Australian or New Zealand citizen or Australian permanent resident (including humanitarian entrants), or a temporary resident with the necessary visa and work permits on the pathway to permanent residency, residing in Queensland and over the age of fifteen; not just young people transitioning from senior secondary school (Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018).

An example of policy barriers limiting access to educational capital is the story of Alvin (see insert below). Alvin was in his final term of Year 12 when he had his enrolment cancelled at one of the secondary schools in Tulsa for non-attendance. Upon enrolling in the Hometree program he decided that he was keen to follow in his mother's footsteps to become a hairdresser. However, state education and training policy, along with limited social and financial capital, meant that his pathways beyond senior secondary school were limited. For Alvin to circumvent the barriers in accessing this education capital, he needed to acquire an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. However, being a newly arrived migrant in a regional centre, he had not acquired the social capital needed to secure an apprenticeship. The state policy, financial and social barriers to learning did not appear to only be happening in isolated cases like Alvin's.

If a young person at Hometree was deemed to be a non-attender they risked their enrolment in their VET course as well as their enrolment in TSDE. When a student was not progressing in the literacy and numeracy courses provided by TSDE, which was often due to non-attendance, but is still engaged in their certificate course through another organisation, they were not just removed from the TSDE course, but since the certificate courses were funded through VETiS they were removed from the certificate course too. The VETiS program's policy required them to be enrolled in a secondary school meaning that "*Failure to attend and complete the short courses will result in students being removed from their certificate courses*" (Handbook, Artefact, 2017). The major issue with these policy measures is the long-term effects that

Alvin's Story

Alvin had recently arrived in Australia with his parents from Eastern Europe and came to the school of distance education after having his enrolment in the local conventional secondary school cancelled due to his sporadic attendance. After a series of career counselling sessions with the school's guidance officer, Alvin made the decision to pursue a career as a hairdresser. If he had made this decision in Year 11, he could have enrolled in a Certificate II in Hairdressing and the course would have been fully subsidized through the state system's VETiS program. Instead Alvin was faced with paying almost three thousand dollars to enrol in a Certificate II in Hairdressing because, being in the last term of Year 12, he would not have the time to complete the course before exiting secondary school, therefore he was not eligible for a VETiS subsidised place (Observation_8, 2017). Unfortunately for Alvin, he also did not qualify for the state system's Certificate 3 Guarantee program as Hairdressing was not on the subsidised list for 2017-2018 at the time when he was leaving school (Queensland Department of Employment Small Business and Training, 2018b).

these consequences will potentially have on the abilities of these already marginalised young people to gain anything but low-skill employment.

The discourse of policy limiting pathways exposes the power and control being enacted through education policy. Firstly, the VETiS funding policy restricted what transition pathways were supported through subsidised training. The decision on what was offered through VETiS was made by the state with influence from big business and industry. Secondly, the Certificate 3 Guarantee was also limited by the same state-controlled subsidy list and was only made available once, thereby not being flexible to changes in career aspirations or changes in employment markets. Thirdly, there was the policy requirement for the young people to progress in the TSDE literacy and numeracy short courses to maintain enrolment in a VETiS course.

The discourse of policy limiting pathways was found, at the micro-level, to be the policies that stated the parameters of how these young people would be supported in their transition pathways beyond NEET status. These policies were distributed, at the meso-level, by TSDE in the way that the school enforced attendance, with control over what certificate courses were afforded to the young people. The macro dimension of this discourse showed how transition pathways for the young people were controlled by decisions made by state powers and enforced by TSDE as a technology of governance. Both the discourses of curriculum and policy limiting pathways that contributed to the discursive theme of institutional influence demonstrated the power extended by the state over how the young people of these Hometrees transitioned beyond senior secondary schooling.

7.2 Supporting successful transitions

Many of the young people within the Hometrees chose to and were supported to take a vocational education transition pathway rather than a tertiary education pathway. However, this notion of choice can be challenged by considering whether these pathway choices were made independently by young people or whether they were directed into these pathways by adults in positions of power who controlled many of the features of these second-chance ALEs. How these young people were supported in their transition pathways can be critiqued from a social stratification perspective, but there were instances of hope for successful transitions identified within the data. This section will explore the discursive theme of supporting successful transitions by considering the findings relating to how the young people of Hometree were supported in their transitions beyond senior secondary schooling.

Supporting successful transitions included assistance with academic learning, vocational training, and career development. However, support to attain the symbolic capital, in the form of

educational certification, was not the only type of support that was made available to these young people. A holistic approach to learning also supported the development of the young people's social and emotional wellbeing thereby providing an opportunity for their accumulation of social and psychological capital. The following two subsections will explore how the young people were supported in a comprehensive way to aid in their successful transitions by presenting the discourses of life skills (Subsection 7.2.1) and wellbeing (Subsection 7.2.2). Successful transitions may be difficult for these young people to achieve without support to accumulate a wide range of capital. The discourses of life skills and wellbeing represent the opportunities for these young people to develop a broad range of capital, rather than focusing solely on accumulation of education capital.

7.2.1 Life skills

The discourse of life skills consisted of the features of support for the young people in their development of the skills needed to function effectively in Australian society. Examples were provided by participants, as well as identified in artefacts, of the young people not just learning from literacy and numeracy curriculum, but learning independent living skills, skills to improve their chances of gaining employment, as well as learning about social issues in their community.

The educators and facilitators who worked directly with the young people, held the view of successful transitions to have a vocational focus, but this did not mean that they did not acknowledge and support the young people in their personal and civic development. Arthur, the facilitator at Tiber Street Hometree, saw the vocational focus of the Hometree curriculum as a strength in how the "*educational content* […] *is preparing for life* […] *job interviews* […] *resumes and* […] *cover letters*" (Arthur, IT, 2017). Arthur's vocational perspective on preparing for life was supported by other adults working with the young people. Kylie, one of the educators, described how they were preparing the young people for life through life skilling:

> *We're teaching them real life skills that they can use later on in life so whether it be, you know, like how to conduct an interview for a job or how to write a resume, our literacy course covers that, how do you write up a budget, you know, like our numeracy course covers that so through the alternate learning space we're teaching them real life skills that they can use later on in life. […] You know, how to sell yourself in an interview so those sorts of skills are really useful because a lot of these students do want to seek work, so we're equipping them with skills that they need* (Kylie, IT, 2017).

Tremaine, the facilitator at Brumley Street Hometree, moved the conversation from seeing the vocational skilling as preparation for transition, to a perspective of vocational skilling to motivate and inspire transition thinking. She spoke of how "*it's relevant to them and it's what they're doing*

and their life skills that they're getting" (Tremaine, IT, 2017). An example of the importance of relevant life skills curriculum that she gave was how it served to re-engage a young male student:

> *It engages them enough to get on rather than going, "Oh I'm not doing mainstream, I'm not doing work, I'm just going to bum out and then go and do other stuff." […] Whereas this, this is, oh back engaged enough to go, "Yeah, I actually did want to be a mechanic and oh, so someone's going to show me how can I help with that or there's traineeships or there's other things I can do and look what I've done for the last year*" (Tremaine, IT, 2017).

Tremaine, like Kylie and Arthur saw value in the support that was available to the young people. While some of their comments had a vocational focus to the life skills that they were describing, the capacity to re-engage these young people in learning and preparing them for life beyond senior secondary schooling was a common thread.

The support afforded to the young people in each Hometree site did not merely focus on vocationally focused life skill support. A holistic approach to learning was made easier through direct access to community partners who provide learning opportunities on a range of topics and it was here that learning began to be defined more broadly than the academic curriculum offered by TSDE:

> *We have learned a lot through the Core of Life workshop which focused on pregnancy and parenting for teens. The Domestic Violence session, run by Women's Health, outlined what Domestic Violence is, what the different forms of abuse are and who we can turn to if we find ourselves or a friend in need of help.* (Ann, Newsletter, Artefact, 2017).

Such community-provided learning experiences were complemented by Ann's LGBTIQ sessions and were well-received by the young people, "*learning about diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity, the histories of these groups and how this impacts us all in contemporary culture*" (Ann, Newsletter, Artefact, 2017). Some of the young people took it upon themselves to lead inclusion of diversity in their Hometree by *"making posters and organising student support groups at the spaces"* (Ann, Newsletter, Artefact, 2017). This passage indicates that while these learning experiences were still structured, adult-led activities, they had the potential to be catalysts for student-led action.

The life skills development that the Hometrees provided was at the forefront of what Jerry saw as the program's purpose. BKSB and the literacy and numeracy short courses, while essential skills provided by program, were secondary to what Jerry consider to be the changemaking elements of the Hometrees:

> *I think just for their own self-esteem, just the fact that they can demonstrate that they can actually acquire the skills that other students in mainstream can acquire. So, in terms of just*

getting them to commit to something and following through with it and finishing it off is probably one of the best job skills that you can teach a child (Jerry, IT, 2017).

Another participant who worked in an administrative capacity was Raymond. As mentioned earlier, Raymond oversaw the running of South Tulsa Youth Connect where Pickett Street Hometree was situated. This was a youth health focused organisation and Raymond also saw the secondary nature of literacy and numeracy skill development. Raymond acknowledged the need for "*very basic… foundation skills*" in literacy and numeracy but described this as an entry point to re-engage young people and giving them "*opportunities to understand there is still a pathway*" (Raymond, IT, 2017). For Raymond, the curriculum was less confronting for these young people than if they were to try to re-engage in conventional school or enrol in a certificate level course. His view was that "*it's not about just getting literacy and numeracy, there's a purpose to it*" (Raymond, IT, 2017). Raymond spoke of Hometree as means to get young people to get back on the road to a successful transition post-secondary schooling through the routine and the social support that the program offered, rather than simply a second-chance to acquire the symbolic capital educational certification. He described the TSDE curriculum as an engagement tool that eased the young people back into the routine of formal learning as many had been removed from school for months before starting with the Hometree program.

During the period of participant observation at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree a number of impromptu discussions were had with the facilitator, Georgina. One conversation was about a boy in Year 12 who was becoming quite sporadic with his attendance during the period of data collection. Georgina described how she, as the youth worker and facilitator, along with the support of one of the counsellors had been working with Jesse since 2016 supporting him with both his social and emotional development (see insert below).

Jesse's Story

At the beginning of 2016 Jesse had started a school-based apprenticeship as a plumber with his aunt's husband. He had been doing well to balance the work, training and school commitments throughout 2016 and seemed to be setting himself up for a stable transition to a skilled profession. By Semester Two (during the data collection phase) this had changed. He now only came in once every couple of weeks for a couple of hours and was not on-track to complete either the literacy or numeracy course before graduation. Georgina, the facilitator, believed that he was only attending to maintain his enrolment as this was tracked by Human Services and linked to his access to support payments. Georgina went on to say how Jesse's apprenticeship had ended as the business could not sustain the position and that he had subsequently left home and was often talking about the party-lifestyle that he was leading. She said that in one of her final conversations with Jesse he seemed quite happy with his life, that he felt as though the lifestyle he was living, supported through Human Services payments, was a good one (RJ/2, 2017; RJ/4, 2017; RJ/7, 2017).

This story of Jesse and how he did not sustain his transition pathway was intriguing and further demographic data was gathered from the artefacts accessible through TSDE. This archival data showed that at the time of Jesse's enrolment at Jay's Youth Centre Hometree neither of his parents were employed and he had attended three conventional high schools before coming to Hometree. While attending these schools a range of emotional regulation issues had been recorded. At one school this led to him being excluded from school for fighting. While Jesse had been on-track to make a successful transition from Hometree into the skilled-workforce, the vocational skilling was in place but his wellbeing and social development needed further support. It could even be said that his level of exposure to the NEET lifestyle made his transition to working class status even more challenging due to the anxieties associated with social mobility.

Life skills are the skills required to function effectively in society and are therefore closely aligned with the goal of employment. This was described not only by participants but also through the artefacts relating to the vocationally focused curriculum. However, life skills were not limited to this narrow view of gaining employment. Participants referred to a range of examples which were verified through observations, including how to cook, do washing, manage finances and navigate public transport (PO/3, 2017; PO/6, 2017; PO/8, 2017; PO/13, 2017). Learning in the Hometrees was not just the basic, vocationally focused literacy and numeracy curriculum. The young people were exposed to learning opportunities that encompassed

their life skill development which would hopefully support the sustainability of their transitions to lives beyond NEET status.

The discourse of life skills was described at the micro-level as *"preparing for life"* (Arthur, IT, 2017). This was communicated by Arthur and Kylie as focusing on vocational preparation through learning activities that included mock job interviews, resume writing, and cover letters (Arthur, IT, 2017; Kylie, IT, 2017). However, this vocational focus was also considered by others as an engagement point that piqued the young people's interests in learning again by supporting their transitions thinking and realisation of the need to acquire education capital for successful transitions from their Hometree (Jerry, IT, 2017; Raymond, IT, 2017; Tremaine, IT, 2017). The vocational focus of the life skills was being used by staff as a tool for re-engaging these young people. The discourse of life skills was also understood from a comprehensive learning approach as broader skills that would support these young people with their future pathways through a social work paradigm of parenting programs, cooking classes, and budgeting (Ann, Newsletter, Artefact, 2017). This shows the complex dimensions of this discourse, where at the meso-level of analysis findings indicated that the discourse life skills was being distributed and consumed by participants differently. At the macro-level, this complexity revealed how the Hometrees provided the young people with support for life in a comprehensive manner that challenged the discourse of institutional influence on transition pathways by considering the various capital accumulation needs of the young people that were essential for successful transitions instead of narrowly focusing on the attainment of education capital.

7.2.2 Wellbeing

There was a strong sense of staff supporting the personal growth of the young people to assist them with their transition journeys. The discourse of life skills presented findings that explained the need for a broad definition of capital accumulation necessary for sustained transitions beyond NEET status. This subsection will consider how the Hometrees supported the young people's development of psychological capital through the discourse of wellbeing.

The voices of participants, when talking about how the school supported the wellbeing of the young people, consistently referred to the capacity to have one-on-one or small group support where staff could develop the young people's self-efficacy as learners as well as building their general levels of self-esteem (Georgina, IT, 2017; Holly, IT, 2017; Jarrod, IT, 2017; Joel, IT, 2017; Kirsten, IT, 2017; Kylie, IT, 2017). Jarrod, one of the educators, described his experience with the smaller teacher-student ratio when compared to mainstream schools:

Having a huge ability to just sort of sit down with each student one-on-one, it gives you a huge ability to build up their confidence to identify what risks and what problems they have and they will have in the future […] *it's allowing me to sort of very much sit down with them and then identify these things one-on-one and hopefully come up with a plan but certainly build confidence and build this sort of understanding that if you're talking through with people, if you trust people, you know, that's the first step to getting a solution. So I think that's a huge support for pretty much all of the* [Hometree] *students that we've got* (Jarrod, IT, 2017).

The level of support that these young people received was substantially higher than what they experienced in conventional schools because TSDE was able to maintain smaller teacher-student ratios (Sophie, IT, 2017; Troy, IT, 2017; Kirsten, IT, 2017; Joel, IT, 2017; Carly, IT, 2017). There was a strong sense of staff supporting the wellbeing and personal growth of the young people. Ann reflected how, "*we take into account so much of the students' other needs and we do have that almost social work type feel to our unit* [educators]*"* (Ann, IT, 2017)*.* This type of support from TSDE staff was fluidly braided with the support provided by community-based staff where educators supported young people's wellbeing just as much as their learning, and social workers supported their learning as well as wellbeing (PO/1, 2017; PO/2, 2017; PO/4, 2017; PO/5, 2017; PO/8, 2017; PO/9, 2017; PO/10, 2017).

In interviews, both the young people and the adults who supported them in the Hometree sites talked a lot about the strong focus on student wellbeing. Joel and Carly (youth participants), in their interview at Jay's Youth Centre, describe how both TSDE and community-based staff supported them. Carly was introduced earlier in Chapter Five as the young woman who had been supported both emotionally and academically to be successful in studying a Certificate III in Community Services – Aged Care. Carly identified how the learning environment had a more mature, adult learning feel for her, "*A lot more people are maturer* [sic] *here*" (Carly, IT, 2017). When probed on this comment Carly described the difference between the social environment of Hometree and conventional secondary school:

Well, I guess because … like I just came from a school where I got bullied and stuff and like you know other people probably come here because they've been bullied or like mistreated or something and, you know, why should we be the ones to judge, we just come from a school where were judged so, you know, why judge others, so that's why I'm always nice to other people here and it just makes school loving, whatever, we're all meant to be loving, we're all humans (Carly, IT, 2017)*.*

Carly, when referring to community-based staff said:

> *When May* [youth worker], *was here she knew what type of person I was and even like*
> *Georgina* [youth worker], *and they all helped me out with the job that I've got now in aged*
> *care because they knew that, like, I was that type of person, I'd be able to do that stuff. So*
> *yeah, they helped me and supported me to do my career that I wanted to do* (Carly, IT, 2017).

Joel's perspective on the focus on wellbeing reiterated Carly's statement; and he added that, "*the*
staff members at ours [Jay's Youth Centre Hometree] *also care about your personal problems that*
you may be having at home, if you have a family problem" (Joel, IT,2017)*.* Ann summarises these
perspectives of humanistic wellbeing support offered to Carly and Joel when she described the
support as holistic, "*I'm hoping that the kids feel supported in that aspect as well, and so then that*
holistic approach helps them grow because they're building resilience in capacity in all aspects of
their life, not just the academic side" (Ann, IT,2017).

For some of the young people their experiences in their Hometree were about surviving not
necessarily thriving. While a holistic approach to learning that is inclusive of supporting student
wellbeing may have had a positive effect on building resilience in these young people and therefore
their accumulation of psychological capital, not all of them expressed this as supporting their
transition beyond NEET status, but as a support for continuing with life. The hope for survival was
expressed by Stephanie, a young woman from Jay's Youth Centre Hometree, in her final assessment
task in the literacy short course, a presentation titled "Just Keep Swimming" (Stephanie, PowerPoint,
Artefact, 2017). With help from family, the Hometree youth workers, educators and counsellors,
Stephanie graduated from Hometree at the end of 2017 having completed both the short course in
literacy and numeracy. When speaking with her at the graduation dinner, she did not have any clear
direction of where she was transitioning to next. She had no specific ideas on whether she would
look for work or engage in further education or training. The only glimpse of a future goal was to get
her driver's licence, an essential skill for survival in a regional community due to the lack of public
transport availability and distance required to travel for work and life in general (PO/14, 2017; RJ/12,
2017).

Stephanie's story, as told through her final assessment task (see insert below), highlights the
need for education systems to see the whole young person and understand that relative gain in
psychological capital can be of more importance than measuring education capital through academic
attainment data. While Stephanie may not have exited Hometree with a clear transition pathway

beyond NEET status, she did transition from Hometree to a continuation of life. Stephanie's story was one of school refusal, where she struggled to make a connection to the social environment of her conventional secondary school, even with her stepsister, whom she was best friends with attending with her in the same grade. Eventually both girls became part of Jay's Youth Centre Hometree. In her presentation designed to have students reflect on their experience in Hometree, Stephanie defined her hope for success as a hope to survive. She reflected on not only her mental health and wellbeing but the experience of personal growth and resilience building that was intertwined with the curriculum with which she engaged.

The holistic support from their Hometree staff played a major role in developing psychological capital for these young people. This wellbeing support was compounded by the physical spaces of the Hometree sites. Holly, a youth worker at Windrixville Hometree described how the location at the Community Hub gave the young people stability,

Stephanie's Story

For as long as I can remember, I've had horrible anxiety due to traumatic events that occurred earlier in my life. Because of this, I struggled to attend mainstream. […] I felt like I was a lost cause and didn't see a point to life anymore, but I pushed on knowing sooner or later time will heal and things will get better… I began to pick up a habit of laying down and falling asleep here and there on the road, tables and pathways and even on the beach. I felt like all life had left my body. At the end of 2014, my anxiety had worsened dramatically and I began having uncontrollable panic attacks. After many counselling sessions and practicing meditation, nothing worked. That was when I knew I was no longer able to attend mainstream. […] We only had to attend a few days a week [at Hometree] which was perfect for me and gave me more time to spend at home where I felt comfortable and safe. Thankfully I had my mother every step of the way. Without her hard work, I don't think we would have ever made it into [Hometree]. Assessment 2 of Unit 2 focused directly on me. I had to complete a concept map of 15 or more positive things about myself. It was extremely hard to pick apart my brain looking for the answers to parts of who I am that I at the time didn't pay any attention to. I thank this assessment for enlightening me to how beautifully unique I am and for teaching me to pay attention to all the small things (Stephanie, PowerPoint, Artefact, 2017).

accountability, and routine (Holly, IT, 2017). She also referred to how the space gave them a safe space to be:

> *Yeah, stability, like a common area, like I've had kids come in, not on a* [Hometree] *day, and just want to sit in the room so, and like I have that ability because I'm there all day, every day, and so I think yeah, so it yeah, it gives them that, a safe space maybe, like where they can do their work and they can explore and once they do get to know us like you know, the conversations that you have like, I think I said this to someone, like, "We should record it or they can write it down," because it's some of the stuff they come out with you're just like, "Why are you telling me this?" Like but its good because they feel safe and it gives them that that place that they can talk about it* (Holly, IT, 2017).

It was through this level of trust that supportive relationships were built. By providing a place where the young people felt safe and that their wellbeing could be supported.

Trust through safe and supportive relationships were described by participants as essential in addressing the wellbeing of the young people. Another key aspect of wellbeing that staff were reported to have focused on was developing young people's self-efficacy or belief in themselves as learners. Liz, the facilitator from Windrixville Hometree, aptly described the importance of supporting these young people with developing their levels of self-efficacy necessary for successful transitions:

> *I guess from my perspective I think it really like empowers them, so like the content that they learn, you know, they're able to set up those goals and they're able to you know, start achieving them step by step and they really feel like they've accomplished something and I guess like you always, you know saying, "You've done such a great job," and that which I find that they don't always get at home either, they don't always get that praise* (Liz, IT, 2017).

This concept of developing self-efficacy in these young people, who were described by Liz as being deprived of praise, was supported by Jarrod, one of the educators, when he talked about how the Hometrees built confidence in these young outsiders:

> *A lot of students come in and they're just, you know, pretty much kicked out of society and so to develop their confidence and develop that sort of, perception that they can access all of these things that they always should have been able to access, you know like literacy, numeracy, expression whatever it is, they then sort of leave with this massive confidence and think that they can, you know, they can go and apply for a job or a career doing that and they're very much, well most of them leave being able to do that off their own back, you know* (Jarrod, IT, 2017).

Jarrod continued to express how the Hometrees were supporting young people's wellbeing when he then spoke about the need for relationship building and trust building with these young people:

> *Probably a majority of my students have always, not really, in our academic skills is not their main weakness, it's social skills, family background, mental health issues, kind of things like that so with this structure of* [Hometree]*, it's allowing me to sort of very much sit down with them and then identify these things one-on-one and hopefully come up with a plan but certainly build confidence and build this sort of understanding that if you're talking through with people, if you trust people, you know, that's the first step to getting a solution. So I think that's a huge support for pretty much all of the* [Hometree] *students that we've got* (Jarrod, IT, 2017)*.*

These thoughts on the marginalised position that many of these young people were experiencing was reiterated at the administrative level through the comments of Ann. She described how the Hometrees provided a safe space for young people who have become disenfranchised with not just education but life:

> *For some of our kids the fact that they turn up every day is phenomenal, they were motivated enough to get out of bed, and they showed up and they were polite and courteous while they were there, and for some of them that's the biggest step because they couldn't even get out of bed to go to mainstream school* (Ann, IT, 2017).

The holistic nature of supporting the wellbeing of young people in the Hometrees was supported by the low ratio made possible through TSDE as the one-on-one support described by participants did not just relate to academic development, but each individual student's personal development as well. It was through the staff's "*genuine interest in their wellbeing*" (Jerry, IT, 2017) that these young people were afforded the opportunity to develop their psychological capital.

A narrow focus on academic attainment (education capital) and vocational opportunities (future financial capital) only serves those already in positions of power as the social class system is reinforced. Successful transitions to sustainable social mobility beyond NEET status require a broader definition that the capitalist view of vertical advancement of the social class system for economic prosperity (see Section 3.3.3). This perspective is a short-sighted view of successful transitions where success is defined as simply avoiding NEET status at the end of senior secondary school. Transition hopes for these young people should not be just to survive but to thrive. In order for the young people of these Hometrees to successfully transition to a life beyond NEET status, support was required for them to develop a holistic range of capital accumulation.

The discourse of wellbeing differed to the discourse of life skills as it was not comprised of instances of vocational preparation but rather supporting successful transitions through helping the young people with their emotional wellbeing. The discourse of wellbeing, while present at the micro-level of analysis as building the young people's confidence, was interpreted at the meso-level as developing their self-efficacy as learners and their self-esteem as young people in society. This has led to opportunities, at the macro-level, for the young people to accumulate the necessary psychological capital to successfully transition beyond NEET status.

7.3 Chapter summary

The impact of the features of the Hometrees on post-ALE transition pathways included both supporting and limiting potentialities for the young people. This chapter addressed Research Question Two by providing insight into how the young people's transition options were affected by power structures within the Hometrees and the types of support that the Hometrees provided. Findings relating to how features of these Hometrees impacted on the young people's post-ALE transition pathway options included (1) limiting pathway opportunities through both curriculum affordance and policy constraints and (2) supporting pathway opportunities by features that helped the young people to develop life skills and enhance their wellbeing.

The discursive theme of institutional influence represented the negative impacts on transitions of a discourse of curriculum that consisted of disabling features of a curriculum for only basic functionalities. Institutional influence was representative of the impact that education and training policies like VETiS had on post-ALE transition pathways. While being designed to support seamless transitions, education policies could also be limiting for some young people in second-chance ALEs. The critical analysis of the discursive theme of supporting successful transitions found that developing life skills and catering to student wellbeing positively impacted on transition pathways for these young people through the provision of holistic support that allowed the young people to develop in areas beyond what the TSDE curriculum afforded.

This chapter has questioned whether the Hometrees could on one hand be supporting these outsiders of the education system, and on the other be reinforcing a cycle of social class stratification by limiting their transition pathway options. This leads to further questioning of how curriculum content in second-chance ALEs may afford impoverished opportunities compared to conventional schooling equivalents. The purpose of the Hometree program was to support marginalised young people to transition to a life beyond NEET status but this would appear to a complex task where the development of educational capital was not the only focus needed to meet this objective.

Chapter Eight: Deshooling for Outsiders in the Hometrees

8.0 Introduction

The previous evidentiary chapters presented findings relating to the features of the Hometrees and their impacts on learning and potential transition pathways. This chapter serves to provide conceptualisation of Deschooling for Outsiders in the Hometrees. Section 8.1 provides an interpretative conceptualisation of Deschooling for Outsiders and explains how the discourses and discursive themes that have emerged within this thesis answer the study's research questions. Links will be made between the discourses that emerged from the conceptual underpinnings in Chapters Two and Three, and the analysis on findings presented as discourses in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. This section then concludes by considering the implications of these findings for the concept of Deschooling for Outsiders. Section 8.2 will then consider the contribution to knowledge of the study and the implications that the findings may have for the empirical, methodological, and conceptual fields that the study contributes to. The Thesis Conclusions (Section 8.3) will provide reflections on the study, particularly how hope can be found in the Hometrees by positioning Deschooling for Outsiders within an ideological paradigm of counter hegemonic potential by eliciting a call for a conceptual reframing of what is a learning environment in contemporary society (Fromm, 1942; Illich, 1971/1980).

8.1 Conceptualising Deschooling for Outsiders

Deschooling for Outsiders positions the five Hometrees as convivial learning environments designed to remove the institutional barriers to learning that marginalised young people experience in conventional secondary schools. However, findings from this study suggest that while the initial design and intent of the Hometrees hold this conceptualisation true, the levels of conviviality of the features of these Hometrees waned as institutional pressure increased. The shift away from the conventional end of Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum reinforces his opinion that universal education through schooling is not feasible even if learning is community-based. Illich (1973) that the deschooling of learning was not feasible "if it were attempted by means of alternative institutions built on the style of present schools" (p. vii). This was echoed in Ann's final interview when she said, "*I think the only way that this would succeed is if it was not attached to the school anymore or if it was its own school in a way, like it wasn't with the state system*" (Ann, IT, 2018). In order for the Hometrees to meet the learning needs of these outsiders of the state education system, continued critical interpretation of the power structures inherent within the Hometrees is needed.

The findings from this study are presented in three subsections. Subsection 8.1.1 will report findings that address Research Question One by identifying how the discourses constructed through the analysis of the features of the five Hometrees impacted the learning for these outsiders. Subsection 8.1.2 will report findings that address the second research question by reflecting on how the discourses related to transition pathways impacted on the young people's potential post-ALE transitions. Subsection 8.1.3 will consider the counterhegemonic potential on what these findings mean for conceptualising Deschooling for Outsiders and what possibilities could exist for reframing how schools and learning are defined. Each of these subsections will be structured to present the findings in the same three levels of CDA used to produce them. Firstly, findings specific to the micro-level that relate to the habitus of the young people or the situated context of the Hometree sites will be presented, followed by the implications of institutional power at the meso-level. Finally, each subsection will consider how both levels are impacted upon by the sociocultural context at the macro-level.

8.1.1 Hometree: A deschooled alternative learning environment

The Hometrees were community-based learning environments that were multi-purpose rather than specifically designed with formal learning in mind. In this way they can be described as convivial learning spaces due to their deschooled setting reducing the barriers imposed to re-engagement in learning when compared to more formal educational institutions. One of the most significant features identified was the partnership between a school of distance education and community organisations. The discourse of community partnerships established an environment that could allow for what participants described as a flexible structure for learning and a low ratio of students to adult support people. By being situated in community spaces instead of in an institution designed for education, TSDE has facilitated learning opportunities for marginalised young people on the verge of NEET status. However, concerns were also raised by participants regarding the systematic removal of some of the more convivial features of the Hometrees that emerged as discourses of structural and cultural change. Comments by both staff and students indicated a change in structural features and culture of the Hometrees where the school was imposing a shift towards the right of Illich's (1973) Institutional Spectrum to be more like a conventional school. The rise in power of these competing discourses was in stark contrast to the original vision of the Hometree program of meeting the needs of young people who had been marginalised by the conventional schooling system.

The needs of the young people in the Hometrees were however still being met through the discourses of supportive environment and relationships, which had created a culture of caring,

where features of a student-centred and holistic approach to learning were valued by staff and students alike. The discourse of supportive environment emerged from the cultural features of advocacy and individual support for the young people. Personal development through a sense of maturity was also noted as a product of this deschooled learning environment where young people had more control over when and how they learned. The discourse of relationships emphasised how investing in positive relationships built trust with these young outsiders who voiced a feeling of being respected and part of a culture-sharing group that was for some an almost tribal experience.

The cohesiveness of the culture-sharing groups was essential on all levels to ensure that the Hometrees were sustainable. Without a shared commitment, these young outsiders could potentially be twice marginalised by being provided with another negative learning experience in place of a successful transition pathway. The difficulty, in addition to providing both the holistic support and the academic curriculum, was to make the space and the curriculum engaging so that the young people wanted to attend, as without their physical attendance the opportunities for support and pathway development became limited.

The point of difference for the Hometrees when their features were compared to other second-chance ALEs was that student enrolment was managed through a school of distance education, where there was scope for flexible learning and the barrier of physical attendance could be removed. Within the discourse of flexible learning, the academic curriculum could be delivered through a platform of laptop learning and physical attendance in a learning space was not require for a student to maintain enrolment. Enrolment in distance education meant that an even more flexible mode of learning could be possible. It is however important to consider how far along the spectrum of flexible learning one goes as the end goal is a successful transition into a life experience that has rigid structure and hierarchies that control how we live. It is here that the concept of space can become a barrier to student success. If space is viewed from the perspective of a student being in a frame of mind or headspace that is conducive to learning, then opportunities for success may in fact become more prevalent.

The concept of learning should not be defined by the rigid parameters of what is formal education within the confines of a regimented bureaucratic institution (Illich, 1971/1980, 1973, 1992). Learning in Hometree was not merely about the progression through the standardised curriculum, but the social learning and emotional development that accompanied it. While this does occur in conventional schools to varying degrees, the perceptions of the young people who attended the Hometrees was that the time and care given to them by all adults who supported them in their

learning environment was far more effective than that received during their time at previous schools.[60]

Even though there were features of the Hometrees that were effective in supporting the learning engagement of marginalised young people, concerns also emerged from the sense of false consciousness (Bauman, 2011)[61] that some of the young people had regarding the narrow curriculum affordance. The focus on vocational skill development, that was evident in the discourses of curriculum and policy limiting pathways, meant that these young people were being prepared as human capital and limiting their hopes for a future beyond employment in low-skill labour positions (Apple, 2006; Bauman, 2012; McGregor et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2019). However, the vocational skilling did serve the purpose of supporting these young people to avoid NEET status and begin their post-ALE transitions with a pathway to employment. In many ways the Hometrees were being constrained by institutional values that supported the conservation of the dominant culture and social reproduction (Azaola, 2012; Bourdieu, 1979/1984). The Hometrees challenge a way of learning that is deeply rooted in our society and the fear of usurpation through loss of institutional control is also real. This community-based model of learning could be seen as counterhegemonic in the way that it challenged the institutionalised control over what is accepted in society as a senior secondary learning experience.

8.1.2 Possible futures: Transitions with limitations

The capacity for the Hometrees to be counter hegemonic was limited by the systemic constraints placed on student transition pathways. Major concerns were identified in relation to the impact that curriculum affordance, student engagement, and attendance had on successful transitions. The concerns raised by other researchers regarding the narrow curriculum affordance in second-chance ALEs, as outlined in Chapter Two, were echoed in this study's findings through the discourse of curriculum. The limiting of opportunities for educational capital accumulation has the potential to lead to vocational strangulation through a discourse of policy limiting pathways and a utilitarian education of employment preparation and class stratification through the reduced opportunities for social mobility.

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[60] Queensland government policy for youth engagement has progressed since the time when this study was conducted. The Queensland Department of Education youth engagement strategy has delivered a range of initiatives to support youth engagement. Details are available at https://advancingeducation.qld.gov.au/youth-engagement. These changes have led to further research projects being undertaken that have build upon the body of work developed through this PhD candidature.

[61] Bauman (2011) refers to false consciousness as where the "overall setting of a capitalist society prevents its underprivileged, deprived and discriminated parts from perceiving the truth about their own condition" (p. 33).

These young people have been oppressed by the conventional schooling system and by the negative effects of labelling them as marginalised or pre-NEET. Their nonconformity with the doxa of conventional schools places them in a vulnerable position in society due to their weakened opportunities to accumulate education capital. Second-chance ALEs like the Hometrees offer a more successful transition pathway but with limitations. The discursive theme of supporting successful transitions portrayed hope for these young people, but the discursive theme of institutional influence limited their opportunities to choose socially mobile pathways. In some ways Hometree and other second-chance ALEs like it could be reinforcing the dominant values perpetuated by conventional school systems.[62] In the interview with Jerry, one of the school administrators, he mentions the need to repair and rebuild these young people. This leads to the rhetorical questions of why do these young people need to be repaired in the first place? Why are they broken? Was it the schooling system that broke them, or other institutions of control operating in society? Have they been broken by measures of power and control in family, school, or community institutions? If it is society, through its institutions, that has caused these marginalised young people to require rebuilding and repairing, were the Hometrees empowering them through the support that it provided or was it merely reprogramming them to conform to society's constraints? Conceptually, could Hometree be an appendage of the state machine, focused on recycling those who fell off the automated production line of conventional schooling into the proletariat ranks of human capital (Marx & Engels, 1848/2010)?

Young people such as Alvin, Kirsten, Val, and Raine were marginalised from conventional schooling for various reasons but all of them have experienced limitations on their opportunities to develop education capital. The discursive theme of institutional influence, that served a data-driven culture, was found to impact: the content of the functional, basic curriculum; the affordances it offered (or did not offer); the timing of their enrolments in terms of progression to other work-related learning; and financial support (or lack thereof) for ongoing learning. In one sense, these young people recognised the marginalising effect of a curriculum for only basic functionalities; yet struggled to comprehend the long-term implications of this curriculum. There appeared to be a epistemological fog (Apple, 2016, 2018) for these young people that meant the limited opportunities that a basic curriculum affords in twenty-first century society and worlds of work remained opaque for them at that time in their lives.

The utilitarian focus of the curriculum could be seen to be reinforcing a dominant discourse of neoliberal values within Australian society (Rodgers-Gibson, 2019; te Riele et al., 2017; Thomas et

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[62] See Section 2.1.2 on how second-chance ALEs can serve to reinforce existing discourses of social order.

al., 2017). There is however hope that with support, these young people will successfully transition into sustainable pathways as resilient and emotionally mature adults. The curriculum affordance issue highlights a lack of exposure that these young people had to a balanced curriculum in this environment and can be seen to have stifled their intellectual growth and capital accumulation. By limiting the learning and vocational pathways available to these young people, these Hometrees could be setting them up for what in many instances will be a cycle of social class stratification. On the other hand, if they do not have basic functioning for life in society as it is and will be, then capabilities for informed and active citizenship are seriously impaired (Nussbaum, 2003; Saigaran, Karupiah, & Gopal, 2015; Sen, 2005). These concerns lead to further questioning of how curriculum content in second-chance ALEs may be developing basic capabilities necessary to survive and contribute to society but when compared to conventional schooling equivalents afford impoverished opportunities. The purpose of these types of ALEs is to support marginalised young people to become active and informed citizens, not merely to ensure through vocational skill development that they avoid NEET status and becoming a burden on the state economy. The Hometree curriculum, including the vocational skill development may be a positive influence on the lives of these young outsiders because it provides the basic functioning necessary for engaging in contemporary society while contributing to their capability development.

By focusing solely on vocational skill development existing power structures are maintained. Opportunities for these young people to choose a transition pathway to social mobility is significantly reduced as vocational skill development to the exclusion of all else does not provide pathways to social mobility. The hope for social mobility may be a pipe dream or false hope for an oppressed group of young people in our society. Bauman (2011) referred, in a similar vein as Willis (1977), to the inherent failings of social mobility when he stated that "the supposed bribery of the 'working-class bourgeoisie', the highly skilled and highly paid part of the industrial labour force, who thanks to their privileges had developed vested interests in the preservation of the status quo..." (Bauman, 2011, p. 33). As Willis (1977) lamented, the taking the cream from the top of the working class, which is basically what social mobility does, only strengthens the middle-class and further widens the gap for the working class. It does not lead to class emancipation but rather reinforces the class system.

For successful transitions to occur these young people require not only an engaging curriculum and motivation to attend the program, they also need a holistic approach to learning and support through a comprehensive curriculum and supportive relationships that lead to opportunities to develop a broad range of capital. Without both the social support and the engagement in the academic curriculum, their transition from the program will most likely be to NEET status which itself

is a neoliberal construction. These young people need the holistic support and the academic learning for their successful transitions from their Hometree. Transition success can be defined as ensuring that sustainable transition pathways are afforded to these young people. This is not merely ensuring that they acquire relevant vocational skills to contribute to society, but also that they have developed the personal and social dispositions to be resilient, mature members of society who are active citizens with the critical capabilities to maintain a monitory democracy (Barr et al., 2008; Singh & Harreveld, 2014). While the hope for successful transition pathways for the young people was central to the participant stories, perspectives on what hope meant and how this goal was achieved varied considerably. Participants shared hopes that aligned with the state system focus on attainment of formal qualifications as well as the more-community-based perspective of maturity and personal growth. Even though the hopes for success emerged within the data, a sense of hopelessness was also ever-present.

8.1.3 Counterhegemonic hopes: Conceptualising what could be

Hope emerges from the potential that the Hometrees have for being spaces of sociocultural change, particularly in how society views the senior phase of secondary schooling, and potentially how the institution of schooling is viewed as well. While there are barriers to be overcome, as were identified in the findings, the opportunity of having a school of distance education as the driving curriculum force is an untapped resource for improving the transition pathways for marginalised young people. Counterhegemonic change becomes a possibility through not limiting the curriculum affordance to basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational skill development. Curriculum choice through a school of distance education would allow these young people to have multiple transition pathways by affording them the full suite of subjects that they have to offer.

The lack of curriculum choice and the effect it has on transition pathway options was a major finding of this study and the contemporary studies critiqued in Chapter Two. This concern was expressed in the study's plain English statement that was provided to all participants in 2019 at the conclusion of the study. This statement detailed the findings from the study and the potential outcomes from the research. The outcome relating to curriculum affordance was "*With continued efforts to provide a diverse curriculum that meets the needs of these young people, the* [Hometree] *program can continue to demonstrate leading practice in educating 21st century learners*" (Plain English Statement, Artefact, 2019). In 2020, an impromptu conversation with Margaret, the school administrator of TSDE, led to a follow up interview about changes to the curriculum offerings based on this finding. Ethical clearance was approved for this extra interview to discuss how the Hometree

curriculum had changed post the initial data collection phase of the study in 2017. I spoke with Margaret about the study's findings and the impact on the curriculum offerings from TSDE:

> *Yes, the program changed at the end of last year for implementation in 2020. We took the line of delivering to students in a mainstream type model, so there was a range of subjects these students were able to* [study online]. *That was good to be able to give them* [young people] *the opportunity* (Margaret, IT, 2020).

Margaret acknowledged the need for giving these young people the opportunity to access the same curriculum as those in conventional schools and their fellow students enrolled in distance education. This decision has broadened the transition pathways for these young people by opening up a larger suite of VET courses as well as pathways into tertiary education. These young outsiders now have the same education choices as those in conventional schools in Queensland, while continuing to receive the individualised care and support that their Hometree experience offers.

The social support that this type of learning environment provides allows for resilience development and community connection/reconnection. By also considering the critical pedagogical possibilities available through the Hometrees, young people who have been marginalised by institutionalised education now have the opportunity to emancipate themselves from their pre-NEET trajectory by raising the veil on the epistemological fog that holds them in a perpetual state of social stratification. The Hometree program could continue to evolve and become a humanistic learning web, designed to not only support young people in their development of education, psychological, and sociocultural capital, but a space where young people can become critically aware and have the power and voice to choose their own pathway with real opportunities for sustainable social mobility.

The young people could have an opportunity to emancipate themselves from the constraints of institutionalised learning where they are exposed to a curriculum that awakens them to an understanding of how they are positioned in society by those in power. Instead of being taught how and what to think (and even behave) these marginalised young people could be exposed to a critical pedagogy designed to encourage independent thinking, empower them to build their critical awareness, and foster their ability to challenge the status quo. The intention of developing these intellectual tools would be to provide them with choice in a supportive learning environment where they can build their resilience and feel connected to their community instead of rejected by it. A diverse and critical curriculum would allow them to consider multiple transitions pathways beyond NEET status. While emancipation from a class structured, neoliberal orientated capitalist society may

be out of the reach of impact for these community-based second-chance ALEs, the potential of this avantgarde approach to learning has not been fully explored.

The potential of having the curriculum for a second-chance ALE being delivered through a school of distance education, with a full suite of subject offerings, addresses the curriculum affordance issue that is commonplace in these types of ALEs. It can address the vocational strangulation and class stratification that these young people experience. It was a grave injustice that was being done, where curriculum affordance was such an issue in the Hometrees, even though the opportunity was there to address it through TSDE. Now that Hometree students are given the same curriculum choice that their peers at TSDE have, the opportunities for successful transitions beyond NEET status are more attainable. This is each Hometree's point of difference. The partnership between community organisations and a school of distance education is the gamechanger that positions this study's findings as a platform to challenge the dominant mindset of viewing learning environments like the Hometrees as second-chance, alternative, and only for those who don't fit the system.

The reframing of possibilities for marginalised young people in second-chance ALEs means to also reframe how these young people in these types of learning environments are positioned in society. These Hometrees can potentially provide humanistic learning environments where education capital can be accumulated in a community space and where young people feel supported and connected. Capital accumulation in this type of space is defined not in a vertical, linear fashion where social mobility is made possible by increasing financial capital through education capital, but a place that values the accumulation of sociocultural and psychological capital that leads to sustainable social mobility if that is what the individual chooses. These types of second-chance ALEs have the potential to evolve into spaces of humanistic learning webs that are first and foremost community spaces where people have the freedom to learn and engagement in their own brand of capital accumulation that counters the dominant neoliberal hegemony of educating to produce human capital.

8.2 Contributions to knowledge

The notion of equitable access to curriculum was prominent in the discussion of findings in the previous section, particularly within the discursive themes of institutional influence and supporting successful pathways. Barriers to an equitable education such as limited curriculum affordance, however, can only be addressed through assessing how the findings contribute to knowledge. This section will therefore present how the findings of the study may contribute to the empirical, methodological, and conceptual fields of knowledge in which it has been located.

8.2.1 Empirical field of knowledge

Empirically, this study has highlighted the potential for education providers to improve young people's engagement in learning through support and flexibility. Findings from this study contribute to understanding the factors that influence young people's post-ALE transition pathways. It highlights the role of schools of distance education to deliver flexible school curriculum and the potential that this mode of learning has in leading to more equitable transition opportunities for young people. The findings from this study have demonstrated empirical significance to not only the contextual field of second-chance ALEs but also for the broader context of senior secondary schooling. This study has directly impacted on the formal curriculum that is now afforded to the young people enrolled in the Hometree program. In her second interview, Margaret identified that, "*this research you're doing is going to assist us to look at what the best models are and best practice as well*" (Margaret, IT, 2020). Margaret went on to say the following:

> *We've grown from just being a re-engagement type hub to let's give these kids more opportunities because what we were offering was fairly limited. So, yes, it's grown but I think your outcomes from your research has also helped that along, Corey.* […] *I think the study helped with this* [broadening of the curriculum offerings]*, your study, reading the findings, that was certainly something that we did consider* (Margaret, IT, 2020).

The growth that Margaret refers to has been influenced by the findings of this critical ethnography. This study has helped the Hometrees to evolve from being a group of second-chance ALEs design to re-engage young people in basic learning, to giving these young people more opportunities for successful transition pathways beyond the initial goal of avoiding NEET status.

The discourses of flexible learning and supportive environment identified through this study indicated that there is the potential for improvement in learning engagement through support and flexibility, with enhanced opportunities for educational capital accumulation through the use of a school of distance education's online learning capabilities. These features of the Hometrees has led to more equitable transition opportunities for young people. These universally positive educational outcomes are made possible through better access to social supports, incorporating a flexible structure for learning, a lower ratio of young person to mentor, which develops stronger connection and trusting relationships. By building trusting relationships with the young people, more in-depth conversations and learning can happen. Having a small group allows more opportunities for them to receive the extra support or guidance that many young people need to successfully navigate their transition journey beyond senior secondary school. Within a flexible, supportive, smaller group, young people can feel more confident and comfortable when asking for help or admitting when they

do not understand something. This study of the impact that the features of these Hometrees have on learning and transitions has provided empirical value to both second-chance ALEs and conventional schooling alike.

8.2.2 Methodological field of knowledge

This study has contributed to the methodological field of knowledge in how it has provided an awareness of the issues that can be encountered when conducting research with marginalised young people. The limitations of the research design in empowering the young people who participated in the study has also been produced through the critical reflection that the methodology invites. CDT, integrated within a critical ethnography that uses CDA as an analytic tool provided insights into the effectiveness of the research design in addressing the aim of the study.

Critical ethnography was chosen as the most appropriate methodology due to the way it lends itself to challenging dissonant discourses of positional power within institutions. The critique of critical ethnography however raised the question of not just the positional power within institutions, where student voice can be silenced through limited curriculum choice and transition opportunities, but also the positional power of researchers in deciding the research questions and methods of investigation; is the participant voice is really being heard? Chapter Four has considered the ethics of insider research and how an insider researcher can empower marginalised young people by having the tacit knowledge to expose the power relationships within a second-chance ALE, as well as questioning researcher decisions and the impact they have had on power relationships. By questioning whether the study has been an empowering experience for those involved, it raises additional questions of can critical ethnography actually empower marginalised young people by exposing power relationships? This presents an opportunity for further research to discern just how empowering critical ethnography can be.

This study has provided an awareness of what issues could be encountered when conducting research with marginalised young people. It builds a critical awareness of the power relationships that constrain the empirical potential of research. Critical ethnography has served to expose the inequity inherent within institutionalised learning. The question of who truly benefits from the research is however a question that require further exploration beyond the capability of critical ethnography and potential asks too much of any research design. This is a methodological implication that needs to be considered further and with a lens of conducting research with marginalised young people rather that conducting research on them.

8.2.3 Conceptual significance and implications

Conceptually, Deschooling for Outsiders has explored, through CDT, how power relations operated within the Hometrees to influence how young people experienced their learning environment and their potential transition pathways beyond this environment. CDT has served to facilitate the study's empirical investigations of how, through partnerships between community and a school of distance education, can disrupt NEET trajectories and potentially disrupt dominant ideologies of what is a supportive learning environment, what is a purposeful curriculum, and what transition opportunities are possible for young people in second-chance ALEs.

The study of these Hometrees has exposed the discourses that affected how learning and transitions were experienced by these outsiders of the education system. While the extent to which the Hometrees were deschooled varied, the concept of community-based learning consisted of convivial features that contributed to discourses that supported the re-engagement of these outsiders in learning. The discourses presented in Chapter Three, which emerged from the key terms identified in Chapter Two, contributed to the analysis of the features of these deschooled learning environments in Chapter Five. Through this analysis and subsequent synthesis of the discourses presented in Chapter Six of the impact on learning and impact on transitions in Chapter Seven, Deschooling for Outsiders has offered a critical conceptualisation of how these Hometrees can be interpreted as convivial learning environments designed to remove the institutional barriers to learning for outsiders of the education system.

8.3 Thesis Conclusions – Reflections on the study

This thesis began with the aim of constructing an understanding of the learning experiences of the young people who attend a second-chance ALE in regional Queensland. This understanding was developed from both students' and staffs' perceptions of whether their learning needs were being met and how they were being supported in their transition from this learning environment. However, Deschooling for Outsiders can also serve as a call to counter the institutionalised oppression of young people who do not fit the conventional system of schooling. This thesis questions why these young people are subjected to learning on the edge of the education system. Their nonconformity with the system requirements, or doxa of the field (Bourdieu, 1970/2018, 1977), impacts on their ability to accumulate the educational capital in the pre-determined linear fashion that is reinforced by the oppressive discourses of institutionalised education, with the capitalist mandate of maintaining the social order.

When the findings from this study are reframed to consider what could be, they have the potential to bring about sociocultural change in the counterhegemonic traditions Gramsci (1975/2011), Freire (1970), Fromm (1942, 1976/2002), and Illich (1971/1980). Through the development of critical awareness, these marginalised young people could be given the tools to "question every idea and every institution from the standpoint of whether it helps or hinders their capacity for greater aliveness and joy" (Illich, 1971/1980, p. 10). This is not in an attempt to attack those people in positions of power as that would disguise the real issue of the power of institutions as technologies of governance (Mitchell, 2006). This thesis considers the possibilities of an informed hope for these young people to push through the glass ceiling of class society by challenging the neoliberal glibness of these structures. It is what Wilde (2004, 2015), in his counterhegemonic conceptualisations of Fromm's radical humanism, referred to as a protest against the dehumanising tendencies of capitalist society. These Hometrees have the potential to provide places where young people gain the requisite skills and knowledge to be active and informed citizens, have the same pathway choices as those in conventional schooling, and most of all places where equity wins out over neoliberal capitalist discourses of competition.

For young people who do not fit the mould of conventional schooling, the features of these Hometrees have the potential to positively change their transition pathway. They can provide an alternative education system that is better suited to the learning needs of twenty-first century Australian society than the conventional schooling model where students and teachers continue to be oppressed by data-driven educative practices that align with a neoliberal view of education for economic purpose instead of a humanistic one. These Hometrees can be a Freirean hope of liberation from the constraints of society's fixation on systems and structures that attempt to count what cannot truly be counted. It provides a flexible, deschooled alternative to what we currently subject our society's future to, in outdated institutions of conformity.

The online curriculum delivery now affords these marginalised young people the full suite of curriculum subjects from TSDE, both vocational training and tertiary education-focused. The findings from this critical ethnography have supported TSDE to acknowledge and provide the young people with the same choice of pathways afforded to all the young people who have the requisite capital to navigate the conventional schooling system. The laptop learning experience is a point of difference identified in this study. It is not just representing how the curriculum is accessed but is vital to this deschooled alternative. Each Hometree's community-based learning space removes the barriers to engaging in learning i.e. the symbolic power of physical education institutions, the physical presence of teacher authority, and the regimented routine of mass education. TSDE provides the means to

deschool, however the Hometrees can never be completely deschooled in the way that was argued by Illich (1973).

The fact that these Hometrees can never be truly deschooled is not simply based on the fact that they are influenced by TSDE. The reason why they cannot be deschooled is not just because a school is at the centre, but each community organisation is an institution as well. Illich's (1973) "Deschooling Society" was a manifesto for deinstitutionalising society. He saw institutions as technologies of governance where people are 'schooled' into thinking and behaving in certain ways that reinforce hegemonic systems. The Hometrees were more convivial than conventional schools but were still institutions for learning. For the deschooling for outsiders of the education system to truly occur Illich's (1973) concept of deschooling society needs to occur. While small-scale attempts, like the Hometrees can be made, systemic change is required. Revolutionary ideas often need revolutions to burgeon. The Hometrees, with their requisite ties to institutions of power, exist in tension, balancing between the conceptual spaces of conviviality and manipulation. The power of institutions will always need to be contended with in such a model. Navigating the constraints of institutional process and policy will continue to be necessary if data-driven discourses of attainment of education capital dominate the sociocultural field of senior secondary schooling.

The conceptual underpinnings of this study have sat firmly and unapologetically in critical theory which has influenced the use of CDT as a theoretical framework for this critical ethnographic investigation that used CDA as an analytic tool. Through the critical approach to this study, participants have been made aware of the inequity inherent within the curriculum afforded to young people in this second-chance ALE and those in power have made changes to improve opportunities for successful transitions beyond senior secondary school. The critical approach of this doctoral study has embodied Marx's (1888/1969) salient point that "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (p. 15).

My role now as a burgeoning researcher is to continue to advocate for and empower those oppressed by the system, the marginalised, the misfits, the fringe dwellers, the underclass, the pre-NEETS… *The Outsiders*. The plight of the young people of these Hometrees has been etched into my psyche like the characters of Hinton's (1967/2003) novel were almost 25 years ago. This ethnographic tale has exposed the barriers that these young people faced in their transitions from senior secondary schooling and the support these unique second-chance ALEs provided them. I hope that in another 25 years the same stories of inequity are not still needing to be told.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Contextual literature analytic matrix

Themes:

☐ Alternative learning   ☐ 2nd chance ALEs   ☐ Marginalised young people   ☐ Transitions

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Avrich, P.	2014	The modern school movement: Anarchism and education in the United States	USA	Literature review	• History of the Modern School movement as a revolt from the oppression of traditional schooling. • Based in anarchist sociology. • "Freedom in education" meant freedom from the authority of the teacher as well as of the church and state.
Azaola, M. C.	2012	Revisiting Bourdieu: alternative educational systems in the light of the theory of social and cultural reproduction	Mexico	Ethnography	• The educational field is central to the theory of cultural and social reproduction. • In Bourdieu's representations, schools appear to have no autonomy from the overall social structure, and it seems that there is little space for liberation and social mobility. • Within this logic, schools are responsible for the conservation and transmission of culture.
Borup, J., & Kennedy, K.	2017	The Case for K-12 Online Learning	USA	Literature review	• eLearning in the K-12 context has had significant growth over the past two decades. • Online learning is a popular alternative with many policy makers, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. • Proven to be a viable alternative to traditional brick-and-mortar schooling.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Buckingham, J.	2017	Virtual Schooling in Australia	Australia	Literature review	• History of distance education in Australia. • In Australia around 70% of the population live in the major coastal cities and a further 27% live in other regional cities and towns. The remaining 3% (530,000 people) is spread across the country. • While Australia may have been an early adopter of virtual schooling by necessity, some states have not yet taken the view that it might be a way to expand alternative modes of provision.
Caroleo, M.	2014	An Examination of the Risks and Benefits of Alternative Education	Canada	Literature review	• Discusses the history and the types of alternative education, who attends, and focuses on the three main themes: the learning environment, the education received, and the perception around the programs. • The risks and benefits associated with the main themes are outlined. • There is a greater focus on vocational or basic skill attainment as part of the academics, but while this meets the needs of the students for future employment, it may hinder their academics.
CEDEFOP, ETF, & UNESCO.	2017	Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks	Global	Literature review	• Draws on extensive international research in qualifications reforms, comparability of qualifications, and use of learning outcomes. • The purposes and impact of qualifications frameworks. • Qualifications frameworks as catalysts for lifelong learning.
COAG.	2009	National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions	Australia	Government document	• Government agreement to: 1. work towards achieving improvements in high level outcomes for schooling; 2. work towards increasing the qualifications and skill level of the Australian population achieve improvements in the numbers of young Australians making successful transitions from schooling into further education, training or employment;

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
					3. work collaboratively with the non-government school, training, business and community sectors to improve the support provided to young Australians to increase educational outcomes, attainment and improve transitions to further education, training or employment, with particular focus on 15 to 24-year olds and young people at risk.
Dewey, J.	1938	Experience and education	USA	Seminal text	• Progressive education is noted for the use of humane methods and its kinship to democracy. • Methods are humane in comparison with the harshness of the traditional school.
Edgar-Smith, S., & Palmer, R. B.	2015	Building Supportive School Environments for Alternative Education Youth	USA	Survey	• Significant difference in student perceptions of the alternative and public school environments from intake to 4 and 8 months after participating in the alternative school program, with higher rates of perceived teacher support at the alternative school. • The small class sizes and invested staff had time and expertise to interact effectively one-on-one, facilitating positive youth perceptions of, and connections to, school.
Edwards, S.	2018	Re-engaging young people with education: The steps after disengagement and exclusion	United Kingdom	Ethnography	• Relational pedagogy builds on synergies between the informal field of youth work and the formal field of teaching. • Holistic social learning pedagogy, which re-engages some students at the margins of education. • Freire dialogic model and agentic voice = engagement.
Freire, P.	1970	Pedagogy of the oppressed	Brazil	Seminal text	• Critical pedagogy has two distinct stages: 1. The oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation;

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
					2. The reality of oppression has been transformed and this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. • Conscientization: refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to act against the oppressive elements of reality. • Banking education: the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposited information.
Grimaldi, E.	2012	Neoliberalism and the marginalisation of social justice	Italy	Ethnography	• Questioned the effectiveness of this education policy to combat social exclusion within a neoliberal political climate. • Findings of the study were that this strategy was not effective in its goal of social inclusion but was shown to be contributing to a reinforcement of discriminatory practices and enhancing the selective function of schooling.
Guterman, O., & Neuman, A.	2017	Different reasons for one significant choice	Israel	Mixed methods	• Home-schooling over the last two decades against the background of growing criticism of the education system and the pursuant quest for alternatives to conventional schools. • The main factors in a parent's decision to begin home-schooling were pedagogical, religious, and related to the school environment.
Hemmings, R.	1973	Children's Freedom: A. S. Neill and the Evolution of the Summerhill Idea	United Kingdom	Critical evaluation	• Summerhill, opening in 1921, was grounded in socialist perspective, promoting the ideas of democratic school governance where students had the same rights as staff; and of a freedom to learn, where student choice was central to the school's philosophical underpinnings and agentic engagement the key to valued learning experiences. • Neill wanted pupils to be educated for active participation in a free democracy.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Henderson, D. X., & Barnes, R. R.	2015	Exploring dimensions of social inclusion among alternative learning centres in the USA	USA	Mixed methods	• Qualitative findings revealed varying dimensions of social inclusion through access, success through empowerment, and participation and engagement. • Quantitative findings revealed a majority of students transitioned back to the traditional school environment. • There were no clear student or school advantages associated with student transitions; however, high school students were more likely to transition back to the traditional school environment than middle school students.
Hope, M. A.	2019	Reclaiming freedom in education	United Kingdom	Qualitative case studies using various methods. Predominantly interview and observation	The theoretical framework: • Discourse of freedom. • Necessity for freedom and social justice to be intertwined. • Social justice is broader than simply relating to redistribution of resources, but also involves a commitment to cultural recognition. • The associated concepts of negative freedom ('freedom from'), positive freedom ('freedom to') and real freedom (agency or opportunity). • 'Absolute freedom' has been rejected as unhelpful and largely hypothetical, and the distinction is drawn between freedom and license (Neill 1962). • The lens of 'responsible' or 'negotiated' freedom are employed to explore the way in which 'freedom' is offered within radical free schools (Rogers 1980). • Freedom on both micro (individual) and macro (whole school) levels are identified in relation to a range of case studies (Morrison 2008). (p. 14).

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Illich, I.	1973	Deschooling Society		Seminal text	• Universal education through schooling is not feasible. It would be no more feasible if it were attempted by means of alternative institutions built on the style of present schools. • Most learning happens casually, and even the most intentional learning is not the result of programmed instruction. • To understand what it means to deschool society, and not just to reform the educational establishment, we must now focus on the hidden curriculum of schooling. • Institutional spectrum: convivial and manipulative spaces. • Learning web: the autonomous assembly of resources under the personal control of each learner.
Kim, J. H.	2011	Narrative inquiry into (re) imagining alternative schools	USA	Case study	• While some alternative schools are viewed as 'idealistic havens', many are viewed as 'dumping grounds' or 'juvenile detention centres'. • Teachers recognise the importance of relations in teaching and implement relational pedagogy. • Students in alternative schools disproportionately are those who are poor, ethnic minorities, who have limited English proficiency, or who are from lower- or working class family backgrounds, rendering alternative schools subject to social, political, and educational inequalities.
Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Wade, A., Maire, Q.,	2020	Educational opportunity in Australia 2020	Australia	Critical evaluation	• Young people who are not fully engaged in education or work are disproportionately female and from low SES backgrounds, located more often in regional and remote locations, and Indigenous.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Doecke, E., Jackson, J., & Endekov, Z.					• Young people who do not complete Year 12 or equivalent are much less likely to gain full access to Australia's economic, political, and social opportunities. • Those living outside of major cities – 27 per cent of the population of 19-year-olds – make up 42 per cent of those missing out on school completion.
Lamb, S., Maire, Q., Walstab, A., Newman, G., Doecke, E., & Davies, M.	2018	Improving participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners	Australia	Government document	• This research takes a regional approach to investigate the educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups. • While diverse groups of disadvantaged learners are widely offered support, it is necessary to customise the support to the individual. • Collaboration helps to develop a comprehensive and coherent approach to the engagement of disadvantaged learners.
McGregor, G., & Mills, M.	2012	Alternative Education Sites and Marginalised Young People	Australia	Not stated	• In Australia the relationship between non-completion and unemployment is stronger than in many other OECD countries. • Many of the practices in these schools have a place in mainstream schools and that such practices would be beneficial to all students. • A one-size-fits-all schooling model often further marginalises those students who already face significant social and economic difficulties in their everyday lives.
McGregor, G., Mills, M., Te Riele, K., Baroutsis, A., & Hayes, D.	2017	Re-Imagining Schooling for Education	Australia	Multi-sited ethnography	• Increasing numbers of young people who are excluded from school, thus removing their right to access public resources and condemning them to weakened socioeconomic positions in society. • Young people from marginalised social groups may be offered a narrower range of learning options with short-term goals of literacy, numeracy and lower-level vocational qualifications.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
McGregor, G., Mills, M., Thomson, P., & Pennacchia, J.	2018	Alternative Educational Programmes, Schools and Social Justice	Global	Mixed methods	• ALEs cater for students who the regular school has failed. • Research suggests that young people who go back into regular schools from alternative programs and short-term placements find it difficult, as nothing has changed since they first left. • Relationships, curriculum and agency essential for success.
Mills, M., Baroutsis, A., McGregor, G., Te Riele, K., & Hayes, D.	2016	Alternative education and social justice	Australia	Multi-sited ethnography	• Students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the lower bands of achievement and attendance data and in the upper bands of data on exclusion, suspension and special needs. • Reasons include students' access to particular forms of cultural capital, lack of fit between the middle-class expectations of schooling and (non)working class culture, teacher prejudices, lack of resources and even diet. • ALEs constructed as a dumping ground for students 'unwanted' by the education system where there is then little academic challenge.
Mills, M., & McGregor, G.	2014	Re-engaging young people in education	Australia & UK	Multi-sited ethnography	• Schools driven by dominant neoliberal discourses. • Schools can be regarded as 'damaging' institutions. • The inherited traditions and practices of systems of mass education were shaped during the rise of industrial societies and fashioned to provide levels of education needed to facilitate the growth of capitalist systems of mass production.
Moffatt, A., & Riddle, S.	2019	Where are they now? Flexi school graduates reflect on their experiences of alternative education	Australia	Narrative study	• Student disengagement is on the rise in many Australian schools. • Sometimes students actively choose to leave mainstream schooling or fall out of it after losing their sense of purpose. • Reducing student marginalisation and educational disengagement is critical because education is a strong predictor of future life chances.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Musita, R., Ogange, B. O., & Lugendo, D.	2018	A second chance to dream	Kenya	Phenomenology	• The study proposed a modern way of integrating technology and open distance learning in secondary school re-entry programs. • By using distance learning tools, their education can be more flexible with respect to place and time constraints.
Myconos, G., Thomas, J., Wilson, K., Te Riele, K., & Swain, L.	2016	Educational Re-Engagement as Social Inclusion	Australia	Interviews from a nationwide research project	• Neoliberal market imperatives permeate the Australian educational landscape, pitting student against student, school against school, state against state, and private interest against public good. • Some 900 FLOs (ALEs) now provide educational re-engagement opportunities for nearly 70,000 of Australia's most severely disenfranchised young people (Te Riele, 2014). • With re-engagement in the flexible learning space consciously rooted to students' sense of safety, mutual support and belonging, the metaphor of 'family' was common across most of the sites.
Neill, A. S.	1973	Summerhill: for and against	UK	Seminal text	• Summerhill is a self-governing school, democratic in form. Everything connected with social, or group, life, including punishment for social offences, is settled by vote at the Saturday night Gene Meeting.
OECD.	2016	Investing in Youth: Australia	Australia	Report	• 580,000 15–29 year olds in Australia were not in employment, education or training (NEET). • Recommended that Australia needed to improve the quality of Vocational Education and Training, particularly for disengaged young people.
Polesel, J.	2017	Pre-Employment Skill Formation in Australia and Germany	Australia & Germany	Critical evaluation	• Neocorporatist (coordinated economy) versus neoliberal (liberal economy). • Australian state schools were expected to address skills shortages and the need for trained workers.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Putwain, D. W., Nicholson, L. J., & Edwards, J. L.	2016	Hard to Reach and Hard to Teach	UK	Multi-sited qualitative methods	• Focused on the instructional approaches used with students aged 14–16 years in their final two years of secondary education. • A more upward life trajectory seemed possible than if students had remained disconnected from their secondary education. • Student engagement is sensitive to the school context and the instructional climate.
Queensland Department of Education.	2018	Final school years	Australia	Government document	• A young person's compulsory participation phase starts when they stop being of compulsory school age (i.e. turn 16 or complete Year 10, whichever comes first) and ends when the person: I. gains a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA), Senior Statement, Certificate III or Certificate IV II. has participated in eligible options for two years after the person stopped being of compulsory school age or III. turns 17. • In the compulsory participation phase, young people have more options. They don't have to go to school—but they do have to be 'learning or earning'. That means there are a wider range of options including continuing school, studying at an institution like TAFE or university, doing a traineeship or apprenticeship, or working full-time.
Parliament of Queensland.	2003	Youth Participation in Education and Training Act	Australia	Legislation	• Compulsory for Queensland youth to remain at school until they have completed Year 10 or turn 16. • Compulsory participation phase where once youth complete Year 10 or turn 16 years of age, they have to remain in education or obtain paid employment for at least 25 hours per week, for a further two years, or until they obtain a Senior Certificate or a Certificate III.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Reiach, S., Averbeck, C., & Cassidy, V.	2012	The evolution of distance education in Australia	Australia	Literature review	• In 2002 the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and eLearning was formed to support distance and eLearning opportunities in most universities in Australia and New Zealand. • Greater support and incentives are needed centrally from the Australian government for distance educational programs to remain competitive with other leading countries in the South Pacific which propose strong programs.
Salem Press.	2014	Exploring alternative education	Global	Literature review	• The roots of the first alternative school movement come from three European philosopher-educators-Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel. • The second alternative education movement that is noted by educational historians began in the 1960's and is called by various terms including free schools, humanistic education, or holistic education.
Sanders, J., Munford, R., & Boden, J.	2018	Improving educational outcomes for at-risk students	New Zealand	Longitudinal qualitative study	• Improving educational outcomes for at risk youth requires a pan-system response, whereby schools reduce the use of expulsion and create a positive school climate, other professionals support schools to retain challenging students at school and the positive resources generated by pro-social peer groups are harnessed. • School experiences that were relationally rich and supportive acted as a buffer against the substantial challenges these young people faced.
Sanders, M.	2016	Leadership, partnerships, and organizational development	USA	Case study	• Full-service community schools seek to provide more comprehensive and coordinated services to children and families in low-income and marginalised communities while reducing fragmentation and delays in services. • They also seek to promote community development, and draw on community resources to enhance students' learning opportunities.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Singh, M., & Harreveld, B.	2014	Deschooling L'earning	Australia	Multiple qualitative studies	- The central problem with schools is the tendency towards being manipulative bureaucracies rather than convivial institutions. - Principals, teacher and other educators are preparing young adults for the world of precarious labour and uncertain capital accumulation they are inheriting. - Curriculum narrowing restricts both teachers and young adults' creative activities and the development of thinking skills. - High socio-economic rank determines who gets the high-status qualifications as determined by high-stakes examinations.
Skelton, R. R. G.	2017	Effectiveness of Blended Learning in a Rural Alternative Education School Setting	Australia	Qualitative studies using various methods. Predominantly interview and observation	- The central problem with schools is the tendency towards being manipulative bureaucracies rather than convivial institutions - Curriculum narrowing restricts both teachers and young adults' creative activities and the development of thinking skills - Monitory democracy: refers to ways in which citizens scrutinise the use of power by societal institutions - NEETs: Not in Education, Employment or Training.
Stanwick, J., Forrest, C., & Skujins, P.	2017	Who are the persistently NEET young people?	Australia	Government document	The key socio-demographic characteristics identified from the samples that were clearly associated with being persistently NEET included: I. not completing year 12 II. having children III. to some degree, coming from a more disadvantaged background.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
					• There are many young people in uncertain or precarious employment situations who may also have low levels of educational achievement. These young people are vulnerable but not classified as being NEET
Stringer, K., Kerpelman, J., & Skorikov, V.	2012	A longitudinal examination of career preparation and adjustment during the transition from high school	USA	Longitudinal study using survey methods	• Career confidence was a particularly important predictor of adjustment. Both 12th grade career confidence and changes in confidence over time predicted changes in adjustment and adjustment 4.5 years post-high school. • An increase in emotional stability was predictive of higher career confidence and lower indecision.
Swartz, R.	2016	From Socrates to Summerhill and beyond	USA	Qualitative studies using various methods. Predominantly interview and observation	• The liberal educational philosophy that has its historical roots in the work of Socrates • Human creativity and imagination have the best chance to flourish when human beings are not controlled or dominated by some external authority • Educational alternatives such as self-governing schools may be considered undesirable by many people, these schools do help us see that social policies are theories or hypotheses that attempt to solve problems.
te Riele, K.	2014	Putting the jigsaw together: Flexible learning programs in Australia	Australia	Critical evaluation	• The emphasis in flexible learning programs tends to be on catering for students in the 15-18 year-old age range, in part due to recent legislative changes to participation requirements for young people. • One concern is that the approach to curriculum may lead to a risk that potential education or training future pathways are being closed down.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
					• Teachers may adjust educational expectations with good intentions, because they see wellbeing as more crucial than learning. Yet, such actions by the teacher risk reinforcing any perceived deficits because a second concern is that students who are never asked to complete challenging tasks, never get the chance to learn to do them.
te Riele, K., Wilson, K., Wallace, V., McGinty, S., & Lewthwaite, B.	2017	Outcomes from Flexible Learning Options for disenfranchised youth	Australia	Literature review	• In Australia, the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions (COAG, 2009) among federal, state and territory governments set a target of 90% of young people (aged 20–24) achieving an upper secondary qualification – usually defined as Year 12 (lower secondary education incorporates Years 7–10 and upper secondary education Years 11–12). • As part of this policy, new requirements were legislated around Australia mandating that young people complete Year 10 and participate in full-time school, training or employment (or a full-time combination of these) until they turn 17. • In practice, these policies are widely understood as a raising of the school leaving age to 17.
Thomas, J., McGinty, S., te Riele, K., & Wilson, K.	2017	Distance travelled: Outcomes and evidence in flexible learning options	Australia	Multi-sited qualitative methods	• In Australia, some 580,000 15–29 year olds are not in employment, education or training (NEET). • The re-engagement of disadvantaged young people through FLOs (ALEs) is predicated upon recognition of their marginalisation from mainstream schooling and an explicit institutional commitment to their social and economic re-inclusion.
Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Petry, P.	2017	Learning from teaching in alternative and flexible education settings	Canada & Spain	Literature review	• The young people who engage or re-engage in these spaces would not do so if the structure was too similar to conventional schooling. • Imposing limitations on young people as a result of participating in alternative settings is less likely to be educative for an individual or a social good for society.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Vellos, R. E.	2016	Re-creating social futures	Australia & Canada	Multi-sited qualitative methods	• Although the label of "second-chance" is often applied pejoratively to alternative and flexible programs, we argue that this should be viewed as a strength rather than a weakness. • There is debate around the role of alternative schooling in contributing to the ongoing failure of the public school system to respond adequately to the needs of students.
Vellos, R., & Vadeboncoeur, J. A.	2013	Alternative and second chance education	Canada	Multi-sited qualitative methods	• Alternative education is defined by non-traditional approaches to learning and teaching that are seen to enrich the experiences of students. • It is frequently based on philosophical, political, and psychological theories and/or practices about the role of education in society, the development of democratic citizens, and/or the creation of rich and developmentally appropriate contexts for learning. • Second-chance education is typically defined by the type of participant: usually young people who have been pushed out of mainstream schooling or who have otherwise disengaged from schools.
Willis, P.	1977	Learning to labour	UK	Ethnography and seminal text	• There is a common educational fallacy that opportunities can be made by education, that upward mobility is basically a matter of individual push, that qualifications make their own openings. • Opportunities are created only by the upward pull of the economy, and then only in relatively small numbers for the working class. The whole nature of western capitalism is also such that classes are structured and persistent so that even relatively high rates of individual mobility make no difference to the existence or position of the working class.

Authors	Year	Title	Location	Type of study	Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation
					• No conceivable number of certificates amongst the working class will make for a classless society. • Institutionalised knowledge and qualifications lie in social exclusion rather than in technical or humanistic advance. They legitimate and reproduce a class society. • Diplomas and certificate act not to push people up but to maintain there those who are already at the top.

Appendix B: Ethics approval

Application reference: 0000020566

Title: Deschooling the Alternatives

This project has now been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, either at a full committee meeting, or via the low risk review process.

The period of human ethics approval will be from 13/06/2017 to 01/09/2020.

The standard conditions of approval for this research project are that:

(a) you conduct the research project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments required to be made to the proposal by the Human Research Ethics Committee;

(b) you advise the Human Research Ethics Committee (email ethics@cqu.edu.au) immediately if any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, or any other issue in relation to the project which may warrant review of ethics approval of the project. (A written report detailing the adverse occurrence or unforeseen event must be submitted to the Committee Chair within one working day after the event.)

(c) you make submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee for approval of any proposed variations or modifications to the approved project before making any such changes;

(d) you provide the Human Research Ethics Committee with a written Annual Report on each anniversary date of approval (for projects of greater than 12 months) and Final Report by no later than one (1) month after the approval expiry date;

(e) you accept that the Human Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to conduct scheduled or random inspections to confirm that the project is being conducted in accordance to its approval. Inspections may include asking questions of the research team, inspecting all consent documents and records and being guided through any physical experiments associated with the project

(f)   if the research project is discontinued, you advise the Committee in writing within five (5) working days of the discontinuation;

(g) A copy of the Statement of Findings is provided to the Human Research Ethics Committee when it is forwarded to participants.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You are required to advise the Secretary in writing if this project does not proceed for any reason. In the event that you require an extension of ethics approval for this project, please make written application in advance of the end-date of this approval. The research cannot continue beyond the end date of approval unless the Committee has granted an extension of ethics approval. Extensions of approval cannot be granted retrospectively. Should you need an extension but not apply for this before the end-date of the approval then a full new application for approval must be submitted to the Secretary for the Committee to consider.

The Human Research Ethics Committee wishes to support researchers in achieving positive research outcomes. If you have issues where the Human Research Ethics Committee may be of assistance or have any queries in relation to this approval please do not hesitate to contact the ethics officers, Sue Evans or Suzanne Harten or myself.

Yours sincerely,

A/Prof Tania Signal

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
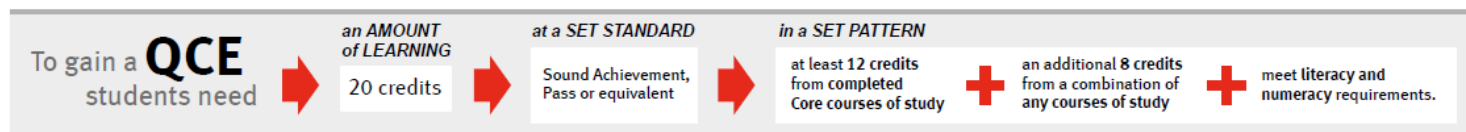
Appendix C: Participant demographics

Participant	Age	Role	Background	Future	Time in role	Previous career	Data source: Interview, observation, artefact
Ann	Early 30s	TSDE administrator	Nurse and teacher.	School leadership roles.	4 years	Health	Interview, Observation, Artefacts
Arthur	Early 30s	Tiber Street Hometree Facilitator - 25hrs	Career direction in Baptist church, currently a volunteer Youth Pastor. Has a Bachelor of Business (marketing).	Left for Youth Pastor job in another region.	2 years	Marketing	Interview, Observation
Bella	17	Student at Tiber Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Relocated from another regional context.	Unsure.	1 year	None	Interview, Observation
Carl	late 60s	Jay's YC Hometree Volunteer - 3 hrs	Retired teacher – volunteer.	Continuing in role.	3 years	Teacher	Interview, Observation
Carly	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living independently. Studying a Certificate III in Community Services – Aged Care.	Aged Care work.	3 years	None	Interview, Observation
Gary	Late 40s	Jay's YC administrator	Police officer.	Continuing in role.	15 years	Policing	Interview
Georgina	Late 40s	Jay's YC Hometree Facilitator - 25hrs	Studying Diploma in Counselling. Did not complete senior schooling. Currently sole income for family.	Leaving for job in Youth Support Services.	4 years	N/A	Interview, Observation
Grace	17	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Parents on a disability and carers pension.	Unsure.	2 years	None	Observation

Participant	Age	Role	Background	Future	Time in role	Previous career	Data source: Interview, observation, artefact
Holly	Early 20s	Windrixville Hometree Facilitator - 15hrs but full-time role with host NGO	Studying Bachelor of Psychology.	Continuing in role while studying.	1 year	N/A	Interview, Observation, Artefacts
Jarrod	41	TSDE Educator full-time	Taught in high schools and tertiary education.	Studying to be guidance officer.	2 years	Teacher	Interview, Observation, Artefacts
Jerry	Late 50s	TSDE administrator	Teacher and principal.	Retirement.	9 years	None	Interview, Artefacts
Jimmy	15	Student at Windrixville Hometree	Excluded from the Windrixville state secondary school. Living with his mother and younger sister.	Interested in becoming a chef.	1 year	None	Observation
Joel	16	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living with his mother and younger brother.	Australian Defence Force.	2 years	None	Interview, Observation
Justine	16	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living with her Aunty.	Unsure.	2 years	None	Interview, Observation
Keith	16	Student at Windrixville Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living with his mother in Tulsa.	Unsure.	2 years	None	Observation
Kirsten	15	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Parents occupations - labourer, cleaner.	Possible return to conventional school.	1 year	None	Interview, Observation
Kylie	42	TSDE Educator full-time	Primary teacher.	Continuing in role.	1 Year	Teacher	Interview, Observation, Artefacts

Participant	Age	Role	Background	Future	Time in role	Previous career	Data source: Interview, observation, artefact
Liz	Early 20s	Pickett Street Hometree Facilitator - 10 hrs	Studying Bachelor of Social Work and working in another youth organisation.	Continuing in role while studying.	2 years	N/A	Interview, Observation
Margaret	Early 40s	TSDE administrator	Business administration and teaching.	Continuing in role.	8 years	Business	Interview, Artefacts
Marilyn	70	Tiber Street Hometree Volunteer - 3 hrs	Retired bookkeeper – volunteer.	Continuing in role.	3 years	Bookkeeper	Interview, Observation
Raine	15	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Parent working in construction.	Mother to be.	1 year	None	Observation
Raymond	Early 50s	South Tulsa Youth Connect administrator	Primary health care.	Continuing in role.	4 years	Health	Interview
Remi	16	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From a state secondary school. Working casually at a take-away pizza shop.	Working fulltime at the pizza shop.	2 years	None	Observation
Scott	16	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From another ALE. Working casually with his cousin putting roofs on houses.	Continue at Hometree.	3 years	None	Observation
Simon	18	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	Excluded from a state secondary school. Parents occupations - miner, shop assistant.	Mechanic or chef.	3 years	car detailing	Observation
Sophie	Late 30s	TSDE Educator full-time	Artist, graphic design - beginning teacher 2015.	Continuing in role.	3 years	Graphic design	Interview, Observation, Artefacts
Stephanie	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From a state secondary school. Left due to social anxiety.	Does not know, plans to get driver's license.	3 years	None	Observation, Artefacts

Participant	Age	Role	Background	Future	Time in role	Previous career	Data source: Interview, observation, artefact
Sven	17	Student at Jay's YC Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living independently.	Unsure.	3 years	None	Observation
Tremaine	Late 30s	Brumley Street Hometree Facilitator - 20hrs	English citizen living in Australia since 2014. Small business operator – Children's face painting.	Continuing in role.	2 years	N/A	Interview, Observation, Artefacts
Trisha	Late 40s	Windrixville Hub administrator	New Zealand citizen. 20 years' experience in community services.	Continuing in role.	5 years	Social work	Interview
Troy	15	Student at Tiber Street Hometree	From a state secondary school.	Continue at Hometree.	1 year	None	Interview, Observation
Val	17	Student at Brumley Street Hometree	From a state secondary school. Living independently.	Unsure.	3 years	None	Interview, Observation

Appendix D: QCE Planning Pathway

To gain a QCE students need → **an AMOUNT of LEARNING** 20 credits → **at a SET STANDARD** Sound Achievement, Pass or equivalent → **in a SET PATTERN** at least 12 credits from completed Core courses of study **+** an additional 8 credits from a combination of any courses of study **+** meet literacy and numeracy requirements.

Working towards a QCE

About the QCE

The Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) is Queensland's senior schooling qualification.
- The QCE is awarded to eligible students — usually at the end of Year 12.
- Students can still work towards a QCE after Year 12 or if they leave school.
- Learning options are grouped into four categories (see opposite).
- The QCE offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs.

How the QCE works

To achieve a QCE a student needs 20 credits in a set pattern.
- At least 12 credits must come from completed Core courses.
- Additional 8 credits can come from a combination of any courses.
- Students must achieve a Sound, Pass or equivalent to receive QCE credits.
- Literacy and numeracy requirements must be met (see opposite).

Planning a QCE pathway

QCE planning usually starts in Year 10.
- A Senior Education and Training (SET) Plan is developed to map a student's future education and/or employment goals and their QCE pathway.
- Learning options include senior school subjects, vocational education and training, apprenticeships and traineeships, university subjects completed while at school, recognised workplace learning, certificates and awards.
- Students choose their own QCE pathway — there are hundreds of possible course combinations.
- Students can plan their QCE pathway and track their progress towards a QCE in their learning account on the Student Connect website at www.studentconnect.qcaa.qld.edu.au

For more information

There are a number of ways a student can gain a QCE.

The QCE Handbook provides information about:
- credit for partial completion of courses of study
- credit transfer for intrastate, interstate and overseas transfers
- conceded semesters for subjects exited at a Limited Achievement
- student learning accounts
- relaxation of completed Core requirements
- notional Sound in a subject for meeting literacy and numeracy requirements
- recognised studies.

Visit www.qcaa.qld.edu.au for a copy of the handbook

Learning options and credit values

COURSE		CREDIT	
CORE	CORE courses: usually undertaken by students in the senior phase of learning	At least 12 credits are needed. At least 1 credit undertaken while enrolled at a school.	
	Authority or Authority-registered subjects	Per course (4 semesters)	4
	Subjects assessed by a Senior External Examination		4
	VET Certificate II, III or IV qualifications (includes school-based traineeships)	Certificate II / Certificate III & IV	4 / 5, 6, 7 or 8
	School-based apprenticeships that incorporate on-the-job training	Certificate III competencies / On-the-job component	Up to 2 / 4
	Recognised international learning programs	Per course	4
PREPARATORY	PREPARATORY courses: generally used as stepping stones to further study	A maximum of 6 credits can contribute.	
	VET Certificate I qualifications	(Max. of 2 qualifications can count)	2 or 3
	Employment skills development programs approved under the VETE Act 2000	(Max. of 1 program can count)	2
	Re-engagement programs	(Max. of 1 program can count)	2
	Recognised certificates and awards	As accredited by QCAA	
	Short course in literacy or short course in numeracy developed by the QCAA	Per course	1
ENRICHMENT	ENRICHMENT courses: add value or complement Core courses of study	A maximum of 8 credits can contribute.	
	Recognised certificates and awards	As accredited by QCAA	
	Recognised structured workplace or community-based learning programs	As accredited by QCAA	
	Learning projects — workplace, community, self-directed		1
	Authority extension subjects, such as English Extension		2
	Career development: A short course senior syllabus		1
	School-based subjects	As accredited by QCAA	
ADVANCED	ADVANCED courses: go beyond senior secondary schooling	A maximum of 8 credits can contribute.	
	One or two-semester university subjects completed while enrolled at a school	One-semester subject / Two-semester subject	2 / 4
	Units of Competency contributing to VET diplomas or advanced diplomas while enrolled at a school	Up to 8 credits (1 credit per competency)	
	Recognised certificates and awards	As accredited by QCAA	

Literacy and numeracy requirements

The QCE offers students a range of options to satisfy the literacy and numeracy requirements, including:
- at least a Sound Achievement in one semester of a QCAA-developed English and Mathematics subject
- at least a Sound Achievement in QCAA-developed short courses in literacy and numeracy
- a Pass grade in a literacy and numeracy course recognised by the QCAA
- at least a C on the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test
- at least a 4 for an International Baccalaureate examination in English and Mathematics
- completion of FSK20113 Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways
- completion of a VET course in Core Skills for Employment and Training – Communication, i.e. 39282QLD (Certificate I) or 39283QLD (Certificate II)
- completion of a VET course in Core Skills for Employment and Training – Numeracy, i.e. 39288QLD (Certificate I) or 39289QLD (Certificate II).

March 2015

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority

(QCE Planning Pathway, Artefact, 2017)