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Title:

The Double Bind for Non-Traditional Families in Post-Primary Settings;
To Tell or Not To Tell their Family Identity

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PhD in Education

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMCSS Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools

ASTI Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland

BERA British Educational Research Association

BOM Board of Management

CORI Congregation for the Religious of Ireland

DES Department of Education and Skills

ESRI The Economic and Social Research Institute

EWO Education Welfare Officer

IES Irish Educational Studies

IHA Irish Heads` Association

JMB Joint Managerial Board

NCCA National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NEPS National Educational Psychology Services

NEWB National Education Welfare Board

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PACCS Parents Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

PA Parents Association

RE Religious Education RSE Relationship and Sexuality Education

RSE Relationship and Sexuality Education

RTT Resource Teacher for Traveller Groups

SCP School Completion Programme

SEAL Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SLSS Second Level Support Service

SPHE Social Personal and Health Education

PISA Programme for International Student Assessment

TCI Teaching Council of Ireland

TUI Teachers Association of Ireland

VEC Vocation Education Committee

IAPCE Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Education

IFPA Irish Family Parents Association

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis being submitted by me is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed: Ann-Marie Desmond_

Date: January 2014

Abstract

This thesis involves researching family discourses which are mediated through educational settings. The traditional family, consisting of father, mother and children all living together in one house is no longer reflective of the home situation of some Irish students (Fahey, Keilthy & Polek 2012). My study problematizes the dominant discourses which reflect how family differences are managed and recognised in schools.

A framework using Foucauldian post structural critical analysis traces family stratification through the co-constructing discourses of institutional and interpersonal relations at micro level in four post-primary schools. Standardising procedures such as the suppression of intimate relations between and among teacher and student as well as the linear ordering of intergenerational relations, such as teacher/student and adult/child are critiqued. This non-recognition of family difference is configured in different ways across schools because school's disciplinary histories have used similar and different practices around the school-home relationship. Normalisation and behavioural discourses such as notes home presume two parents together, and teacher assumptions around mother and father make it difficult for students to be open about a family set-up that is constructed as different to the rest of the schools'. Family technologies such as enrolment evenings, family profiling, accountability measures such as signed homework and examinations, as well as the management of difference and deficit through pastoral care structures all suggest a politics of family adjustment in relation to schools. These practices beg the question whether families are better off not telling the school about their family identity.

This field work involved gaining insights from students, parent/s and school staff as well as analysing texts from the Department of Education and Skills, from educational psychology and from school policies relating to families. Cultural, historical and religious phenomena are also traced to view how they interconnect across national and local sites in attempts to co-ordinate family recognition. The data, from four post-primary schools is not just concerned with how these students, parents and school staff are constituted in and by this complex network of discourses and where they are located within it, but also unearths some subverted discourses through which they challenge the adult/child order, the public/private divide and school's "openness" to diversity.

My thesis will be of interest to educational research and educational policy making in two specific ways. Firstly, it highlights how changing demographics such as family compositions are mis-conceptualised in schools, showing how they are constructed relationally in different contexts. Second it reveals the changing forms of family governance through the deconstructing of school-family regimes, such as pastoral care. This analysis allows for the existence of and a valuing for alternative modes of family existence, so that future curricular and legal discourses can be challenged in the interest of equity and social justice.

Key concepts; School-Home Governance, Family Recognition, Family-Stratification, Normalization Discourses and Pastoral Care.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to all the precious people in my life who have inspired me to reach heights I had never dreamed possible.

Firstly, I thank sincerely my supervisor Dr Karl Kitching Department of Education, UCC for his wisdom and patience throughout this research process. I know that I have the honour of being his first PhD student, which cannot have been easy! He played a blinder!

I thank Professor Kathy Hall, Head of the School of Education at UCC, together with the entire Education Department Staff for their support and dedication throughout this learning curve. Also a mention for the Boole library staff who were extremely helpful. Martin O`Connor in Q+ 2 was outstanding!

To the cohort PhD in Education group of 2008-2012, it has been wonderful to hear all your various topics of interest and different perspectives on life. I miss the stimulus!

A special thank you to my friends and colleagues at Regina Mundi College, Douglas, Cork for their encouragement and insights throughout this journey

To the students, parent/s and school staff who welcomed me into their schools and lives, I really appreciate their kindness. I hope their voices are heard clearly in this research project.

A major thank you to my `current` husband Myles Mc Swiney who kept me grounded and treasured during the last four and a half years; I couldn't have done it without him.

A special mention for my darling daughters who are now 18 and 16 and perfect proof that reconstituted families (among others) can be extremely happy. I hope they keep on surprising me!

I would like to dedicate this study especially to my mum, Mary O'Leary-Desmond (1922-2009) who passed away during this process but whose presence was felt throughout. A special mention also for my dad Paddy Desmond who was an amazing man; he filled me with self-confidence. A thank you to all my invisible helpers on the other side, too numerous to mention, who carried me at times. I would also like to thank my extended family and a general thanks to all my good friends whom I nearly lost during this timeframe, as well as my good neighbours for being so caring.

Introduction

In this introduction the research questions that prompted my study are outlined as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches taken to address them. My area of special interest involves researching family discourses in educational settings, and I am questioning if it is better for families to be open with the school about their family composition or not. To manipulate Shakespeare's, "*To be or not to be, that is the question*", I wish to suggest "*To tell or not to tell- that is the question*", which is very pertinent for many parents of new students entering post-primary school. My study involves contact with all the key players at local level; school staff (principals, teachers and school secretaries), students, and parent/s as well as looking at the social and historical constructs of family within the Irish context.

The `family` as a social institution can be understood in many ways, as constructed and mediated by larger institutions, such as the state, the church and the schools, or as the constructor, whose influence builds and shapes a solid social foundation (Van Krieken, 2005, p. 25-48) Structuring processes in the past mediated the family unit as stable and permanent in comparison to the composition of family entities today; the number of divorced people has increased 150 per cent since 2002, according to the Census report of 2011. The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act (2010), provides that civil partners have broadly the same rights as married couples have under civil law. Figures and statistics from the census confirm that there is an increasing amount of children and young adults in non-traditional family situations, for example;

"One- in -three families in Ireland departs from the traditional model of a married couple both of whom are in their first marriage. One-in-four children under 21 years of age live in a family that does not conform to this model"
(Lunn and Fahey, 2011, pp.7-8).

Yet my data suggests that students in classrooms can be subjected to embarrassment, non-recognition or alienation when the educators and/or text book discourse reflect only a narrow family composition-that of the ideal, traditional, nuclear type.

1). Aim of this study

In the past there appeared to be a clear line of delineation between public (school) and private (home) living which kept these two institutions apart with mutual understandings as to who was in charge within each space. Nowadays this symbiotic relationship can be understood as one of partnership, with teachers acting in *loco parentis*. Many unquestioning parent/s believe

that school staff have the best interest of their children at heart because the post-modern education system appears inclusive of their voice (Lynch and Moran, 2006), so they trust the school staff to care for the child/youth. The aim of this study is to investigate if a politics of family adjustment may operate around non-traditional families in order to assimilate them into school structures as opposed to respecting and valuing the various family types from which students come. My study investigates school discourse in relation to the double-bind dilemma which some families may find themselves in due to a discrepancy between what the school expects and what their family reality is. By analysing school policies and texts which relate to family practices, as well as the voices of the key agents in each of four school settings, this study will demonstrate the multitude of pressures, problems, identities, desires and demands which impact on the everyday school-family discourse.

Statistics and contestations

There is much contestation over the place of the family in the Irish public space. Interest groups such as the Churches and other religious bodies, family advocates, educationalists and health groups all have a vested interest in child welfare and family well-being. A number of reports by these various groups give a sense of the different positions from which they are coming and the complexities involved. The two main areas of contestation involve conservative and liberal constructs of what family as an entity involves/should involve. Some of these reports do not relate to the school-home relationship directly but act in the rhizome like fashion of discourses to indirectly impact on school practices. Reports on legislation, and research by family organisations will be dealt with in Chapter One.

2). Foucault`s post-structural lens

Theorists such as Foucault believe that individuals are not free rational beings (as the Enlightenment writers believed); but are unable to think or act freely outside of the politics of knowledge. People are fashioned by, and in turn fashion, the institutional and interpersonal discourses with which they are involved. This myriad of ways in which family discourse circulates officially and unofficially is exemplified in this study, in order to help understand the complexity of dealing with such an emotive and seemingly subjugated topic as family diversity in the midst of schools` micro-politics. This thesis argues that the powers affecting education and the discourses of family living are far more complex than they appear since certain families, and non-religious family representatives themselves, have impacted on how practices around `the family` are possible in schools. Examples include initiatives by the

National Parents` Post-Primary Council [NCPpp], the *White Paper on Education* (1995) as well as legal challenges to the Department of Education [DES]/state by individual families.

A post-structuralist analysis of the language used around family and the politics of knowledge generated serves to deconstruct the pastoral power dynamics involved in the formation of subjectivities. Family technologies such as enrolment evenings, family profiling, notes home and in-school Pastoral Care practices are some examples of these constructs and can be paralleled with Foucauldian concepts (which will be explained in more detail in Chapter Two) such as pastoral power, panopticism, and normalization.

“Foucault specifically aimed to show how with modernity the self was constructed in discourses in which power relations were established around the formation of subjectivity by application of particular forms of knowledge....it seeks to reveal that knowledge is not emancipatory, but heavily implicated in the shaping of social institutions in modern society” (Delanty, 2011, p.82).

By thinking otherwise and unmasking the power plays behind family governance in schools, families in future can politicise how they are represented, so that school care could have an emancipatory potential rather than what appears to be at present, a repressive, binding regime. Foucault`s understanding is that disciplinary discourses are not simply repressive or top down, but also present opportunities for resistance. By tracing the un-naturalness of these constructs throughout this thesis, in the gaps between institutional and interpersonal approaches, it is hoped to reveal the contingency of such relations, as a way of rethinking family framing. The specifics of the home-school partnership or the `governance by consent` models, where parent/s cede power to the school, have not yet been examined in Irish post-primary schools, in relation to family difference; there has been no analysis of power in schools that successfully move beyond conventional notions of family and no analysis of how non-traditional families are themselves effects of power. Building on that notion, I am questioning how non-traditional families are constructed in Ireland`s post-primary schools and what organisational and cultural influences have been instrumental in their framing.

3). The study design and methodology

Foucault`s post-structural analysis of disciplinary power is used to rethink the positioning and classifications of non-traditional families in post-primary schools so as to meaningfully recognise and value family difference in education and in Irish society in general. His lens on genealogy and context is important in investigating the origins and specific power formations

around families in schools so as to critically reflect on the un/conscious gestures and assumptions that mediate family living. Four case studies were undertaken in four post-primary schools, involving single-sex schools and a mixed school. The key actors, students, parent/s and teachers were interviewed about their understandings of family discourse in their school. By undertaking a phenomenological approach, the voices of students from various family entities in Irish society, the voices of parent/s and voices of school staff, will all be heard. The analysis is an effort to unearth the discourses which construct their identities, their family structures and institutional practices in the hope of gauging the educational and social impact of school-family discourses- on them, and on their sense of well-being. It gave individuals a chance to express whether or not they are represented by the discourses and texts used in their particular school. Questions were asked such as; *“Is your family reality reflected in the text books and classroom talk on family?”*

“The key characteristic of phenomenology is the study of the way in which members of a group or community themselves interpret the world and life around them. The researcher does not make assumptions about an objective reality that exists apart from the individual. Rather the focus is on understanding how individuals create and understand their own life spaces” (Mertens, 2005, p.240).

This critical, poststructuralist phenomenological epistemology traces the dominant power influences in schools through multiple social and school discourses so as to meaningfully recognise how the institutional and interpersonal co-construct family stratification at post-primary level. Like post-structuralists, I think that the image of the family is a constructed one since all identities, individual or family are fluid, not constant. Having no single `truth` today, only partial ones, then family can be whatever a person/student experiences, and describes it to be.

Contribution to knowledge

This research will be of interest to educational researchers and educational policy makers because it explores the need for change in relation to how the multiplicity of family entities within and across the Irish school context is represented. It may also impact on Irish teacher education and Continual Professional Development (CPD) for educators who need to be cognisant of identity issues involving the affective areas of student learning and well-being. This thesis argues that family entities and particularly non-traditional family entities need to be recognised, included and responded to in future educational and legal policies in schools if student well-being is a priority. This research is significant since many students today may

not be recognised in the discourses around families, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. This research could also be significant for future policy direction in relation to curricular texts and policies, as well as everyday school practices.

This examination of educational discourses pertaining to families should also be of interest to many other individuals or groups of people who do not feel part of `the` established order-who did not quite fit in for whatever reason, and are made to feel different, weird, or `other`. The context for this research is in a school, but the marginalization effects of modern institutions are more widely felt. The non-recognition issues which treat of non-traditional families in schools are paralleled in many other areas such as; race, socio-economic identity, dis/ability, intellectual abilities, sexual preferences, sporting participation, body shape and size and so on. It relates to almost every aspect of life where someone is made to feel as if they do not belong. It is a topic that many can relate to, since almost everyone has been in that situation at some time or another, and wondered if they should be open with the establishment or if it is better not to say anything for fear of repercussions. However, for some individuals it is more or less a permanent exclusion, until they escape from the confines of that particular institution or society.

Advocates from the field of social work and psychology counselling, (Okun, 1996), as well as adoptive, step, and gay family support networks, (Geis-Rockwood, 1990) have also come to the fore in calling for changes in curriculum and for teacher education programmes to recognise and address these often neglected forms of diversity, (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005). Other researchers such as (Laidlaw, 2006) for adoptive families, (Castagno, 2008) and (Kitching, 2010) for anti-racism have all highlighted what it means to be an outsider in certain spaces. The lens they throw on these areas show the agentic nature of the subjects involved, when they experience alienation and are perceived as being the problem, as opposed to the cultural context in question needing adjustment in order to rethink attitudes to human diversity. The parallels of inclusive/exclusive discourses and practices are very similar.

Positionality

I want to add my voice to those of inclusion advocates in calling on schools to change the ways in which they manage the tensions between school policies and diversity. Since I began my doctoral reading and visited schools to do field work on this topic, I have developed three main insights; firstly, that the institutional discourse of school spaces, influenced by history

and governmentality, has a powerful impact on the mind-sets of students, parents and school-staff concerning traditional and non-traditional families. Secondly, once one's sense of social difference is heightened, one recognises the importance of discourse in constituting and mediating the collective discourse of 'normality'. Thirdly, there is a need to identify the voices of marginalised individuals who are excluded by these 'regimes of truth' and to act with them in changing the politics of education. Being an educator myself, I recognise the need for education in this affective area for the students involved especially, and for their fellow classmates, who need to learn respect for family diversity;

"With the social sciences it is likely that studying family lives is simply the most challenging topic because it is a topic so close to us all and deeply intertwined with our own sense of self" (Bernardes, 1997, p.28).

My interest in this area stems from much personal and professional reflection on family complexity in Ireland. A major life altering event such as my separation and divorce, forced me to view family identity from an outsider's perspective. By default my two young children became outsiders in that they were the only students in their rural school with a mum and dad who did not share the same home. They are now at post-primary level negotiating their family identity alongside many more students whose family composition is not of the traditional type. As I problematize the discourses around family identities, I have had to reflect on my own subjectivity on this topic, and wonder why I am drawn to the post-structuralist understanding of society and family. It forces me to think about the politics influencing family constructs in schools and the politics of my own actions and research. I have discovered that the family is political and I would like to see school politics becoming more open to family diversity.

4). Ethics

Ethical considerations are considered directly in Chapter Three- Methodology. I hope to represent the individuals I interviewed, not as 'others', but as fellow travellers who are negotiating their family identity in the shadows of an apparently bygone era.

"So we are not likely to hear much about "going native" again. Today we are trying to live ever closer to the lives about which we write about. Others are forthcoming that try to show not that we can live those lives, but that we have lived close enough to them to begin to understand how their worlds have been constructed" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.421).

The students I worked closely with seem to be subjected to a family discourse that does not reflect their family reality because the dominant sociocultural ideologies surrounding family

are still very prevalent in their schools (Chapter Six). Instead of seeing themselves reflected back in the texts and discourses used in their classrooms, their family entity is described instead by adjectives such as `deficient`, `broken`, `step` or `half`. These words reflect society's biases and undermine student's family identity. As a teacher of both History and Religion in the post-primary sector for twenty-six years I am mindful of this discourse from the insider's perspective too, and am cognisant that at times I inhabit the practitioner identity as well as that of the researcher. The immense influence of both History and Religion as curricular subjects, are also key factors in my decision to undertake this thesis.

5). Overview of the chapters to follow

Chapter One interrogates the often uncontested dominant psychological and developmental discourses around families, which impact on present post-primary school `expert` discourses. Some of these discourses are Irish specific (Hadfield and Nixon, 2012; Fahey, Keilthy and Polek, 2012) and some of them more international (Amato, 2003; Bures, 2009). The assertions by some social scientists about `dysfunctional families` and children from `different` family backgrounds realizing uneven outcomes in school are critiqued from a post-structuralist perspective. Their contributions to childhood and family constructs are illuminated through intersecting discourses as narrow and positivist with specific exclusionary effects in institutions such as schools. Alternative constructs are presented drawing on critical theorists who argue that much of the earlier psychological research findings have promoted the interests of middle-class families and society, while marginalising the powerless. This chapter addresses how deficit family research impacts on educational psychology in differentiating between normative and deviant families within educational establishments. By providing post-structuralist understandings of the limits of these knowledge bases and by demystifying their `expertise`, a rethinking of culpability is considered in the sense that it may be the system itself which is compounding and complicating family differences through their Pastoral Care Practices (Smyth, 2006, p. 288; Mulcahy, 2012, p. 20).

Chapter Two presents the concepts which frame this study within a Foucauldian perspective. Discourse as context, as text and as practices are explained as they relate to school experiences. Foucault's post-structural critical analysis draws from the sense that discourses are not simply language or signs but are practices which systematically form the objects about which they speak, so that they recognise themselves as certain subjects, in this study, subjects of a school discourse. The discourse of the institution comprises of `truths`, categories and

surveillance, so that the subjects of education can be made the subjects of politics. School ‘truths’ created through normalising discourses tend to be internalised by participants so that they become definitive moments of non-coercive discipline, or in Foucault’s terms, ‘*technologies of the self*’ (Foucault, 1988). The institutional and interpersonal strategies of normalization and naturalisation of the traditional family make it very difficult for other family types to gain legitimacy or recognition.

Foucault suggests we excavate the meanings from within and behind institutional discourses (context, texts and practices) in order to help understand the power plays at work there in the formation of governable subjects, and for the purpose of this research to help explain the privileging of particular models of the family while excluding anyone outside of them. Foucault does not offer solutions to concerns such as mis-recognition of non-traditional type families in schools, but he does provide a lens on how and why they are constructed as they are, and offers possibilities of surpassing such restrictions by thinking otherwise.

Chapter Three concentrates on the methodological aspects involved in the excavation of non-traditional family discourses in post-primary schools, through *Discourse as Context*, *Discourse as Text* and *Discourse as Practices*. Foucault’s post-structural critical discourse and Le Greco and Tracy’s discourse tracing (2009) are employed as analytical tools for textual analysis of educational policies and semi-structured interviews in four post-primary schools. The insights of Ball (1994, 2003, 2006, and 2011) will also be used for analysing policies and texts, but it is important to state at this point that the methodological emphasis in this study is not on state policy. This thesis attempts to excavate meaning from within the everyday institutional governance of families so as to understand how certain families become peripheral to the cultural life of a school. The organisational processes through which certain families become non-normative become apparent by examining the school’s techniques and the subjective experience of student/parent/s/school-staff. Spaces for resistance are offered by identifying how these processes are constructed differently within each school context, crystallising the fact that family governance is socially and politically constructed, not something natural or normal.

Chapter Four, *Discourse as Context*, investigates the historical context of post-primary education in Ireland. The genealogy of family is traced through the lens of institutional control; *panopticism* (Foucault, 1977, p.195). I examine how the Catholic Church and the

Irish state regulated private living through education as far back as the nineteenth century. Even though Foucault did not discuss family or education at any great length, his analysis of power and disciplinary techniques as a research problematic in institutions, provides great insights into educational and psychological literature. By tracing the legislative and socially restrictive discourses within educational circles the suppression and privatization of family difference is highlighted.

Contemporary literature on 20th century Ireland centres on economics, religion and politics, with very little research on alternative families from that period other than reports showing repression and regulation in areas such as; Childhood (Maguire, 2009) and Education (Magray, 1998), Family (Earner-Byrne, 2008) and Roman Catholic Church control (Cullen and O'Hógartaigh, 2013). By comparing the historical construction of family in schools and society to present day family constructs in education policies, it is hoped to provide insights and understanding into the changing social constructs which family has undergone so as to understand why some family types seem to be rendered non-normative or invisible within school structures. Discursive ruptures and contestations of institutional and interpersonal conversations need to be highlighted from a poststructuralist position, so that people can gain insights into the roots and rhizomes of present day family recognition as well as the inherited traditions which fail to value them.

Chapter Five, Discourse as Text- Department of Education [DES] circulars, curricular materials and national and local school policies are examined in order to consider school/family constructs at post-primary level. Foucault's conceptual tools of disciplinary power and bio-power are employed throughout to demonstrate the myriad of ways in which schools, as social institutions, mediate governance in the name of the State/ DES. Discourse as text is the main focus of this chapter. Literature from DES, from the National Education Welfare Board [NEWB], and local school policies, especially that of Pastoral Care, together with curricular materials, are critiqued with a focus on family governance. Deficit developmental psychological theories as they relate to family dysfunction, and school 'experts', are also critiqued so that the connections and interwovenness between the various discourses which impact on families, through 'normalizing judgement' (Foucault, 1977, p.177) are presented.

Ball's (1994, 2003, 2006, 2011) insights into dominant policies, local and national will be used to unearth how they impact on school practices in order to stratify family difference. Family governance as shaped by policies, texts and curricular materials is questioned with a focus as to whose interest is directing initiatives such as family standardisation at post-primary level. This analysis challenges the ways in which these texts are used to interconnect repressive family practices at local school level. It employs Foucault's critique of power/knowledge relations to consider ways of resisting and transforming them through discursive contingencies and discontinuities.

Chapter Six, Seven and Eight-Discourse as Practices: The existing power operations in schools are uncovered through new data to reveal that families are being constructed to conform to family regulations in post-primary schools through disciplinary and pastoral measures. The extent of family governance in four post primary schools in Ireland is examined and analysed to convey what students, parents and school staff are saying about family stratification across their establishments. Factors such as official suppression of intimate relations and intergenerational ordering are considered in all contexts with students, parent/s and school-staff. Chapter Six reflects on the students' experiences of family stratification in each school, and the ways in which school literature and practices mediate good and not-so-good student subjectivities based on their family identity. 319 students from a broad range of family backgrounds were surveyed and the students who agree to be interviewed (five in each school) were asked about their insights on school discourses involving non-traditional families. Chapter Seven provides analysis of the interviews with parents in three schools and how they understand their subjectivity in relation to family stratification. Two representatives from school/parental boards were interviewed with the hope of unearthing the perspective of parent/s on school governance of families. Chapter Eight treats of the interviews with school staff who reveal how restricted institutional discourses impact on their subjectivities.

Chapter Nine, Conclusion summarises the thesis and viewpoints put forward by the participants in the field study. It puts forward the view that the ways in which certain families are managed in Irish post-primary schools may not be the most effective or socially just ways of dealing with changing family compositions. The accumulated data gained from the school population testify to this. Suggestions for counter-constructs of family in schools are proposed so that school discourses can be expanded to be inclusive of all family types.

Recommendations for Continual Professional Development (CPD) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) are outlined as well as a call for a re-framing of the school/home relationship.

Chapter One: Literature Review-Theorizing Families at Post-Primary Level in Ireland

1). Introduction: reframing educational theories involving families

This chapter deals with some of the literature which contributes to the misunderstanding of the complex relationship between school and home, and the `need` to regulate family practices within standardised school discourses. It looks at the dominant psychological and educational theories and images surrounding families and the limiting conception of family which they presented in the past (Lillard and Gerner, 1999; Neale, 2002; Boney, 2003). These representations partially frame and continue to frame, albeit in a more subtle way, pastoral discourses about family in schools (Chapter Five) giving rise to identity divisions between typical family units (normative) and `different` family units (non-normative), because for people in the past `the family` was viewed as a fixed natural biological entity. Their naturalist discourses involving biological images of father and mother became predominant in major research theories such as the normative union between male and female, with comparisons being made between the animal and human species. The biological/patriarchal family was equated with safety and stability, and thereby constructed as the best unit in which to rear children and educate them for society. Such definitions of family are understood as essential rather than temporally contingent truths. Now due to family changes, family identity is perceived to be in crisis: fragmenting and decentring along with other cultural landscapes such as class, gender and sexuality (Hall, 1992; Giddens, 2009).

“The family is collapsing”, cry the advocates of family values”, `rubbish`, others reply. “The family is not collapsing; it is merely diversifying. They argue that we should actively encourage a variety of family forms and sexual life, rather than supposing that everyone has to be compressed into the same mould” (Giddens, 2009, pp.376-7).

This shifting family profile unnerves many individuals and vested interest groups since the family was always regarded as the bed-rock of society. This duality of family identities in institutions is an unconscious control process which develops over time through language and meanings about family structures in which people of particular cultures participate. It can lead to homogenous images and definitions around what constitutes a family (Bernardes, 1997, p.5). The post-structuralist lens of Foucault, which I am using for this research, points to the use of these contradictory and shifting discourses around families as deliberate rather than accidental, so that the dominance of the traditional family type is guaranteed. He argues

together with many more post-structuralist writers, that the family unit is and always has been a social construction, that it was never stable; it only appeared to be so. They argue that it was designed to enable procreation and survival, and that it has been the circulating discourses of powerful organisations, such as state and church that perpetuated traditional family ideology in society and in social structures such as schools (Bevir, 2010). By applying post-structuralist concepts to concerns around family I can then investigate if purportedly neutral schools work to construct the families of their students to their criteria through discourses of what family should be in Irish culture.

The aim of this chapter is to present a variety of theories available on families/schools informed by sociology, psychology and anthropology, and to show how these theories link to school/institutional understandings of non-traditional family living. While the literature I present here focuses on how power relations stratify families within dominant knowledge bases, I want to include socio-economic and gender factors in the rhizome of the school/home/society assemblage, even though I am not specifically adopting a class or gender analysis.

2). Early family research established the nuclear family as the `ideal` one (1950s-1980s)

Foucault writes about “*regimes of truth*” (1977, 2000) or dominant beliefs which are assimilated into the mind-set of a group or society. His concepts will be explained at length in Chapter Two, but his lens on `truths` are relevant here in relation to how dominant beliefs and theories developed in earlier family research has been taken up and used in education contexts such as in Pastoral Care and Counselling. These theories developed in countries such as The United States and Britain in the hope of understanding the `family` as a fixed, apparently objective entity. Various family paradigms emerged as a consequence of such research but family identity as a paradigm has only evolved recently.

Earlier research theories gave rise to beliefs or to what Foucault termed `regimes of truth` which suited the standards and values of middle class families while ignoring the need for broader and less structured instruments of research.

“Each society has its regime of truth, its `general politics` of truth-that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault, 2000, p.131).

Biological perspectives involving monogamy between male and female, with the male as provider and the female as the nurturer, dominated family research until the 1960s. This natural/biological construct was reinforced by Murdock's (1965) research evidence on over 250 societies throughout the world. He asserted that;

“The nuclear family is a universal social grouping. Either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded, it exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society” (1965, pp.2-3).

Bernardes (1997) quotes Reiss (1965) about Murdock's claims, and suggests he actually observed the universality of sexual reproduction, not the universal family. 80 per cent of the families Murdock researched allowed for polygamy, and his studies also allowed for single parenthood as an example of 'the family'. Bernardes critiques the assumptions around natural and biological constructs of family because;

“If 'the family' is assumed to be natural or biological, researchers will assume it is universal, if 'the family' is universal, researchers will tend to assume that it is natural or biological in origin. These type of arguments have allowed all sorts of groups to claim that one sort of 'the family' is natural and that other living arrangements are somehow 'unnatural'” (Bernardes, 1997, p.6).

Carrington (2002) writes about the naturalisation theory where traditional type families are 'sanctified' and naturalised in British society and reinforced through representations in films portraying the 'perfect family', which served to limit views on other types of family living; for example, in the USA, *The Honeymooners* and *I love Lucy* were held up as blueprints for a moral and successful living. Monogamy became associated with marriage and family in Western Europe with little consideration or knowledge of alternative family systems in other continents such as Africa and Asia, where polygamy was favoured.

Other anthropological studies such as Parsons (1952/71) and Goode (1963) also classify descriptions of family as patriarchal, a husband, wife and children, and consanguinal (coming from the Latin term blood) meaning an extended family, in which parents and children co-reside with other members of one parent's family. Much of their research defined family by structure; such as traditional, nuclear, single-parent, divorced and so on. Parsons (1952) an American functionalist sociologist argued that the family's two major functions are primary socialization and personality stabilization (Giddens, 2009, p.370). He also claimed that a child's status in the family is fixed from birth, whereas a child's status in school is largely achieved, through individual achievement (Giddens, 2009, p.835). Parson's work shows that

not all sociological research was helpful for two main reasons; Firstly; The traditional family was constructed as `the` model; patriarchal, stable, and economically viable, since it maintained the capitalist system, while catering for the emotional well-being of developing children. Secondly; Offspring were constructed as being without agency, identity or full development so they were framed as vulnerable and in need of the protection and the care of two responsible parents to cater for their needs (similar to childhood constructs as critiqued by James and James, 2004; Grant, 1997; Greene and Horgan, 2009). Socialization hypotheses associated family diversity with difficulties, so they argued against family separations and divorce. Their research suggested that; parental divorce increases the risk of young people experiencing psychological problems, seeing their own marriage end in divorce, and having weak ties to parents (especially fathers) in adulthood. For example, Lillard and Gerner`s (1999, pp.708-709) discussion on three different theorists such as; “*children perform poorly in school*” (Hill, Augustyniak, and Ponza, 1989); “*Marital disruption negatively affects how children are socialised and puts them under greater stress*” (McLanahan, 1994); “*reduces the student’s ability to concentrate in school and thus reduces performativity*” (Haveman and Wolfe, 1994). These theorists also argued that single parents did not spend enough time disciplining their children, so consequently they got into trouble more often in school.

Moving from the Nuclear Family Ideal

Structural functionalist theories coincided with the economic needs of society at that time while being grounded in a deficit framework model. They also reflected popular ideas contained in History, Biology and Morality. Functionalists understood the family as a key organ in a harmonious society where everyone played a part in supporting a cohesive society. Families were expected to fulfil their role by contributing to the economy and structure of a wider society. Thus the nuclear family was constructed in the midst of competing sociological perspectives of functionalist, as against the critique of Marxism in an attempt by researchers to best understand the family as an entity. Marxism understood the family as the key manner for exploitative capitalism to flourish, with the father constructed as the `breadwinner` and the mother as the `homemaker`. Marxist scholars in particular, argued that the earlier family structure was based on a style where each member is identified with and through their definite role and associated function. Marx and Engels (1848/2001) helped to de-naturalise the family by establishing that it is not just a natural/biological construct but had an economical and functional structure, which had little concern for emotional ties until recently (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore the theory of socialization developed alongside modernity, replacing the

notion of an autonomous, isolated family unit, with an understanding of family that is constituted by its function and interactions with others in society. This understanding involved the interplay of family subjects with their environment, where external factors were internalized and internal thoughts and ideas externalized, through family bonds, friendships and actions in the world.

Edward and Gillies (2012), in their call to reclaim the `family` as a central focus in sociological studies describe the many ways in which the term family has become more fluid and progressive by using it as an adjective, such as, `family lives` or `family practices`, or as a verb as in `doing family` (p.65).

“One reason why there has been a conceptual withdrawal away from focusing on families to decentre and subsume them within a broader term, is the limits and problems identified with the normative and functionalist idea of `the family`”(p. 64).

They argue for the continued importance of family as a concept in social policies through the reinstating of the importance of the concept of `family`. Wilkinson and Bell (2012) critique Edwards and Gillies` (2012) call to reinstate the concept of family as a misguided and unnecessary move at this time. Instead they caution against summoning up the idea and ideal of the `family` since such definitions could continue to exclude others or create new forms of oppression, tradition or repressive norms. They say it is critical for researchers to continue to think beyond the family in order to challenge the narrow definitions and scope of government policy;

“It is more pressing than ever for us to be speaking out about the ways in which vast numbers of people are excluded by these deeply normative and conservative family policies. From this we can begin to imagine a new form of policy agenda that fully understands the significance of non-familial relationships, of friendships, of ties beyond biological kinship” (2012, p.427).

3). Students` identity is closely tied to family identity

Weedon (1997), Taylor (1994), Skeggs (2004), Devine and Kelly (2006), Hall (1992), and Knowles and Lander (2011) all emphasise the importance of identity in school and in discourse. Hall (1992) defines identity as a bridge that gaps the inside and outside, between the personal and public worlds (Hall, 1992, p.274), *“Identity stitches the subject into the*

structure”, and is now understood as a changing concept whereas in the past identity was constructed as fixed;

“Since identity shifts according to how the subject is addressed or represented, identification is not automatic, but can be won or lost. It has become politicized. This is sometimes described as a shift from a politics of (class) identity to a politics of difference” (Hall, 1992 p.280).

Identity is closely associated with discourse as it is understood by post-structuralists to be constructed in and through meanings of `sameness` and `difference` in discourse. (Weedon, 1997; Hall, 2008; Erickson, 1987; Taylor, 1992; Skeggs, 2004; Devine and Kelly, 2006; and Knowles and Lander, 2011 all write about the importance of non/mis recognition and discourse. Skeggs (1999) writes from the view point of sexualities and dis-identification, but there are parallels between her research and mine. Fear of certain types of recognition- leads to mis-recognition, which can result in many marginalized groups being rendered worse off so they prefer a position of invisibility. She claims that visibility politics are additive rather than transformative; *“It is a politics of assimilation not opposition”* (Skeggs, 1999, p. 227). Truths, meanings and school practices all have a bearing on student identity (Youdell, 2011; Butler, 2005; Carrington, 2002; Harwood, 2006; Smyth, 2006; Ecclestone, 2011). These researchers, together with many others, are concerned with how power works in societies to produce certain subjectivities, those who belong and those who are excluded. Their writings, like those of Foucault help to make sense of the complexities of everyday life such as identity constitution through critical analysis. Youdell (2011) writes about ideas of identification and subjectivity for students who are trying to make sense of the meanings and recognition which school assign to them;

“The importance of recognition and identification is made clear when we turn to the consequences of not being recognised. One tool for thinking about the subject who is not recognizable within the terms of the prevailing subjectivizing discourses is the concept of `abjection`. The abject subject is the subject who is both outside the terms of recognizability and conceived of as threatening to contaminate those within its terms. The abject subject is a risk, a threat, and must be expelled” (p.42).

Knowles and Lander (2011) also write about multiple belongings in diverse societies where young people pick up the dominant identities which impact on them and they learn to `perform` that identity. They assert that it does not matter how a child`s family is constituted; having a family to attach to, however `diverse` it may be, is what is important for a child to thrive;

“At any one time we may need to prioritize one narrative of our lives above others depending on the situation we are in. For example when we are in the classroom we may be focusing on one aspect of our identity and narrative of our lives that requires different things from us to when we are out with friends” (Knowles and Lander, 2011, p.27).

Difference is negotiated in school spaces

Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2009) write about the image of a disintegrating family system as a metaphor for other social anxieties, since the family is changing together with many other facets of society. They reflect social change through ideological and spatial control and in the ways public and private spaces are mediated. Their insights are enlightening when applied to the way in which schools manage space and family policies. Their work illustrates how spaces are culturalized and specialized, in that practices such as discourses are lived in space; *“The organisation of space defines relationships in the specific context of a set of interactions and activities”* (p.9). Their concept of *‘in-between-ness’* is interesting in portraying a younger generation negotiating their identities through space, place and time. Students pick up on these heteronormative understandings of family and can be highly conflicted when their family unit is not represented or valued in the dominant school discourse. They may internalize the negative *‘othering’* of their family unit and end up feeling different, which for teenagers, is the worst possible feeling. Dominant pedagogical practices and discursive frames used in schooling tend to remain aligned with portrayals of the traditional type, leaving other family types ignored or misrepresented. Many students rarely see their own kind of family represented in their school culture and so may be rendered silent as a result. Fine’s (1991) work on student silencing by dominant school discourses is insightful in understanding how student subjectivities are constructed in and through classroom conversations. She writes at length about how and why schools silence some students and privilege the voice of others; the hegemonic academic voice of teachers together with *‘normal’* students are heard while the voice of the minority is shut down and dismissed as irrelevant.

“The formal and non- formal ways schools control who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled. There persists a systematic commitment to not name those aspects of social life or of schooling that activate social anxieties; with important exceptions, school-based silencing precludes official conversation about controversy, and critique” (Fine, 1991, p.33).

Hall (2002), like Fine believes that when teachers or adults are silent and awkward about a topic, they end up silencing the youth as well in a given school context;

“Her (teacher) feelings are important and pupils are expected to be sensitive to them. Permission to express such personal views lies with her only, not with the students. The ideational aspect is privileged in the discourse while the inter-relational is understated” (Hall, 2002, p.184).

Fine and Weis (2003) invite teachers to *“Create a space in a classroom in which difference is interesting, not hierarchical”* (p.3). Schultz (2009) writes about student silences and the different types and reasons for being silent in the classroom. *“The students are not always silent; they are silent in response to locally specific contexts and activities”* (p.29). Schultz quoting Wortham (2006) explains, students work together to construct their peers as certain kinds of people, including silent ones. She gives an example of students such as Zakiya who enacted a stance of silence *“to protect her family and community which was not well understood by others in her school community. It may have been necessary for her to keep parts of her life hidden and outside of their gaze”* (Schultz, 2009, p.41), because circumstances and assumptions seemed to work against her. This resonates with the double bind dilemma in which students find themselves in within Irish classrooms, unable to be open about their family identity due to disciplinary practices operating there. Bosacki (2005) writes about the culture of classroom silence and writes that students who feel silenced by the school atmosphere may *“have a negative influence on their mental health”* (2005, p.123). She touches on topics of *“inner chaos”* and *“hiding my real voice”*. She learned very early on in her education that *“student speech was valued only contingent upon the teacher’s agenda”*. Lewis (2010) suggests that children’s preference for silence warrants more notice and better listening skills on the part of researchers. *“Listening better includes hearing silence and that silence is not neutral or empty”* (p.20).

Smyth (2006) captures the confusion between the meanings students attribute to themselves and the social identities made available to them inside and outside of school. He quotes Gilroy’s (1993) *double consciousness* in explaining that young people consciously take on different identities, depending on the context in which they are in and with whom they are speaking; *“Many young people are living multiple consciousness, living in one reality at home, in another reality with peers, and then negotiating another reality at school”* (Smyth, 2006, p.290). He goes on to argue that unless schools create a relationship of trust between teachers and students then students will become disengaged and develop an *“oppositional identity”*, rejecting the negative identity the school assigns to them by refusing to learn/ behave (Smyth, 2006, p.349). The student’s family is often blamed for this disengagement but Smyth

maintains it is a clash of frames of reference due to the lack of understanding on the school's part. He supports Bingham and Sidorkin's (2004) book view that;

“Relational power is a set of resources in that it draws upon trust and co-operation between and among people, and acknowledges that learning involves the power to get things done collectively by confronting rather than denying power inequalities” (Smyth, 2006, p.292).

This multiple or double consciousness resonates with Foucault's description of the inmates' `true selves` / docile bodies, being created or manufactured by one or several technologies of power (Foucault, 1977, p.22). Critical theorists re-frame the question of `difference` with the understanding that it is the system/ schools which need to adjust to social and familial change, not the families. The discourses of the institution tend to stratify families as problematic and as an extra burden on their system, whereas post-structuralists assert that it is the school which is the problem- since it fails to adapt to family changes through silencing and distancing tactics. Alternative family types are not reflected in school textbooks or discourses. Bures (2009) looks at the objective reality of family change and society and poses the question differently- that is-whether social norms have adjusted to family realities? Her lens on society adjusting to new family types as opposed to families adjusting to the discourses of society is useful for post-primary schools, as they need to reconsider their practices in relation to family changes. Her research, which highlights ongoing family transitions and their consequences for individual lives, challenges society to readjust their constructions of families; *“Family roles and expectations have changed over time. Not all children are raised in nuclear families”* (Bures, 2009, p.580).

Mulcahy (2012) writes about student identity and the importance of attending to the affective dimensions of teaching and learning as well as to the academic aspects. She argues that classrooms are affective spaces which allow for students to *“become”* (p.23) through the various connections made through classroom discourses. She quotes Blok (2011) as saying: *“All pedagogies are situated, produced and taken up under particular sociocultural conditions”* (p. 21). Mulcahy claims that identity and belonging are the affects which connect with learning effect;

“Good teaching is in contact with the moving dimensions of experience that allow for affective connection. Basically the good is affectively defined as what brings maximum potential and connection to the situation” (p.23).

Popular depictions of family become deeply ingrained in the school's psyche and space which portrays the traditional family type as the happiest in school books (see Chapter Five), literature in general and in the media.

"You probably know them personally, but in any case you've seen them in a thousand advertisements: the father, the mother, the little boy, and his older sister, alighting from their new car at the charming small town church" (Jacobs, 2005/Laidlaw, 2006, p. 43).

Laidlaw, who researched families involved in adoption, suggests that by changing the way we talk and think about different sorts of families might loosen the grip on negative cultural messages around diversity so that some families are not more privileged in schools over others;

"In fact the "messy" diversity such children and their families bring can create new openings and strengths within classroom collectives, as well as offering learning opportunities that would be less likely in homogeneous groupings. While educators might broaden the ways they represent "family", we can also ask children themselves to consider ideas of family and relation in more complex ways" (Laidlaw, 2006, p. 50).

She mentions assignments such as the `family tree` which expect students to trace biological maternal and paternal lines. It represents narrow assumptions about family compositions and family history and can be very distressful for students from adoptive, single and same-sex families. She quotes Davis (2005) in suggesting that teaching might be framed as *"the consciousness of the (classroom) collective"*, and stresses that it is important not to ignore the aspects of the collective that do not fit normalized assumptions;

"Today's families are wonderfully diverse and include multiracial families, gay and lesbian parents, foster families, children being raised by grandparents and other kin, non-related households, step and blended families, children being parented by mothers or fathers who have placed a child for adoption, as well as families formed or expanded by open or closed adoption. All children learn when all families are respected" (Wood and Ng, 2000/Laidlaw, 2006, p. 49).

4).The failure to question family ideology has allowed all sorts of mistaken ideas to persist

While the aforementioned understandings of family were useful in understanding many aspects of family living such as emotional ties, character formation and so on, they do not reflect the everyday dynamics of culture and family life, particularly not so in the twenty-first century. Such constructs do not allow for human agency or the power of the individual to work the structures to their own personal preferences. Neither do these sociological constructs

allow for variations in family unions, such as homosexual unions, single parenting, lone parenting, child-free unions or divorce. Such deficit theories do not include the voices of the young people in question, what particular family issues caused their stress or what other variables exist in their home or school. The influence of extra-familial factors such as schools, peers, and neighbours are not considered either. Commentators such as Friedan (1963), among others, have helped to untangle family talk from the biological and structural binds of narrow research to open up alternative ways of theorising family. Friedman highlighted the oppressive and constricted agentic aspects of domestic drudgery, emotionally starved marriages, alcohol abuse in homes and violent spouses. These arguments, reflecting a post-structuralist family paradigm, reiterate those espoused by 18th and 19th century feminists who sought to expose family troubles which were concealed from public scrutiny for fear of undermining the `traditional` family.

“The failure to question the idea of `the family` has allowed all sorts of mistaken ideas to persist, such as the naturalness of monogamy, the inevitability of female inferiority, the right of many men to control and abuse women, and the right of parents to control and punish children”
(Bernardes, 1997, p.4-5).

5). Poststructuralist understandings of family

Within a post-World War Two context, women`s increased participation in the labor market, increased sexual freedom in societies, and the liberalization of divorce laws in various countries, ensured that the static constructs of womanhood and family were questioned. The critical perspectives of these feminists (Weedon, 1997) highlighted family diversity and the fluidity of family living thus helping to phase in another construct of family- that of the post-structuralist paradigm. This changing construct of family as `contingent` rather than `fixed` can be termed a post-structuralist paradigm of family. This position argues that people/families are not entirely defined by endlessly repeating structures, but that their agency allows them to make various meanings by allowing for personal choice, while being cogniscent of how power mediates in and through such interactions. Researchers began to realise that the biological and structuralist approach to theorising families was too narrow, since social structures such as class or gender hierarchized different family types as being more or less `stable` and `moral`. They questioned the belief of family constructing society as over-determining of the place of family in social life, and also queried the opposite assertion, that society constructs family as too fixed, pre-determined and passive, neither being an

accurate reflection of family living. Other critics say that the structuralist paradigm was too deterministic in claiming that individuals are formed through social structures, such as family or school.

Today the term `family` has expanded to encompass a broader range of family compositions, so much so that most family researchers agree that it was no longer acceptable to describe `the family` as a monolithic traditional entity (Bernardes, 1997; Carrington, 2002; Giddens, 2009). Giddens, a renowned sociologist, traces the changes in family life (in western Europe) from the traditional nuclear family to new family types such as; binuclear, reconstituted, single family forms, co-habiting, gay and lesbian parents, and families who adopt or foster. Reconstituted families is the term that Giddens gives to what is generally referred to as step-families, where one or both of the partners have children from a previous marriage or relationship. The term bi-nuclear family refers to a family formation, after a divorce, where two households with children come together as one entity. *“Members of these families are developing their own ways of adjusting to the relatively unchartered circumstances in which they find themselves”* (Giddens, 2009, p.361). He identified five main family types whose definitions are all parent-centered: 1: Organizational (e.g. breadwinner or dual-career); 2: Cultural (e.g. ethnic minorities, feminism); 3: Life-course (single-parent, divorced); 4: Cohort (generations); 5: Sexual diversity (same-sex). He mentions that while this diversity generates satisfaction and self-fulfillment for some, such trends affecting marriage, the family and sexuality, is creating great anxiety for others. He critiques O`Neill (2002) as saying; *“We must reinstate the traditional family, which was much more stable and ordered than the tangled web of relationships in which most of us find ourselves now”*(Giddens, 2009, p.376). Evolved understandings of the term `family` allow for different and adaptive forms of family living and generate a multitude of personal and societal discourses around it. Bernardes (1997) attempts to understand the *“enormous variation and diversity of everyday family living”* (p.30); his work on family studies acknowledges that the construct of the family as nuclear/traditional is an idea with remarkable strength and power.

“Family ideology, supported by family sociology, has ensured that we pay attention to white, middle-class, two parent families. At the same time, family ideology ensures that some aspects of social existence are simply not seen or become invisible. For example, traditional family theorising has ignored the possibility of widespread abuse or unhappiness in `the family`” (Bernardes, 1997).

He establishes that ideology presents society with ideas of right and wrong families and those sociologists have failed to recognize a multiplicity of family types due to the power of traditional family ideology. He quotes Gittins (1974) as asserting that; *“If one thing should have become obvious by now, it is that to speak in terms of “the” family is totally misleading”* (1997, p.43). Thus the sense of more than one type of family is presented by Bernardes, allowing for diversity and change. He suggests we develop new family discourses and theorising as a way of capturing the enormous richness of variation and diversity in families today. The model of *‘Family Pathways’*, is presented in his work, which portrays a sense of the uniqueness of each family group` path in life and its links with other subsystems of the community.

“We share the necessity of facing and coping with similar events or situations, this does not mean that we all experience those situations in the same way. This begins to hint at the enormous richness of variation and diversity in human family living, which is precisely the objective of developing alternative theorizing about family lives” (Bernardes, 1997, p.49).

Carrington (2002) recommends that we should penetrate popular stereotyping of families, in order to understand how and why family forms are part of a changing set of social structures and modes of governance.

“Any theorization which is to claim relevance for new times must be able to position families of difference, whether this difference be cultural, racial or sexual, without recourse to technologies of lack or misfortune” (2002, p.9).

Post-structural discourses around families allow for their identities to simultaneously shape, and beshaped by them. Such discourses will probably be appreciated in time as ruptures, contesting wills to power, where there is an attempt at reshaping social structures and social practices by agented parents, students or teachers who no longer want to be just shaped by them.

Methodologically unsophisticated `truths` seem to have overestimated the effects of divorce on children

The interdiscursiveness of ideology, economics and morality in societies, at home and abroad, ensured that few depictions of *‘happy ever after’* families are seen or heard in the dominant cultural depictions of family life. Good parenting and family stability were constructed as the bedrock of a good society. Children/students from non-traditional type families were constructed as in need or victims of parental selfishness. In 1993, Wallerstein wrote that children with divorced parents often reach adulthood as psychologically troubled individuals

who find it difficult to maintain stable and satisfying relationships with others. More recent findings of research are not amplified to offer counter-arguments, such as; *“As many as half of the behavioural and academic problems of children in marriages whose parents later divorced were observed 4 to 12 years before the separation”* (Kelly, 2003, p.32). Earlier research such as Wallerstein’s is also contested by sociologist Amato (2003), who says that the estimated effects of divorce are not as strong as previously claimed and that the major disagreement between her and other social scientists involve the fundamental question as to how large and pervasive are the negative effects of divorce on children. He also criticizes her sampling methods due to an absence of a comparison group, and her qualitative approach (not selected randomly) as opposed to quantitative; *“Methodologically unsophisticated studies may overestimate the effects of divorce on children”* (Amato and Keith, 1991). Amato’s review of her work states that;

“Wallerstein recognises that divorce can sometimes be a beneficial experience for children....her analysis represents useful descriptions of the complex patterns of events; emotions and experiences that often connect parental divorce to developmental problems for children” (2003, p. 339).

Wallerstein claims after a twenty-five year longitudinal research project that she is not against divorce; *“I’ve probably seen more examples of wretched, demeaning and abusive marriage than most of my colleagues...I don’t know of any research, mine included that says divorce is universally detrimental to children”* (Wallerstein, 2000, p.298). She goes on to state that children in intact unhappy or violent families face misery in childhood and experience tragic challenges in adulthood (2000, p.300).

Neale’s, work in 2002, found that the children of divorced parents were constructed as *‘children in need’* whose interests are to be safeguarded by the State and School (similar to the Irish Constitution 42.5). He carried out in-depth interviews with 117 young people, who were living under a variety of post-divorce/separation arrangements. His aim was to understand what matters most to these students, and what their identity is within their families. He also wanted to investigate if these children’s` voices were being heard in policy debates around post-divorce family life. His findings are very insightful for my research as he contrasts the rhetoric on children’s` rights to what happens in reality, particularly in an acrimonious divorce situation, and whilst my thesis is not directly concerned with the impact of divorce on children, such findings in the areas of social services and children need to inform research on schools and families. He discovered that children who were involved in

meaningful conversation with one or both parents during the divorce proceedings were happier than children who were not engaged or consulted. He does not give figures or statistics but implies that they were in the majority of the children he interviewed. These children did not want outside agencies or their parents making all the decisions regarding their futures, neither did they want responsibility for decision-making, but they did appreciate being consulted and involved in the whole decision making process. Children who were not engaged in meaningful conversations during the whole process expressed feelings of entrapment, helplessness, marginalisation and stress. Neale's findings are very enlightening for the education of people involved in working for family diversity. He sees the child at the heart of the whole process, and concludes that "*Child-led agendas do not necessarily fit the agenda of the courts*" (Neale, 2002, p. 466). The answers he gets from the disgruntled group of children would reinforce the thought that children's agendas are not always the main priority of some parents either, at that difficult time. Neale gives arguments from various interest groups in favour, and against involving children in court decisions. Respondents in his survey had said that they would only involve professional help as a last resort, so that leads me to understand from his overall findings that the parent/s communicating openly and honestly with the child is the best antidote to off-setting the effects of divorce on children.

"In the context of divorce, they are treated as part of the family system rather than as individuals whose interests might diverge from those of their parents. Where disputes arise over arrangements for their care, there is a marked preference for dealing with the parents and resolving disputes through parental agreement rather than engaging directly with the child" (Neale, 2002, p. 456).

Neale also highlighted the futuristic understanding of childhood, the sense of an unfinished person until they reach adulthood. He suggests we recognise and appreciate the child in the now, as well as acknowledging the child's ability to articulate its own needs and wants at present. He grounds his research in various educational and legal findings but bemoans the absence of the child's voice in legal, educational and psychological circles;

"Family law thus operates according to a welfare paradigm that allows for a limited notion of children's agency, one that recognizes children's competence to speak but only in carefully prescribed circumstances and according to adult agendas" (Neale, 2002, p.458).

Maes and Buysse's (2011) research stress the importance of listening to young people and the importance of reassuring them that they are loved. They found that a good living arrangement for children is one that takes their needs into consideration, one that shows them that they count, that they matter, more than the disputes over access or structures. "*For children's well-*

being it is important to know that they matter to their parents". If they do not sense this, children feel they disappear in the whole divorce process, as if they did not count at all. In this case, children are more likely to assert their right to decide for themselves (Maes and Buysse, 2011, p. 277). Gubrium and Holstein (1990) argue that the shifting nature of family living needs a new discourse to replace the idea of family with an emphasis on *'being family'*, which is also a theme which Smart (2004) has developed. From her findings as a qualitative empirical researcher, Smart suggests more emphasis on the fluidity, nature and embeddedness of kinship, rather than focusing on the family as a static unit. She found that alternative family entities can bring new sets of challenges for children as they learn to navigate through new sets of complex relationships, conflicting loyalties and changing allegiances. However she allows for the agency of the young people involved to reconstruct their happiness by being attentive to, and appreciating the new caring adults and new step-siblings;

"Divorce does more than oblige people to change their practices of care, of financial exchange, of cohabitation, and so on, because it pushes people to negotiate new moral terrains on which they have to make decisions about how to act, how to regulate, how to prioritise, how to safeguard their children, and ultimately how to reconstruct family living" (Smart, 2004, p.407).

Educational psychology still tends to be influenced by family ideology

The deficit theories of fragmented families were reinforced by powerful institutions such as the British state, *"There was consensus in the House of Commons (1997) and in popular media that divorce harms children"* (Smart and Neale, 1999, p.177). Similarly in Ireland the dominant images of traditional families are deeply entwined with social constructs of deficit around contemporary families. Lodge and Lynch's *Diversity Report* (2004) quote MacGreil's (1996) survey on social prejudice in Ireland which shows how circulating discourses (probably mediated by the unquestioned findings of social researchers and the media) influenced the portrayal of the ideal family. He found that; *"Just under half of all those surveyed believed that a single mother could not raise a child as effectively as a married couple, with attitudes towards the parenting ability of single fathers being noticeably more negative"*(2004, p.33). Today psychologists still understand family as the primary agent of socialization: the source of influence behind the formation of personality and growth in young people, and the provision of a cultural capital for students within the education system (Lareau, 2003). They tend to confer great importance to the *'normative'* or *'ideal'* family's impact on socio-economic and cultural success, so much so that these constructs set the standard and ideal for what a *'normal'* and *'good'* family means, by differentiating between it and less desirable ways of being family. Family ideology continues to be a powerful aspect in

education psychologists' discourses which influence, in turn, assumptions to which school personnel and students are exposed. These assumptions involve; a) Two parents; b) Husband and wife; c) Biological offspring; d) Traditional family types are easier for schools to manage; e) Students from intact homes perform better within the education system.

Because psychologists studied these social theories they too focus on the individual as a product of their family structure, associating 'good' families with disciplined and interested students. The topic of children at risk is a concern for Ecclestone (2011) who writes about initiatives concerning emotionally vulnerable students which are politically and socially driven, but gain legitimacy in schools through psychology and psychoanalysis. She claims they are the "*latest manifestation of a long running tendency to psychologise intractable emotional and social problems*" (p.91), and that these politically sponsored initiatives are also evident in the legal systems, humanitarian and aid interventions and social policies of Britain, USA, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, South Africa, Singapore, Australia and Canada. She quotes McLaughlin's (2011) view that these concerns would "*transform political and economic fragility into personal, emotional vulnerability that needs support or intervention*" (p. 107). Her references to SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Strategy) and to dismissive and essentialising professional labels assigned to students such as 'at risk' resonates with what can happen for some students when their entry to post-primary school is framed around discourses of family crisis.

"Extensions to informal and formal assignments legitimise participation in emotionally-based pedagogies and knowledge. They also create new power dynamics that reinforce the legitimacy of casual, normative judgements of 'emotionally dysfunctional families' whose children need 'support' in developing emotional skills" (Dress, 2005/Ecclestone, 2011, p. 106).

Dr. Walsh a clinical psychologist with Chicago Centre for Family health, when interviewed by McDonald explained that the term *family resilience* captures for her the various challenges which families face. Her work finds that families respond well to programmes that see them as having potential, and finds that the resilience shown by contemporary families informs her practice with struggling families. She critiques research for being focused on constructs of dysfunction or damage, but added that it is difficult to get funding for family research unless it is problem focused. She says that we cannot have some perfect idealized family model that does not fit most families in the real world;

"Many assumptions about 'normal' and 'healthy' families are socially constructed, influenced by our theoretical orientation, by idealized images of

white, affluent two-parent families, and most of all, by dominant cultural norms and values” (McDonald, 2013, p.236).

6). Family research in Ireland

In Ireland there has been a dearth of research in the area of family in general, but more recently reports on the position of family in legislation are being published regularly. Firstly there are the reports on legislation; in 1996 Article 41 of the Irish constitution was amended by the Fifteenth amendment of the Constitution Act 1995, and was signed into law on 17th of June 1996, providing for the dissolution of marriage in certain specified circumstances. These divorces were structured along the lines of a `no-fault` divorce, which results in many parents contesting each other for a four-year long period of legal limbo over custodies and assets, with `experts` encouraging self-interest and distancing among the adversaries. Fahey (1998) wrote about conflicting family policy paradigms which emerged in the analysis of *The Final Report of the Commission on the Family* between the traditional conservative `patriarchal familism` and more modernizing claims for more `egalitarian individualistic` approaches. Rush (2006) too found a “*sharp division*” between the view of patriarchal familism against those supporting the United Nations equality model in the submissions to *The All-Party Oireachtas Committee (APOCC) on the Constitution 10th Progress Report on `The Family`* (Government of Ireland 2006, pp53-70), between these two sides;

“The APOCC stressed there was a strong connection between those submissions advocating a traditional view of marriage and reliance on American social science research” (Rush, 2006, p.26).

State funded reports such as Mc Mahon and Moore`s (*Post-Separation Parenting Report* 2011) which seems to favor the legal process (financial victors) while constructing both parents as irresponsible and immature (p.30). Such constructs of `irresponsible parents` seem to suit the Irish system because the couple are in a legal limbo for at least four years, which is a deterrent to other couples who might consider a similar route, while all that time the legal costs for both parties accumulate. Consequently the rate of divorce is still relatively low. Their study however is more balanced in other areas of research such as the effect of divorce on children. She quotes family researchers such as Booth and Amato (2001), Hetherington and Kelly (2002) and Kelly and Emery (2003) in their findings that; “*The majority of children with divorced parents enjoy average or better social and emotional adjustment as young adults*” (Mc Mahon and Moore, 2011, p.27). Sometimes constructs of children as vulnerable in these arrangements and without agency add to the poignancy of the public perception of

family changes, so literature which deconstructs the framing of childhood are interesting to use as counter-discourses. This report however, goes on to say that the State should favour support for married families over others (2007, p. 23). This constitutes family discrimination as far as I understand it.

A second type of report is, or may be, government funded through the Family Research Programme, initiated in 1999. *“Family Relationships and Family Well-Being: A Study of Families of Nine Year Olds (8,568) in Ireland”* (Fahey, Keilthy and Polek, 2012), is one of the most recent examples. This report looks at family well-being across various family structures and contexts and provides interesting insights into modern-day Irish families, such as having well-educated parents, particularly mothers, is more important for a child`s well-being than being part of a family where a mother and father live together.

“Differences on the four indicators of child well-being between children of two-parent married families, cohabitating families, step-families and lone parent families were slight or completely absent. In general the educational and material resources of parents mattered more to children`s development than what type of marital or living arrangements they had with each other” (Fahey, Keilthy and Polek, 2012, p. 82).

This Report also states that; *“The results show for intact families, looking across a number of indicators, re-partnered couples (that is partners in step-families) have the highest level of relationship quality”* (p. 46). It goes on to say that since the 1990s, family policy in Ireland has grappled with the types of necessary interventions for disadvantaged families (p.87) but that their findings indicate that *“disadvantage is linked somewhat more strongly to parents capacity to love (or at least live with) each other and that has knock-on effects on children”* (p.89). They conclude the report with the assertion that relational difficulties can occur at all social levels in the population. These findings contradict the `findings` of the 2009, Iona report. Issues of concern relating to children`s best interests, post-separation family relations, and the impact on peers are real issues for Irish people. The *Growing Up in Ireland* report (2012) is insightful in that it presents statistics which suggest that a mother`s educational status has more impact on student well-being than does family structure (Fahey, Keilthy and Polek, 2012, p. 79). Considerations of children as agentic and with rights are also of interest since the Children`s Rights Referendum (2012) voted to allow children more voice in the legal areas of their lives. These discourses around student voice and rights and silencing will be explored throughout this thesis with a view to understanding how students/parent/s and staff are positioned in relation to changing family topographies and the dominant discourses

around it. Texts such as O'Brien (2005) critiques the current discourse of 'parental involvement' in her work on the social positioning of mothers and their role in emotional and practical aspects of post-primary education in Ireland. She writes "*the school system assists in the reproduction of a traditional unequal gender ordering of society and misrecognition of the significance and demands of care on mothers' lives*" (p.224). Her insights into cultural, economic, social and emotional resources are helpful in understanding the various cultural differences between school/home relations.

"Being marginally positioned means not being able to be as effective in doing educational care at transfer because of lack of knowledge and familiarity with the codes and practices dominant in the educational system" (p.226).

Findings around school transfer in her report are particularly useful for my research regarding family adjustment practices as she shows how vulnerable and anxious mothers/parent/s are that their children adjust well in their new school setting. "*Sadness was experienced around a sense of the passing of childhood and the knowledge that their children were entering into a stage in their education and development that would bring new challenges and that held more risks*"(p.231). She mentions Beck (1992) who is frequently referred to in relation to Pastoral Care practices and the prevention of 'risks'. O'Brien's NCCA report (2008) on post-primary schooling emphasises the importance of a sense of belonging, happiness, respect and recognition for students in order for them to have a sense of well-being.

"Inequalities are expressed in the education system through degrees of inclusion and exclusion, both within and between schools and within and between texts, syllabi and subjects. Groups who are marginalised may internalise this 'othering' and experience their identities differently" (p.158).

The gendered order of care is also researched by Lynch and Lyons (2008) and the affective and emotional aspects of schooling by Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007),

"A schooling which is compulsory must also be assessed in terms of its impact on the student's sense of self-worth and well-being. Attention must also be given to the affective implications of teaching work for teachers and of the emotional demands that schooling makes on parents, particularly mothers"(p.14).

Mooney Simmie (2013) supports this view of the ethics of care for each student. She criticizes our education policy makers for focusing on European targets (p.498) as opposed to justice for all within our education system.

"There is no time allowed for a discursive approach to the ethics of care and concern for the different needs of pupils. These are perceived as a problem for

the teacher to solve and not for the policymaker. According to Sandel (2009) this lack of moral engagement in education has led to assuming that respecting our fellow citizens convictions means ignoring them in a stance of silence and avoidance” (p.495).

The lack of moral engagement in schooling is also reinforced by Lynch and Moran`s (2006) findings on post-primary parents` choice of school. Some parent/s seem to choose a school as a means of attaining a higher socioeconomic future for their son/daughter. This is the economic capital O`Brien (2005, p.224) refers to and the `private good`, as opposed to the `public good`, as referred to by Mooney Simmie (2013, p. 486). Findings from their research suggest that the affective and caring dimensions of schooling seem to be cast aside in the interests of meeting economic and social capital, such as the OECD`s league table targets instead of focusing education on emotional capital.

Devine (2012) argues that young people are agents; people in their own right whom she believes should have a say in their educational, legal, religious and familial rules and regulations. In 2002 she argued that primary school children have the capacity to be active agents in their own right. Her research found that children showed resistance to the `otherness in adult-child` relations (p.315). The childhood construct of innocent dependency is being replaced by a construct of child competence acknowledging the diverse voices, values, role and abilities of children within Irish society. Her research also treats of the importance of peer relations as a key element of “*children`s connectedness to*” (Devine 2012, p. 315) and a sense of belonging in school. A book entitled *Understanding Children* (Cleary, Nic Ghiolla Phádraig and Quin (ed.) Volume 1 and 2, 2001) encourages an understanding of childhood, not as a fixed biological given, but as a social construction, which is constantly in process and reconstruction. Section 2 of Volume 2 shows children actively involved in the construction of their social selves, and rather than being passive or unfinished, as the older perspectives of childhood had understood. O`Donoghue`s (Chapter 3) “Parental Separation-Children`s Responses”, also gives insights from children who readjusted to their changing family pattern;

“Where interparental conflict declined, predominantly in the post-separation period, peer relations improved for most children; this supports the family conflict perspective, which notes that the adjustment of the child to parental separation improves with the passage of time if inter-parental conflict subsides” (Amato and Keith, 1991/O`Donoghue, 2001, p.64).

These findings have implications for parent/s and professionals who work with children/students from non-traditional families in understanding the agentic nature of young

people and the need to involve and consult with them in relation to family changes. Also these research findings highlight the importance of how adults deal with conflict and in reducing its effects on children, as being more important than family structure type. Research by Darmody, Robson and McMahon (2012) on the transition from primary to post-primary education highlights the pressure students and parents experience to belong and do well in their school settings, and may go some way to explaining why they are prepared to take on the subjectivities offered to them by schools, even when such subjectivities are anathema to them. “A high level of social capital has been found to contribute to better school performance, increased students` well-being and help protect individuals from involvement in anti-social behaviour” (p.32). This text may explain why educators tend to encourage potentially problematic parent/s/families to be self-governing so as to prevent them from becoming a burden on the school system and/or add to their work load.

Research involving Parents

Research relating to non-traditional parent/s and their dealings with school is very limited. Most appear to welcome the apparently liberal consent model of school against the repressive right winged previous model of educational control. However some parents remain fearful that being too open with the school could be problematic if their family entity is other than that of the norm. They are fearful of finding themselves in a double bind or catch 22 which could classify them as different if they tell about their particular set-up, or if they do not tell they may feel dishonest about their identity. Vincent (1997) captures this dilemma somewhat when she asserts that “*parenting has shifted imperceptibly away from something `natural` towards something that can be learned and can be perfected, or at least, improved*” (p.272). She considers how the civilizing process extends to the monitoring of other parents and children as well and helps to shape emerging constructions of the good parent versus the bad parent dichotomy, with schools expected to assume responsibility for neglected children through state intervention schemes such as Counsellors, pastoral care teams and pastoral care policies. Nakagawa (2000) researched parent involvement in schools and teacher discourses relating to it. She claims that school discourse controls who gets involved, and how that involvement is structured. She writes about the `double bind` (Jamieson, 1995) of their involvement, criticised if they are too involved and criticised if they are not involved enough. Her research advocates a radical shift in the prevailing parent involvement discourse as she questions the power plays and constructs of what and who constitute good parents, and who is privileged by these dominant discourses.

“The parent involvement discourse has created particular definitions and understandings of legitimate parent involvement, as well as commonsensical notions (Bové 1990) of a good parent....What role do parents perceive they should play? ...The expectations and perceptions about parents are constructed by the language of policies that guide parent involvement, by school documents dictating what parents should do, and by myriad texts that frame a particular kind of parent as being better than others” (Nakagawa, 2000, p.445).

Van Krieken`s (2005) work on the `civilizing of parents` in divorce contexts, could be applied also to educational contexts. Non-traditional families who do not have the `ideal` family structure may be viewed as unstable or in flux, by schools and other structures in society which tend to reinforce a narrow family ideology through their meanings, symbols, differences, spaces and `expert` knowledge about family constructs. Uncontested circulating discourses around families can become a technique, a form of power which serves to limit and silence conversations on non-traditional family living because they normalise how family members should live, work, and interact with each other, while prioritising the `*best interest of the child*` approach (Van Krieken, 2005). He suggests that the construction of the `*best interests of the child*` approach is part of a much “*broader and deeper set of processes of change*”, suggesting that it is a political maneuver to broaden the governing of family life, and childhood through the education system;

“We are all compelled more and more to regulate our conduct ‘in an increasingly differentiated, more even and more stable manner’. Elias referred to this increasing self-regulation as a process of ‘psychologization’ and ‘rationalization’ because it revolved around the growing reflexive understanding of our own actions, those of others, their interrelationships and their consequences” (Elias, 2000/Van Krieken, 2005, p.42).

Research involving school staff

Research findings note that many educators and parents assimilate the dominant school discourse around family entities, whether consciously or unconsciously. The college courses that teachers attend have been influenced by the psychological-deficit findings which focus on the structural aspects of single-form families and the consequent effect on college entry, and socio-economic difficulties (Lillard and Gerner, 1999, p.707). Teacher and parent representatives who are on school associations/boards tend to become immersed in the values of the public education system and fail to think about alternative ways of understanding social constructs other than the institutional lens. Allen (2011) critiques the private use of reason by

teachers who act as part of the education system without reflectivity on the values being promoted.

“Whilst employees should demonstrate obedience in day-to-day administrative-functional tasks, when it comes to more abstract, less directly practical matters, they are permitted to make public the use of their reason in the interests of a wider citizenry. Obedience in carrying out one’s duties is to be combined with the facility to address a wider citizenry on issues of public concern” (2011, p. 371).

Code words such as parent or guardian enable educators to talk around family in ways that are perceived to be safer and less threatening; the hegemonic academic voice of teachers and `normal` student is heard while the minority voice is shut down and dismissed as irrelevant. Non-traditional family entities tend to be obscured and silenced by these patterns of discourse in schools despite the fact that the traditional model is a less than accurate representation for many families. The silencing acts of `family talk` by school staff and school institutions render the subject of family invisible.

A study by Santock and Tracy (1978) researched thirty undergraduate and graduate students attending the University of Texas in Dallas about stereotyping of students from non-traditional type families. They were not told the reason for the study; *“None of the subjects detected that all were seeing the same videotape and that the experiment actually concerned stereotypes”* (Santock and Tracy, 1978, p.756). The interesting outcome was that each rating was less favourable in the divorced home condition compared to the intact home condition, suggesting that some students are more likely to be seen negatively by teachers, than a similar child from an intact family. The authors of this research suggest that; *“Future investigations should attempt to identify those characteristics of teachers that render them more or less susceptible to stereotypes about children from divorced homes”* (Santock and Tracy, 1978, p.757). Becky Francis (2001) writes about teacher identities and how they articulate different views, depending on who they are with and where they are situated;

“This social construction of self has always been recognised by social constructivists (e.g. Berger and Luckman, 1966; Shotter, 1989). Just as we temper our speech depending on our perception of the views of those with whom we interact, so too their perceptions of us, and responses to us, inform our constructions of self” (Francis, 2001, pp. 157-172).

Prado (2011) writes to challenge power inequalities that are typically veiled under the language of institutional neutrality but thwart civil rights objectives by focusing on student or teacher performance mandates. He gave an example of a Latina teacher;

“In this case she was expected to ignore the context of inequality that structures and fractures the lives of poor Latina/o students- her own as well. In addition to that feigned ignorance, she was expected to exercise an apparently neutral gaze, one that sought to expose supposed deficiencies of rural Latinos and their need to meet standard institutional goals. No questions would have been contemplated, of course about the organizational goals themselves” (Prado, 2011, p. 419).

So interestingly, teachers themselves who are `outsiders` can become victims in the entangled discourses of post-primary schools and are unable to say anything for fear of compromising their employment status. They cannot freely express their personal understanding of family changes or their empathy with students from non-traditional family set-ups, or those with homo-sexual tendencies. Their personal lives cannot be seen or heard to be in conflict with that of the school ethos. McNamara and Norman (2010) also write about this issue of teacher subjectivity where their identity conflicts with the ethos of faith based schools and their vulnerability around employment status as outlined in Chapter Four.

7). Family recognition involves valuing all family types

Charles Taylor`s book *“The politics of Recognition”* (1994) argues for recognition, but one based on being a human being, as well as based on one`s distinctiveness from others. In Irish schools, this would involve recognition for teachers and students from various cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and family entities, to name but some differences. The governance of families in schools seems to be about homogeneity and standardisation, taking on the subject position which the school offers; that of the `good` student. Non-recognition of difference in general enables schools to continue without change or adjustments and to focus only on the `good` students and the `good` families so as to maintain focus on academic pursuits. Blum (2001) critiques Taylorian recognition as group based distinctiveness, as only one strand of what students want from recognition, and suggests that they should be; *“also recognised as equals to their fellows in class and in school-equally worthy of their teacher`s attention, of educational development, and so forth”* (Blum, 2001, p.555). He furthers his argument for institutional recognition by quoting Steele (1999) who found that African-American students were more engaged with their studies when they saw themselves reflected and honoured in the curriculum and organisational life of their school. Nancy Fraser reinforces this belief when she was interviewed in 2004;

“Look, what is really important here is not the demand for recognition of a group’s specific identity, but the demand for recognition of people’s standing as full partners in social interaction, able to participate as peers with others in social life” (Dahl, Stoltz and Willig, 2004, p. 377).

The desire for institutional recognition for their family identity could allow for new ways of being family to be seen and valued, but the risk for many students may be too great because they could be given a badge of difference or deficit, depending on their school setting. Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Weakland (1956) developed the idea of a double bind to help explain that when levels of communication breakdown a paradox is generated, an authentic connection is severed. Ringstrom (2003) critiques relational moments such as private sessions with counsellors as *“need and fear”* because *“these moments create treatment dilemmas exacerbated by their not being recognised, which entails the analyst’s collusion in preserving their “blindness”* (Ringstrom, 2003, p. 202). He recommends individuals break out of these unacceptable binary positions which are unacceptable as relational constructs, and to develop instead an alternative space without unacceptable opposites. This sense of in-between-ness helps to capture students’ confusion in relation to the governance of their family difference (among other difference-constructs). They are in a no win situation, a double-bind-between being open with the school to be ‘sorted-out’ or pretending that their family is ‘normal’ so as to blend in with their peers, even though their good friends know that it is all an act.

8). Conclusion

The aforementioned constructs of family compositions and associated discourses in the field of education are very topical in the changing demographics of family forms. The evolution of family definitions is interesting and the lens on the power plays around it renders it exciting and relevant. Silences seem to have allowed the space around school-family discourses and theories to be filled by negativity pertaining to crisis around ‘difference’ in family. Because of this deficit discourse, teachers, school psychologists and administrators may focus their concerns around the safety and legal aspects of family diversity, from a childhood best interest perspective, without any reference to the voice of children. Consequently, discourses may get entangled in double-binds and awkwardness around non-traditional families due to socially constructed complexities. Those family voices which may currently be constructed as different need to be heard and listened to so that family diversity can be understood as a norm and a fact of life for many students, rather than an aberration or anything weird.

Reports such as the *Growing Up in Ireland* (Fahey, Keilthy and Polek, 2012) give positive outcomes for students from contemporary families, with the emphasis for educational success being linked to the quality of family relationships, rather than family structure, as Smart (2004) advocates. These positive findings need to be amplified to enlighten educators about the realities of children`s home lives and its impact on education, so as to allay their fears in relation to family changes and issues of stability. The dearth in family research from an educational aspect is particularly noticeable given that it is one of the nine areas selected for attention by the Equality Authority Acts (2000, 2004) gender, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of a travelling family.

The theoretical approaches which I have treated of in this chapter give insights and suggestions for alternative and broader perspectives on families to be heard. They also suggest that more balanced approaches to research should be considered, so that cultural and patriarchal patterns can be modified. The positive aspects of family theories from the past could be adapted and improved on so that they could become compatible with contemporary family living. The hope is that the field of family research will evolve with time through social constructs to allow for different and adaptive forms of family living, resulting in a hybridity of personal and societal discourses around the concept of family which will not exclude any family type. Such understandings could help to inform professional practices in schools and politics so that in time many young people from non-traditional families could find themselves inculcated, or *“coming to own discourses, to position themselves inside them, to act and think and talk and see themselves in terms of new discourses”* (Fairclough, 2003, p.208). Also research factors which are not limited to economic or gender factors alone would help in going forward with family research. Relational perspectives assume that the individual, family, community and society are all interconnected and inseparable and should be researched accordingly.

Theoretical issues are dealt with again in the next chapter with an emphasis on subjectivity within an educational setting. Foucauldian and post-structuralist concepts are difficult to grasp so in order to facilitate an understanding of them I have framed them as they apply to school personnel involved in Pastoral Care discourses.

Chapter 2: Theorising the School-Home Bind through a Foucauldian lens

1). Introduction: Foucault and post-structuralism

This chapter is structured in a form which aims to explain the key concepts used throughout the full thesis. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is the key post-structuralist writer I draw upon as his philosophies in the field of Literature, Politics and History provide a deeper understanding of the institutional effects of discourse on official knowledge, power and subjectivity. Post-structuralism as a movement is difficult to summarize but can be broadly understood as a rejection of the determinism of structuralism (as described in Chapter One) and involves an exploration of power operatives in social structures, such as schools and families through the use of analysis of discourse. His basis presumption is that knowledge is never found without power, or power without knowledge. His insights on power show it as a relational entity which pervades the social body, and manifests itself in human interaction/discourse. In using his concepts of governmentality, normalization and pastoral power I hope to decipher why some family units seem to be privileged by dominant discourses in our education system while other families compositions seem to be entangled with negative connotations which render them not a family in the `normal` sense of what a school recognises.

In the past `the family` was equated with social ordering, academic focus and economic welfare, at home and abroad. People were exhorted to protect it and take part in the micro technology of power in safe-guarding it as an institution; *“In the 1920’s the emphasis on the function of the family was heightened by a pervading fear that this core unit of society was imploding”* (Byrne, 2008, p.362). Using Foucault’s lens on present day family structures and how they are managed in schools involves a readjustment of how society has internalised the fixity of constructs such as marriage, and to consider instead the multiple experiences and understandings as to what `family` means today for many students. Foucault’s terms which will be explained throughout this chapter are used to examine the organisational processes through which certain families are exhorted to recognise themselves as non-normative, or in need of adjustment. His concepts of panopticism, contagion and regimes of truth are interwoven throughout the study in order to help the reader to understand the seemingly innocent surveillance and tension filled policies of school-family practices which are mediated through benevolent initiatives such as Pastoral Care programmes at post-primary level. The `truths` and ideologies governing school structures are treated at length in Chapter

Five, and are traced in order to demonstrate how official texts succeed in giving the subject of the text (e.g. family) an institutional and physical form.

Discourses, regimes of truth and normalisation

Discourse in the Foucauldian sense encompasses the various utterances spoken, written, signed and enacted, as a means of meaning making for people of each era. Discourses can be spoken, written, enacted, symbolic or simply thoughts. Discourses are the ways in which we make meanings around people, things and issues such as families and education. Foucault's lens suggests that our discourses, because they involve people and are constantly changing and being changed by them are never value-free, and are always political. Being post-structuralist he believes that all meaning in society is constituted in language, within a specific historical context, and never free of political intent. Every utterance, every letter is political. Foucault claims that power, knowledge and discourses are inseparable, they form a politics of knowledge, a govern-mentality because the `truths` or cultural meanings are the network through which power gains its legitimacy to govern people's lives, e.g. by quoting the psychological `experts`, politicians or bishops. These are called dominant or institutional discourses.

Other discourses may be inter-personal or subjugated discourses. Discursive ruptures can be understood as counter-discourses, which take understandings of concepts such as family apart, with a view to looking at alternatives ways in which to frame or understand it, because discourse is not a free-floating language, or a deterministic one, it can be shifted by human resistance to the institutional arrangements. With the aid of the reflective philosophers such as Foucault, Wodak and Meyer (2009), and Butler (2005), the bio-power and disciplinary power discourses which construct subjects, in this instance families, through normalizing discourses, can be challenged. Foucault states; "*one escaped from the game of truth by playing the same game differently or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards*" (Foucault, 2000, p.131).

Counter-discourses, or ruptures as Foucault calls them, consist of questioning dominant discourses by exposing ideologies hidden in the organisation of the school/ state discourses. Such discourses such as how the discourses of the larger structures impact on the local school's construction of concepts such as family, while wondering whose interests are being served by this social construction; "*Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it,*

but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Ransom, 1997, p.82).

Foucault's work challenges us to question the 'taken-for-grantedness' of routines/rules of the school game where discourses make the practice of forming subjects as objects of institutional discourse appear routine. This critical reflection on how language and its related practices operate in order to govern populations is commonly referred to as post-structural discourse analysis as it refuses to take discourses at face value. Analysis experts view discourse as socially constitutive as well as being socially shaped (Wodak and Meyer, 2009 p. 38), as a dynamic process which is often contradictory and precarious and dependent on to whom one is speaking. Like Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principle' (1930) where one cannot find the position of the electron without changing its momentum, so too students change school discourses through their family discourses. Likewise school discourses are mediated/or changed by their interactions with each family. Terms such as 'the students' or 'our school' construct an identity other than those assigned in a family setting such as 'son/daughter', 'brother/sister', 'nephew/niece'. Here, it is as if there is a school/home dichotomy operating, with the family as primary care giver being both respected and distanced by the school personnel, and vice versa.

Contagions and docile bodies

Foucault's philosophy specialised in understanding how criminals and mentally ill people were controlled in eighteenth century society, so as not to impact on the general populous. His writings on the panoptic surveillance in the modern prison system (Foucault, 1977, pp.195-229) gives insights into how individuals experienced disciplinary power (control over their bodies) in order to adjust their behaviours for fear of contaminating others; "*to prevent contagions*" (1977, p. 172). People who were considered mad or criminal or a threat to the general population were subjected to discipline rather than violent domination as a means of rectifying their behaviours; "*Thus discipline produced subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies...it turns it into a relation of strict subjection*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). The specific techniques by which a government in the framework of the state was able to regulate groups happened by setting up a system of differences whereby anyone who was judged to be outside the norm was disciplined by a number of techniques until they conformed to the standards of the institution. The gaze worked on the site of each individual and produces individualizing effects-such as the "*docile*" body (Foucault, 1977, p.138).

Panopticism as disciplinary power

Jeremy Bentham`s (1843) architectural form of disciplinary power in prisons was designed to maximise control of inmates from a central tower through the gaze of a monitor. Occasional monitoring of each cell only happened from time to time, but prisoners had no way of knowing when, so they had to assume that they were being watched constantly; *“The panopticon is a machine for disassociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen”* (Foucault, 1977, p.202). Foucault further developed this idea of observation and normalization to consider the notion of bio-power (power over populations) which consists of considering all the means through which modern populations could be governed or controlled, at individual and social levels.

“In all of these ‘official positions’ there are assumptions about ‘how’ to do school and ‘what’ school is supposed to be for and what it is supposed to be like. These normalising discourses sculpt and shape the ways in which schools select, interpret and translate specific aspects of policy initiatives and policy mandates. Again, drawing on the work of Foucault (1979), normalisation is to do with the constitution of measures against which all are to be measured and all are to be evaluated and judged. Normalisation goes beyond any binaried account of good/bad” (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball and Braun, 2011, p. 603).

Later on in his work Foucault developed the idea of govern-mentality to explain how discourse works on the consciousness of individuals in order to mediate power over them - bio-power, not through force, but with their consent.

“We can see the increasing intervention of the state in the life of individuals, the increasing importance of life problems for political power, and the development of possible fields for social and human sciences insofar as they take into account those problems of individual behaviour inside the population and the relations between a living population and its environment” (Foucault, 1988, p.161).

Foucault`s lens and its implications for educational practices is considered throughout this research, shedding light on how the politics of disciplinary power and bio-power in schools construct the `normative` family; (the stable one, which is equated with the traditional type) through discourses of; *Context*-school ethos and historicity (Chapter Four), *Texts*-department circulars and school policies (Chapter Five), and *Practices*-such as withdrawal from class of students of `difference` for adjustment purposes (Chapter Six), the distancing of their parent/s for fear of confrontation (Chapter Seven) and governance of teacher subjectivities (Chapter Eight). Foucault`s analysis of the modes of construction of disciplinary power in institutions

such as schools is applied to the data I gathered during field work in four-post-primary schools from students, parents and school-staff, so as to examine how powerful institutional discourses impact on their subjectivities.

2). Post-structural discourse analysis and subjectivities

Foucault's perspective makes it possible to see this positioning from the lens of the families who are not of the traditional family type- who may be marginalised and not recognised because they do not fit the norm of what the institution constructs the school-family relationship to be. He did not view discourse as linguistic only, but as an all pervasive medium working in and through practices and power arrangements in every setting which involve people. As a post-structural theorist he considers the importance of the social and discursive aspects of a given context in forming social phenomena and individual consciousness about concepts such as family and education, through subjectivities. As noted earlier, he believes that individuals cannot speak, think or act outside of a language context, because as humans we are not free rational beings, but formed in, through and by our discourses. His theory of subjectivity helps to explain the relationship between individuals and their social interaction with institutions such as schools;

This form of power applies itself to everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects (Foucault, 1982, p.781).

Dominant school discourses tend to impact on individuals sense of self and their interactions with others, and induce them to become subjects of a school system in order to belong. Subjectivity refers to the positioning of an individual in a given discourse, within a particular context. Hegemonic discourses of schooling place individuals in positions from which they can act or speak, or not. This also impacts on the relationships in which they are situated with others, class-mates, fellow-parents and so on, and the interventions which may become applicable to them through Pastoral Care services. Foucault's post-structuralist lens suggests that discourses form individuals, makes them 'subjects' of the institutions through techniques of power so as to make them easier to govern. In schools students, parents and staff come to recognise themselves as subjects of the education system to the point of transforming their personal identities because they need to identify with the particular subject positions, or

practices made available to them by the school. They thus becoming objects to the schools' technology of power (Foucault, 1988 p.18);

These powerful constructs may cause difficulties for some students or parents in how they relate to the subject position being offered to them by the school authorities, and how they relate to others in relation to their positioning as 'different'. Weedon (1997) writes about identification issues for individuals with particular subject positions within discourses;

“The discursive positions within discourses are a constantly repeated process, which begins at birth and is repeated continually throughout life, and which has implications for the unconscious as well as the consciously remembered subjectivity of the individual human agent. Discourses are realised in institutional practices, for example in the family and the school...the dominant discourses assume the unitary nature of the subject...to be inconsistent in our society is to be unstable. Where there is a space between the position of subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced” (Weedon, 1997, pp. 108-109).

School values and programmes of education offer various subject positions to parents and students, as well as staff, which can be accepted or rejected, depending on their individual circumstances (similar to Foucault's 'examination' 1977, pp.184-194). Subjectivities or the role of individuals within discourse, the key audience at which school discourses are aimed will be dealt with in Chapter Five through school policies and curricular materials. Later on accounts which students give of their relationship to the school environment from a family perspective are analysed so as to understand how they are positioned in relation to family diversity (Chapter Six).

Student identity is closely associated with traditional family subjectivity and discourse, since both are constructed in and through techniques of organising 'sameness' and 'difference', in dominant discourse. Most 'lay selves', because they do not understand the complexities of the system, are willing to cede power to the school institution in order to fit in and belong. They begin to identify with particular subject positions within the system, even though they do not necessarily agree with them; society has a tendency to work with, not against the system. Subject positions such as the 'good student' or the 'responsible parent' or the 'professional teacher' are taken up and enacted by individuals who want to succeed within the education system; the 'good self' works with, not against the system. Students, teachers and parents construct their own subjectivities within the school setting according to the discourses available to them, 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988, p.48). This research emphasises

the *sociality* of the school personnel in relation to family differences, how these individuals describe their constitution in and through the complex network of hegemony, and where they see themselves located within it (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). During my field studies, I listened to the ways in which individuals reconstructed their identity in and through these discursive formations. I also met with personnel who are shaped and constituted by the discourses of their institution, but not determined by them. Because the terms of recognition or subjectivity are not fully their own, individuals often contest them. Also their positioning was transient and influenced by their own inner discourses in relation to the particular school environment.

Parent subjectivity

Dominant school discourses seem to be aimed at parents to initiate them into the post-primary school. Their subjectivity is constructed as `the parent` of such and such a student. Discourses such as notes home and homework to be signed, as well as parent-teacher meetings all constitute them as subjects of the school institution (Chapter Seven). This research questions how and why families become subjects of school discourses through dominant regimes of truth; how some families are stratified as `normal` and others `deviant`. I am interested in hearing how parents enact or resist these identities so that counter-discourses to disciplinary powers in schools involving family entities can begin. The liberal school-home partnership became clearer with initiatives such as the `White Paper on Education` (1995);

“The government is committed to promoting the active participation of parents at every level of the education process. It also supports the right of parents to be consulted, as part of the collaborative process for educational decision making and policy making at school, regional and national level” (p.140).

This document allocates a public and egalitarian role to parents in school control. Foucault`s bio-power and power/knowledge lens would suggest that the construct of a working `partnership` is no deeper than a disciplining technique to seduce parents with the hope of inducting them into becoming subjects of the education system. Parents who readily accept the subjectivity offered them by the school are fashioned as `good`/ `normal`, whereas parents/families who do not conform to the structures and expectations are deemed problematic or deviant. Foucault`s lens on this *disciplinary power* suggests that it works at a very subtle level to produce docile subjects who internalise the dominant school discourses of what is in the best interest of their child, in order to regulate family living. Parents of truant or undisciplined students are often constructed as negligent and not responsible about enforcing

adequate discipline. Other parents are fearful of the bad influence this behaviour may have on their children in the classroom-the containment of contamination or `contagions` which Foucault speaks about. Such threats are contained through state/school initiatives such as the Pastoral Care programme (Chapter Four) which enables school intervention in areas where they normally would not venture.

“Foucault specifically aimed to show how with modernity the self was constructed in discourses in which power relations were established around the formation of subjectivity by the application of particular modes of knowledge.it seeks to reveal that knowledge is not emancipatory, but heavily implicated in the shaping of social institutions in modern society” (Delanty, 2011, p. 82).

Foucault claims that institutions such as family and schools are constructed along with all other social identities and institutions through multiple discourses which are constantly shifting and varying. These discursive constructions of social identities suggest that family living and its interplay with education, was and is given meaning by, and its members made subject of the institutional discourses of Law, Medicine, Religion and Social Welfare. His post-structuralist lens suggests that discourses form individuals, makes them `subjects` of the institutions (such as schools) through techniques of power so as to make them easier to govern. In schools, students, parents and staff come to recognise themselves as subjects of the education system to the point of transforming their personal identities because they need to identify with the particular subject positions, or practices made available to them by the school. They thus become objects of the schools` technology of power (Foucault1988 p.18);

“As the genealogies of Nietzsche, Foucault and others have suggested, if forms of subjectivity, along with other kinds of cultural artefacts are “manufactured”, then it follows that something has been left out, put to the side, suppressed. What has been left aside, what has been repressed, has been manifestly subjected to the cohesive and repressive action of a particular exercise of power....has been imposed by practices protecting... hegemonic identities” (Ransom, 1997, p. 106).

Teacher subjectivity

School-staff, involving principals, teachers and school secretaries are also made subjects of the school institution through constructs of contract, role expectations and professionalism; Subjectivities such as `the teacher` or `our school` frame them as deliverers of a system and restrains them from working against it (Chapter Eight). Literature pertaining to attitudes and assumptions about families show that particularly those in areas of authority reiterate and embody the dominant school discourses through the subtle manipulation of their subjectivities

via networks of pastoral practices and shared representations of family as `good` or `problematic`. They regulate *the conduct of conduct* (Foucault, 2000, p. 341). Resistance and agency is rare in teachers or in other parents because their discursiveness is bounded by their interactive environment which sensitizes family discourses. Unless their positional lens (Glazier, 2005) has been adjusted due to personal experiences, such as divorce, same-sex partnership etc. they do not usually consider family living from an alternative view-point;

“Positioning refers in part to the ways in which speakers orient themselves and one another in conversation. Our subject positions become articulated and further defined through our discourse. Because discourse is central to the work of teaching, our subject positions play out loud and clear in classroom contexts; As a result, teachers often, albeit unconsciously, privilege some students over others, students whose discourse, actions, and ultimately, subject positions, may seem more like their own” (p. 232).

This is helped according to Foucault by the *“dividing practices”* (1982, p.777) which are transmitted through dominant understanding about various key aspects of life, rendering the subject divided either inside himself or divided from others. This process objectifies him such as; the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminal and the good. In schools, dividing practices work on `differences` to the norm, such as the normative family or the deviant one. Schools use these dividing practices as ways of forming individuals into governable subjects, to make them objects of the system. They discursively articulate certain ways of being and acting in any given situation in school which subjects internalise, because to appear inconsistent in society, is to be categorised as unstable (Foucault, 1977 p.184, Weedon, 1997 p. 109).

“In analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. ...of no longer treating discourses as groups of signs, but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault,1972, pp. 48-49).

3). Genealogy

For the purpose of this study, the genealogy of school and state discourses around families need to be researched in order to understand present-day resistances to contemporary families. Foucault defines this type of historicising as genealogy. His lens can be applied to the dominant discourses in Ireland in decades past when certain individuals and particular groups were silenced, while other voices, such as those of the politicians and the clergy were allowed to dominate. This will be the subject matter of Chapter Five, which will trace the gaps and contradictions which resulted in a piecemeal understanding of certain concepts such as

`family` in the past, since it was constructed as private; *“Genealogy works to uncover the battles that gave birth to the world we accept as normal, to make it questionable again, and to make it possible to fight over it once more”* (Foucault/Ransom, 1997, p.5). The lens provided by genealogy is that of a history of the present structures or institutions, such as family or schools, where one sets out from a present day perspective, in order to trace backwards the mechanisms (mainly discourses) by which power operated in order to control and normalise populations. Foucault felt there was not just one history of a time, but many other histories, such as that of women, prisons, family life, and all things social.

4). Foucault`s lens on pastoral power/care in schools

Foucault`s lens would suggest that the circulation of discourses through policies and programmes are practices of power since they are not neutral or constant, but political and constructed, and are used as a form of panoptic control (Foucault 1977, p. 195) governing what goes on in every school. Foucault termed this care of others, Pastoral Power- the states way of addressing the miseries of modern life, with the spiritual texts on salvation being replaced by worldly ends such as health and well-being. The secular pastor in the form of a psychiatrist or `expert`, encourages the individual to open up and reveal their innermost secrets for their own good and for the benefit of the institution and society.

“What Foucault comes to analyse are the interdependent processes, during which in the course of the last few hundred years repressive and centralised forms of state power exercised by the sovereign evolved into more decentralised and diffused forms of power exercised by myriads of institutions and by the subjects themselves, which Foucault will term governmentality” (Fimyar, 2008, p.5).

This form of resistance to power or governance involving families in schools is used in this study to allow for more emancipatory understandings of family compositions to emerge by `hearing, seeing and speaking` the discourses of the individuals involved. The insights into school discourses were also enriched by the help of Ball`s framework of policy trajectories (2006) which reinforce Foucault`s stance that discourses are not neutral, but political, and are used to serve the interests of the status quo through the dominant norms within a given context. Ball (1994-2011), a post-structuralist policy expert, asserts that the differentiation around certain topics/families in school is not accidental, but structural and cultural. *“Policy is text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended”* (p.10). Ball et al (2011) claim that policy discourses around student care and behaviour are *“actively translated and complexly enacted into practice”*, resulting in

discursive productions of the `good student`, the `good teacher` (p.600-605), and for this study it can be applied to the construction of the `good family`. They examine how school policies justify the deployment of a wide variety of `expert knowledge` constructed across school boundaries to justify behavioural interventions with students. Disciplinary procedures and standards guide families towards desirable outcomes which ensure the smooth running of the school system, together with their co-operation. The equating of traditional families with social, academic and personal success is bound up in school policies and ethos (Chapter Five). The disciplinary regimes of the schools will be examined to see if they operate through a number of key technologies such as; Discipline and School rules (Panopticism-Foucault, 1977, pp.195-228); Enrolment procedures, (Examination-Foucault,1977, pp.184-194), Standardisation and Assumptions (Normalizing judgement-Foucault,1977, pp.177-184) in order to position and adjust families within school structures.

The Pastoral Care/power structures in different schools tend to take various forms and names depending on what model of personal-social structures suit their organisation of, and support for, the student as a person and as a social being. Changes to such power structures seems possible by comprehending and rethinking the constructive processes, because the state`s role may have changed from repression to care but its pastoral power continues.

5). Conclusion

Foucault writes about the political technologies used to contain and adjust any threats or risks to society, what he terms a mechanism that works in and through institutions to produce particular kinds of subjects, knowledge and truths (Foucault, 1977, 1980) in order to govern people in response to the wishes of those in power. His analogies of panopticism and normalization as explained above, together with his other key conceptual tools are used throughout this thesis to throw an alternative lens on family technologies used in post-primary schools. How people and their families are deemed to have certain identities and how they engage with or resist these identities through their interactions with the school and their fellow students, parents and staff, will reflect how they are positioned in the power plays of school discourse. Foucault`s contribution to critical theory is not exhaustive. He offers no solutions to these dilemmas other than to suggest we become more critical of power relations, to analyze it through discursive ruptures, so as to provide alternative lens on the particular phenomenon.

The analytical tools used for this research are examined, together with the tracing of institutional and interpersonal discourses so as to question the governance of family identities in four case study schools, through Discourse as Context (Chapter Four), Discourse as Text (Chapter Five), and Discourse as Practices (Chapter Six-Students), (Chapter Seven-Parent/s) and (Chapter Eight-School-Staff). In this research I liken my findings to the analogy of the three wise monkeys; *see* no family, in the assumptions evident in the discourses of educators, students and parents, *speak* no family, in the silencing practices around sensitive topics, so that the actors do not mention family in class, and *hear* no family, in the need for students to go to the school counsellor or a class teacher with family issues. `Family` seems to be an absent presence in educational texts and in classroom conversations. I am asking how students, parent/s and staff negotiate their identity, in and through these discursive practices. Families exist even if they are made invisible by institutional discourses. The State and school leaders do not seem to recognise, or may not want to recognise that changes in family structures are the result of various complex social changes, such as class, gender and human rights, interwoven with social arrangements such as welfare and immigration. It seems to suit those in power to continue to associate family difference, based on biological and functionalist constructs, with negativity and under performativity.

Greater analysis is needed to understand how particular `truths` around the construct of family came to be entangled with post-primary educational aspirations and school interventions, so post-structural discourse analysis (PSDA) is employed throughout this research as an attempt to understand at a micro-level, how power, language and subjectivity all become interwoven in the contestation of family meaning making through social institutions such as schools. This process is explained in more depth in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Chapter 3 Methodology

1). Introduction: rethinking school-family research paradigms

This area of research interest focuses on family discourses, post-primary students, and schooling. A school's pastoral culture pertains to the discursive practices which constitute and regulate the family in educational institutions. The main concern of my research surrounds non-traditional type family entities that seem invisible within this pastoral framework. Students are increasingly being raised in a range of different family types, such as sole parent, blended, and same-sex, yet school curricula and teaching practices still seems to assume the traditional/nuclear type for all. The literature reviewed thus far suggests that family type difference seems to be embedded in a deficit knowledge base which favours 'the' family unit. This research questions the institutional privileging of one family structural type over others in schools and the theories on which it is grounded, since it no longer adequately captures the life world of many students. It is interested in inquiring into what a postmodern investigation into family discourses in schools can reveal about school practices which seem to value this type of family while devaluing all others. Critical post-structuralist analysis through the lens of Foucault's genealogical critique together with Ball's (1994, 2003, 2006, 2011) use of Foucault's mode of thinking about power, knowledge and language will be used in the study and critique of educational policies. This analysis will help to reveal who benefits from the different meanings applied to the various family forms and the categorisation of normative and deviant families. By critiquing how power and knowledge work through family discourses in school contexts, it is hoped to show the contingency of family framing while questioning the motives of the various powers who maintain such discourses.

The analytic framework

This chapter considers the methodological aspects of collecting data from the key players in four empirical case studies across schools which were researched as separate sites but cross-sectioned in analysis, by making links between three main strategies. The traditional approach of generating data first and then analysing it afterwards is not the route I am taking since the post-structuralist domain does not separate one from the other. Therefore I am writing about theory and data generation as one and the same since my research is already involved in the vast web of knowledge and disciplinary power. This chapter is organised around this basis in terms of three research strategies of context, text and practices. These strategies trace family

discourse: Firstly, as policy context so as to examine cultural influences on how family is constructed; Secondly, as family discourse within text, to make linkages between the distributed mechanisms through which policy is stated; Thirdly; family discourse as school practice, which involves tracing the experiences of the agents involved. This framework is somewhat similar to Ball's analysis of policies; policy as text, policy as discourse, and policy as effect (2006, pp. 43-53). The approach adopted in my study re-works the ordering, or emphasis, of this discourse analysis process. This is necessary not least because the family tends to be an absent presence in educational policy texts at national and local school level. In order to excavate the apparent absence of meaning in these texts, it is first important to do the genealogical work at the level of Irish society which makes family 'appear' as an absent presence: a separate, distanced institution from that of the school. In addition, the methodological emphasis in this study is not one of text production and circulation, as such, although it is important to include this work in the study.

Similar to Harwood's (2006) approach to analysing the linkages between institutional genealogies and subjective experiences of today's institutional practices, this study is primarily concerned with examining the organisational practices through which certain families, and family members, become non-normative, and at best peripheral, to the cultural life of the school. This involves writing a genealogy or 'history of the present' of how family is produced through modern Irish institutional (primarily educational) history. It also involves exploring, through case studies, the contemporary experience of students, school staff and parents. The focus here is on how-the techniques of how they and their family belong or not, and strategies through which they are persuaded into peripheral modes of belonging.

Critical post-structural analysis

Defining this case began with the problematisation of family constructs in post-primary schools and the need to meaningfully recognise all family unit diversity. To address this dilemma I needed to attend critically to how discourses work across all aspects of school life so as to understand how the intertwining of the various discourses such as meanings in text, meanings in school policies and meanings around voices and effects happened. I mentioned Deleuze's (1990) analogy of the rhizome earlier like a capillary system of roots beneath the surface. To understand the how, where and why of their movements, the gardener would have to dig the layers of soil on top of it to reveal the workings beneath. I liken the critical post-structural analysis to this form of excavation, lifting the layers of school governance so as to

look at the workings of the rhizome of discourses at play to understand the contingency of family constructs.

Chapter One provided a back-drop to this analysis by reviewing the relevant literature involving families in educational research as an initial step to understanding the discursive layers with a view to recognising that local school discourses are often mediated by larger orders of discourse and vice-versa. Chapter Four examines education policies and curriculum to unearth the influencing discourses on present-day literature. In Chapter Five, contextual and historical factors are unearthed as part of this methodology to trace their impact on family construct from the present, genealogy, to the past. Foucault's (1977, p.129) challenge to make genealogy something that stirs us from the taken-for-grantedness of life—a critique which “*will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say and do as so many historical events*”. This chapter on genealogy lays the foundation for methodologically excavating family discourses as school context. This was undertaken so as to analyse key political and social ruptures to family processes across time and context. An examination of the power relations which shape school-family structures became necessary because, as Foucault (1972) suggests, one is not interested in history for its own sake but to understand how history positions events, discourses and so on, in order to understand the way things are now and to change them if they are unacceptable;

“In the family, parents and relatives became the chief agents of a deployment of sexuality which drew its outside support from doctors, educators, and later psychologists, and which began by competing with the relations of power but soon “psychologised” or “psychiatrized” the latter” (Foucault, 1972, p.110).

As a poststructuralist piece of work the production of school-family knowledge had to be explicitly problematized throughout my whole thesis as it impacts on all sections. Chapter Six, Seven and Eight draw links between; the discourses of text, the discourses of context, and their impact on the various practices and positioning of students, parent/s and school staff in each of the four school regimes. This chronological ordering allowed the tracing of dominant family discourses as reported by students, parent/s and school-staff, while at the same time illuminating the absence of other type of family entities.

2). Research activities involved discourse tracing and crystallisation (Table 1 p.56)

Dominant family discourses are analysed in terms of their multifarious practices by which meaning about family are reflected and enacted. Foucault (1972) suggests we examine the

relationships between continuities and transformations so as to consider the ways in which this discourse makes practices appear routine- normalization. Family discourses in schools were traced to make links across three levels of discourses; family discourse as historical context is discussed in the next chapter, family discourse as policy text will be discussed in Chapter Five, and family discourses as school practices which constitute how families are mediated in post-primary schools, as reported in student interviews, will be evidenced in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven will examine parent responses, and likewise Chapter Eight, school staff responses. This process closely traced the emergent themes from the data as well as noting the specific absences across multiple sites. See Appendix 1 as an example of how the emergent themes were analysed.

“In order to illustrate how discourses operate across micro, meso and macro levels, discourse tracing pulls from multiple sources of data to support claims about how discourses scale up or bear down on practices” (Le Greco and Tracy, 2009, p.1525).

There are debates around what counts as knowledge in qualitative and quantitative research (Mertens, 2005), but the post-structuralist view of knowledge generation would not be to find definitive answers or truths, since they believe that such truths are contingent and are reflective of what has been and continues to be constructed by society. Therefore my goal is not to offer truths involving families in schools, but to explore post-structurally the subjectivities offered to students, parent/s and school-staff within their school institution so as to consider their implications for their work/study. The metaphor of the crystallization process is used by Ellingson (2004) to capture how a variety of qualitative methods can be integrated to offer partial truths on socially constructed phenomena; *“Ellingson does not emphasise seeking truth through crystallization, rather many truths can and will present themselves through different forms of inquiry”* (Vik and Bute, 2009, p. 340). By crystallizing them it becomes possible to show that schools construct non-traditional families in different ways, in different contexts, thereby de-naturalising the apparently `given` way schools tend to construct families. It shows that these marginalization processes are not an individual deficit, as student/parent/staff are led to believe, but a large-scale institutional deficit which has to isolate and silence difference as a threat to its very regime.

Partial `truths`, or constructed understandings of social phenomena such as family positioning in schools, could lead to ways of re-considering how non-traditional families are mis-recognised and to offering alternative visions by *“thinking otherwise”* (Foucault, 2000, p.

131). Therefore a combination of the transformative and pragmatic epistemologies were chosen as a way of doing just that, since this post-structurally informed study could not hope to capture school-family relations entirely for students, parent/s or school-staff.

“The ontological assumption of the transformative paradigm holds that realities socially constructed, but it does so with a conscious awareness that certain individuals` occupy a position of greater power and that individuals with other characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions” (Mertens, 2007, p.216).

The transformative approach was selected as being the closest to Foucault`s critical post-structuralist understanding which could be applied to the multiple realities of family and its contingency within the ambiguities of school and social interaction. Komulainen`s (2007) work on the contingency of children`s voices in research captures the idea that constructs such as `real voices` of children (or indeed any human) are not fixed, but very much produced by, and in, the context in which it is deployed. Such research understandings also reinforce the work of Harwood (2006) who said of her research;

“I am attempting to write stories of their subjugation and disqualification, to craft accounts of subjugated disqualified knowledges that can support a genealogical criticism of the diagnosing of disorderly children” (p.16).

The pragmatic approach allowed for flexibility in deciding what methods matched specific questions and purposes of this study, which allowed for the mixed-method approach in the use of surveys as part of my initial methodology. The rationale for using a survey (Appendix 2 and 3) was used as a starting point with which to reach young people in schools and to gain insights into how they understand family diversity to be recognized in their school. I was cognisant that this method tends to categorize and normalize and so as a method of generating knowledge, not compatible with Foucault`s philosophy. I decided to employ it as a starting point, as a means of reaching students for subsequent interviews, as well as a chance to establish research questions for our interviews. The survey was a type of testing the waters before the full study and it was a relief for me at that time as an amateur researcher.

The survey responses raised a variety of issues relating to family difference for young people and schooling. It would seem that these questions have been given little space in socio-cultural research or interest up to now, and neither has the school-home relationship from the changing social perspective, since divorce legislation is relatively new in Ireland (1996). An extension of this research could be an investigation focusing on the discourses between

families and schools, through the tracking of distancing practices from the lens of students' homes. However due to the breath of such an investigation it was considered beyond the remit of this project, since my main concern was focused on the need for family diversity recognition at school level. The transformative paradigm also helped me to be cognisant of power plays in operation through school discourses and to reflect on issues such as whose reality/family is privileged here, and whose is underprivileged and why?

Table 1- Types of research activities employed

Type	Description	Analysis Used
Family Discourse as Policy Text See Chapter Four	National and local School Policies Curricular Material relating to School/Homes Chapter Four	Discourse tracing and crystallisation
Family Discourse as School Context See Chapter Five	Case Studies of Four Post-Primary Schools across three areas- Students Parent/s School Staff	Discourse tracing of individual school policies and influence of ethos on PC Crystallisation of findings
Family Discourse as School Practices (Chapters 6,7,8)	319 Senior Students in Four Post- Primary Schools surveyed and Interviews; 14 student interviews 7 Parents 3 Principals 8 Teachers 3 School-Secretaries	Discourse tracing and crystallization of 319 survey responses and Codes, categories and themes are traced to develop a theory

A discussion of the approach taken to each of the three levels of data generation and analysis is provided below.

Family discourse as school context (Chapter Four)

This involved an examination of the Irish school context in which discourses are situated to make links across the history of Irish Education, school management and ethos as well as local school conversations. The perspective of this study is a socio-cultural one, tracking the impact of history and discourse (including institutional arrangements, practices and forms of language) on each participant (Chapter Six, Seven and Eight) in a given school setting. School policies as text (Chapter Five) which were formulated in each specific school setting were gathered and analysed so that their impact on the interview personnel could be understood.

The interviews of each student, parent and staff member within each specific setting was noted as a means of tracing how discourses are intrinsically connected to setting (Chapter Five-Context) by interweaving policies and practices, local and national to suit their school's specific construct of family difference.

Family discourse as policy and curricular text (Chapter Five)

The data gathering of the various utterances involved interlinking meanings between formal institutional discourses and informal conversations including texts, school contexts and school practices. The textual data evidence in the form of DES literature, curricular materials and school policies were traced to search for historical, cultural and religious ideologies in attempts to co-ordinate family practices across national and local sites. Critical Post-Structural Analysis was employed to point to the ways in which family is represented in school literature and how subjugated truths such as biological and stable become synonymous with good, while unstable and different are equated with not so good families (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994, Haveman and Wolfe, 1994). This involved the tracing of the dominant discourses within DES texts, which are inter-twined with comprehensive understandings of international and national research on family living and its framing of what constitutes good family practices, 'the good parent', through developmental psychology (such as Piaget, 1952) in educational settings. These child development knowledges become "*regimes of truth*" (Foucault, 1977, p.38), which govern normal and desirable ways to feel and think about child development, happy families and school services. From a Foucauldian lens it could be claimed that these 'truths' serve to normalise and regulate the relationship between teachers, students and parent/s. The norm becomes the measuring stick for well-adjusted students/families/school. "*Normality - like inequality- is the production of inclusion and exclusion*" (Mc Naughton, 2005, p. 46).

Sociocultural development theories such as Vygotsky's "*situatedness of mediated action*" (1978) are being reviewed in terms of socio-cultural theory today but the wider power relationships within which these practices are situated still need to be considered, (Hall, 1992), so as to consider the contingency of family framing, and the power interests behind it. Using Foucault's critical analysis of modes of constructing, such as family, would suggest that these texts (knowledges) construct a 'grid' of school-home relations within which families are expected to fit and be recognised as fulfilling or lacking. Policy production and its impact on the shaping of local school discourses are implicated as the technologies which

enact family discourses in specific school circumstances. Pastoral Care structures seem to be the key medium through which these school-family policies are implemented. Dominant PC texts guide unquestioned family intervention in school contexts as a legitimate practice. Ball claims that;

“Policies are always incomplete insofar as they relate to or map on to the `wild profusion` of local practice...Policy as practice is `created` in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/ freedom ...control can never be totally secured, in part because of agency” (Ball, 1994, p.11).

These discontinuities allow spaces to rethink the negative connotations of deficit and harm around family difference, and in doing so, provide counter-discourses to school-family silencing which is made to appear natural and above critique. These dominant assumptions and `stable` constructs of family which social theorists posit as `truths` (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) are questioned through new post-structural perspectives on family and through disrupting the contradictions inherent in present day school discourses. Foucault and Ball offer useful and productive ways to look beyond these normalising knowledge claims to consider the power relations whose values and interests frame classroom practices, so as to critique them in the interests of justice and transformation for families who are marginalised.

Family discourse as school practice (Chapter Six, Seven and Eight)

A mixture of qualitative (case studies, individual interviews, and textual analysis) and quantitative methods (large scale questionnaire surveys of senior students in each school) were used within a post-structural/transformational paradigm to investigate four schools and their discourses on families so as to inform possible future practices about representing all families. This involved the tracing of specific school discourses which were played out in the everyday classrooms and interpersonal conversations. Students, parents and school-staff were given an opportunity to voice their understandings of the school-home bind, and I highlighted how these social actors participate in the construction of this bind, given their subjectivity within the system.

3). Case studies

I had considered approaching the case study research as a comparison among the four schools, but decided instead to focus on the key players, students, parents and school-staff, across the schools, so as to trace their reflections on family governance. This enabled me to focus more on the disciplinary practices used in schools as a means of representing school

personnel's institutional and interpersonal discourses and to see things, like Foucault, from the margins as opposed to the perspective of the establishment or the status quo. It is an ideal way of showing the resistances which he encourages us to see, by not making normative comparisons of schools as if they were fixed, static institutions, but crystallising themes across them in order to show the particular ends to which practices are used in order to question the power plays involved. This epistemology of discourse tracing in the shape of four case studies was adopted as the most suitable methodology to understand 'family discourse in post-primary contexts'. By using this structured focused comparison between the data given in each interview by each participant in each school, it became possible to lift out patterns and observations from the data set (Appendix 4).

“Discourse tracing emphasises how the human instrument –as influenced by close reads of past literature, experiences gained during data collection, and the chronological ordering of that data-is implicated in drawing out qualitative observations” (Le Greco and Tracy, 2009, p. 1532).

Le Greco and Tracy, like Foucault, emphasise the positionality of the researcher, the human instrument. Much thought and soul-searching was involved throughout the process and will be treated later on in this chapter as a section on reflexivity, after the research data is presented. The case study's strength is its ability to deal with a wide variety of evidence, and the flexibility to dig deeper at certain times. It also allows for the interviewees to explain how they understand the ways in which their school discourses enable or restrain family discourses and how they make connections between institutional and interpersonal practices. Their accounts may reveal if family is disciplined differently in each school so as to reflect contingencies of situational discourses. The tracing of the key players in their case studies allowed for flexibility in probing pre-determined questions around family framing, while delving deeper during the semi-structured interviews. Experts claim that the case study method is relevant the more questions require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon, which impacts on them personally;

“For researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important in two respects. First it is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply as the rule governed acts found at the lowest levels and in much theory. Second, cases are important for researchers' own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research. If researchers wish to develop their own skills to a high level, then concrete, context-dependent experience is just as central for them as to professionals learning any other specific skill” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223).

Flyvbjerg goes on to quote Eysenck (1976) who criticised the case study method initially for producing what he termed- anecdotes, but he later realised the importance of looking at selected cases, not in the hope of proving anything but in the hope of learning something from the people involved.

This notion of not restricting understanding of any concept resonates with Foucault’s notion of “*truth games*” (Foucault 1988, p.18). A phenomenological study of the everyday school discourses of these young students, their parent/s and their teachers provide valuable insights into how they understand family positioning in school, knowledge and power relationships. It traces how they relate to themselves and others via certain types of subjectivities and gives an overview of how some individuals accept the assigned subjectivity given to families, as well as giving examples of others who reject such positioning.

“The key characteristic of phenomenology is the study of the way in which members of a group or community themselves interpret the world and life around them. The researcher does not make assumptions about an objective reality that exists apart from the individual. Rather the focus is on understanding how individuals create and understand their own life spaces” (Mertens, 2005 p. 240).

Ball (1994) claims that this type of research is engaging critically with ‘the real’, but that it is also disruptive since it gives voice to the unheard, in the dynamic power-knowledge relations within specific local settings (p. 4).

Table 2 -The post-primary schools involved

School Name	Description	Interviews	Survey
Hawthorn Heights School	Large urban all boys Catholic Post-Primary (532 students) City centre	5	41-4 th year 47-5 th year
St. Brigits School	Medium all girls Catholic urban Post-Primary (240 students) DEIS region	5	20-4 th year 42-5 th year 9 LCVP
Cogito College	Large all girls Catholic urban Post-Primary (481 students) Suburb	4	69-4 th year 66-5 th year
Mount Eagle School	Large mixed Community School, Post-Primary (960 students) Rural	0	25-5 th year

Each of the post-primary schools involved are identified by a pseudo name to protect their identity Hawthorn Heights School, St. Brigits School, Cogito College and Mount Eagle School. Hawthorn Heights School is an all-boys secondary school with 532 students. It is denominationally controlled and is under Roman Catholic management. St. Brigits with 240 students and Cogito College with 481 students have similar managements but both are single-sex girl schools. St. Brigits is a DEIS area while Cogito College is in an affluent part of the country. Mount Eagle is a Community School with 960 students. It is managed jointly by the local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) and the Catholic Church. It is a co-educational school with a majority of male students. The first three schools were very welcoming, if a little reticent, when I explained my research topic. The fourth school was very hesitant, and eventually the principal agreed to only let me give a survey to one group of fifth years and to interview only one person- the Religion teacher.

The table on the previous page has school name, description of school, the amount of students interviewed in each school and the number of students surveyed in each school and from which year group. The discrepancies in the number are explained by the level of openness by each school to conducting a survey with their senior students, and I took whole class groups, or full year groups, whatever number was feasible for the school. I was beginning the research process so I was not very clear on what I was setting out to discover. Interestingly the number I surveyed did not correlate with the number interviewed, because many students probably felt less visible in a non-threatening survey than in a one-to-conversation with an adult/stranger. Also a greater number of students showed interest in an interview with me than actually were interviewed since they did not return the signed consent sheet. Whether they changed their minds or a parent would not sign it, or they mislaid the permission form (Appendix 5) remains unknown.

Gaining entry to the schools

Before beginning the fieldwork I familiarized myself about ethical issues, such as consent, participation, power positions and restrictions, as outlined on page 73 of this chapter. Fieldwork was carried out with students, parent/s and school-staff beginning in 2009 and completed by the end of 2011, in schools of varying size and demographic backgrounds; a mixed post-primary, two all-girls post-primary, and an all-boys post-primary. I deliberately chose different school types to reflect a range of social factors which are ever present in any understanding of family such as school governance, gender construction and socio-economic

factors, even though I did not want to focus my lens on any one of those in particular. So for that reason schools` with a variety of governing bodies, located in various socio-economic environs were selected, but I was remiss in the sense that I forgot to consider researching in a school with a religious ethos other than a Catholic one.

I approached five schools in all and was accepted by three, half accepted by the fourth-Mount Eagle and refused outright by the fifth, which was a rural school, and which explains the predominance of urban schools in my research. The fifth school, an all girls` convent school, was located in a rural town so I wrote to make an appointment with the principal. I took time off school to travel for this meeting and spend an hour explaining my topic and methodology to him on the sixth of October 2009. He seemed agreeable to my doing research in his school but needed to pass the idea at a forthcoming Board meeting. He rang me soon afterwards to inform me that the Board had deemed the topic too sensitive for them and so I was not allowed to do research in their school.

A similar response was received when I telephoned the principal of Mount Eagle to gain entry to the school. He said my research topic might offend parents. I had made contact initially in March 2010, and explained that I would be in touch again in September 2010. I rang him at the end of September and he asked me to get back to him in November. In October (6-10-2010) he rang me to ask if I could write again in January 2011. I got the impression that he hoped I would forego his school due to procrastination, but I wrote again at the end of January and got no reply. I telephoned twice during February 2011, but his secretary always said he was busy. At the end of March I rang again but he was at a meeting, so I asked the secretary if she could ask their Religion teacher, whose name I furnished her with, (whom I knew from the Religion Teacher`s Association) to contact me. When she contacted me (3-3-2011) she had spoken with her principal and wanted my request to do research in Mount Eagle to be once again put in writing.

The principal subsequently rang me (9-3-2011) to set the limits of what my study could involve in his school. He said I could interview the Religion teacher and survey one group of her students but not any of the parents or other staff. I had sent this principal a copy of my survey questions the previous year, so he asked me to delete the last question on it before arriving-the question which issued an invitation to students to be interviewed. When I questioned the principal about these restrictions, he was dismissive and said he was very busy,

mentioning that he was preparing for a Whole School Evaluation, and would be busy until the end of the academic year. I explained that I needed more participants to interview for my case study on his school, but it was a case of one fifth year group and their Religion teacher or not at all. I got the distinct impression that he would have preferred if I had not chosen to do research in his school at all. I was very disappointed by his lack of co-operation.

Data collection procedures

Principals were contacted by phone first, and the purpose of the inquiry was explained to them. Their permission to visit their senior students and survey them about school-family discourses was sought. Their co-operation in contacting a number of teachers and parents for interview on school-family discourses was also sought. I explained to the principals of Hawthorn Heights, St. Brigids and Cogito College that I would visit the senior students (4th and 5th years) at a time that was most suitable for the school and would stay to explain and collect the questionnaires from each class group. It was also mentioned that question 14 of the survey entailed an invitation for students to write their names if they were interested in meeting with me for an interview. A time and date to visit each school was agreed in order to undertake the questionnaire, 319 in total (Appendix 2).

Survey responses

Topics such as silencing, issues of family difference and identity were all mentioned in the responses which I read on the survey sheets (Appendix 3). The two main concerns were with the school as an institution, and the reaction of their peers. Many mentioned the taken-for-granted comments by teachers which revealed assumptions about traditional type families. Silencing in class around sensitive topics was mentioned by many. Fear of being treated differently by the teacher if s/he knew of a student's `difference` was of real concern for all of them, the feelings and fear of being treated differently really came through on these scripts. Lack of teacher understanding was also mentioned, as well as teacher's fears and awkwardness around the topic of family. Fear of mockery by peers as a result of perceived family difference was also an issue raised by some. Comments such as; "*He`s not your actual Dad anyway*", came through. Being able to be honest with friends was a very important aspect of survival for the students. After reading the survey responses I began to formulate and structure my research questions more clearly. Students were suggesting that post-primary schools were not meeting the challenges presented by non-traditional families- for example, in response to a question on the survey; "*Have you heard any comments which showed*

understanding of alternative families?” Most students responded no, and some qualified it with comments like “*it is never discussed*”. Bernardes’s comment about “*how can it be that something so central to our lives, so powerful in driving our hopes and ambitions, is banished to the sidelines?*” (Bernardes, 1997, p.27) came to mind.

The emerging themes and interpretations pointed the way for the interview questions which I needed to ask, such as assumptions about traditional families in teacher talk and in curricular materials. At this point I did not have a definite title for my thesis but in hindsight their fears about how family difference positioned them or their classmates sowed the seeds for my title on the double bind for families in school. Their different lens offered insights and possibilities for changing stagnant school practices involving families, so that future students from non-traditional families will be able to see their family type represented in institutional discourses, and in teacher and curricular descriptions of what it means. I began to question what particular practices do schools use to construct non-traditional families? Do all schools follow set classifications and practices? Are students from non-traditional families deliberately made to feel different in the classroom and if so in what ways do they take up the subject position of `different` or `other`? These questions then led to the concerns that the other key players may have around family discourses. How do `respected` parents view the issue of family diversity in the school? How important is it for school-staff and policy makers to meaningfully recognise the family entities of all students? I drew up a list of semi-structured questions on the basis of what I had heard from the students through the survey, and prepared for the next step- that of digging deeper through the interview process.

Student interviews (see Table 4 p.127)

The students who volunteered for interview were given a consent slip to sign, as well as one for their parent/s to sign since they were minors (Appendix 5/6) via the school principal, to be signed by themselves and another for a parent to sign. A week later I collected the signed forms from the schools and agreed with the principals to revert to them in order to organise suitable days and times to interview the volunteers. The senior students were chosen as the most accessible and mature of the school cohort. Some of these who had volunteered for interview by putting their signature at the end of their survey form, and who had subsequently been given a consent form to take home, did not return the signed consent form, so they could not be interviewed. The principals were willing to pursue them for me but I did not want to put pressure on anyone, so I elected to interview the interested cohort only. The reasoning for

this is that some students may have changed their minds after I left their classroom or they may have reconsidered when they discussed it at home with parent/s.

Guided by the survey responses, I devised a series of focused questions for the interviews to focus attention on how family constructs are situated within and across these discourses (Appendix 7). Local policies were also gathered throughout the course of the visits to each of the schools and used to complement the narratives of the interviewees, because Foucault notes that institutional governance and knowledge production (Foucault 1972 p. 184) of inequalities are produced through the valuing of certain knowledges (`truths`), while devaluing others. These policies provide an understanding of how family subjectivity is discursively constituted within significant school practices.

Fourteen students were interviewed in total. Six students were from marital/nuclear families while eight were from non-traditional family structures. I prefaced every interview by explaining the aim of the research and gave a brief outline of my own biography. Ruth Behar (1993) wrote *“We ask for revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing about ourselves; we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable”* (p.273). This set the interviewees at ease as well as the emphasis of the questions being on how schools could manage family diversity better, rather than on what they or their family could do differently. The interview with each of the young men from Hawthorn Heights lasted for approximately one hour each, on a one to one basis, during November and December 2010. In March 2011, I returned there to hold a semi-structured cohort meeting with all of them together so as to glean more insights and to focus on curricular material which was pertinent to the topic of family.

The girls in St. Brigits chose to be interviewed as a group while all the others agreed to individual meetings. I held two focus group meetings with the St. Brigits girls, the first in February 2011 and the second, a month later. One girl, Clare was not present on the second day and there was vagueness as to her whereabouts. The girls, who seemed to know all about each other the previous month, were uncertain. During the second meeting curricular material was the focus of interest so as to gain their views on it. I met with each of the four girls in Cogito College on an individual basis and spent almost two hours on each of their interviews. I considered returning to speak with them about curricular material but felt we had covered a lot of subjects during the semi-structured interviews.

Students in school four-Mount Eagle College were not interviewed as per their principal's request. This was unfortunate, as the class I had been with for the survey had been most forthright and volunteering of valuable insights. I did not pursue this by assessing them outside the school setting for ethical reasons, and because I did not consider it right to go against the principal's wishes, due to my professional standing as a teacher, and the vulnerability of my position if I undermined a more senior member of the teaching profession.

Parent interviews (see Table 5, p.151)

The interviews with the parents followed those of the students. I spoke with the principals about the possibility of accessing parents from non-traditional families- `outsider` parents, but they wondered how it could be done without reinforcing further stigmatization. Also the principals admitted that they were unsure as to the family structure of many of their students. So I decided to interview parents who are involved in the school- parent associations, as I felt this was the route favoured by the principals as the route of least resistance. As a post-structuralist researcher, I knew this was the line of least resistance, and not in keeping with my ethics, because I felt that they may not be as open about the school's politics of difference if they were sourced by the principal. However I was not going to risk the principals' refusal to do research there, given that I had lost two out of five principals at this initial stage, so I gladly accepted. With hindsight I was recruiting the `institutional selves` without even realizing it. While these parents were not my first choice, I felt their discourses would be reflective of the `respectable` parent cohort of the school. It would also be a means of unearthing their taken-for-granted discourses involving families.

Their times were arranged by the principals for the research, in their school setting, where I explained my research topic to each before the interview began. I also treated the topic of ethics and confidentiality with each one and asked for a signed consent for their interview data to be used as part of my thesis (Appendix 8). I also gained their written consent to tape our conversation, as it would be useful in deciphering the interview later. Two parents represented each school and an extra parent was added to the mix in one school as one student I had interviewed volunteered her dad, who was constructed as an `outsider` (Appendix 9/10).

School staff interviews (see Table 6, p.175)

I planned on starting the interviews with the four school principals to gain access as well as to probe their practices and perspectives on family diversity. It would also give them an opportunity to `interview` me, but as events turned out the principals were the very last to be interviewed. They arranged for me to meet with some of their school staff a few weeks after the parent interviews were complete. I expressed a preference for teachers who are involved in some aspect of pastoral care, or a subject which relates to it, and for school secretaries since they have a lot of contact with the homes of students. I interviewed the staff in the schools at a time which suited them (Appendix 11/Appendix 12). I interviewed three principals first and then a variety of teachers in each school context. To complete the interviewing process I met with the three school secretaries in the hope of understanding the school-family discourses from an administration perspective (Appendix 13). These three key personnel, principal, teacher and secretary are referred to as school-staff when referring to them together, for the purpose of simplification.

5). Data analysis of interviews

Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants` written consent and transcribed afterwards in full by hand and then typed, so that a clear sense of what was being said was reinforced in my mind. When the data, from all the various cohorts as gathered, I began the analytic process after typing the interviews one by one. This process took on average two to three hours each with an added hour the following day to replay and proof read exactly what was being said in each interview. While this work was very tedious at the time it was a great resource when I was tracing and quoting from the transcripts afterwards. Because I had given my interviewees an undertaking that what they told me was in confidence, I felt it an ethical issue not to have a typist transcribing my interview data.

The tracing of texts which contextualise school practices, such as school policies and Pastoral Care structures (Chapter Five) showed how subject positions are created within the school institution, and how individuals accept, reject and constantly negotiate what subject position is being offered to them/their families. Beginning with the students, I plotted the frequency of references to assumptions about families in their schools, directly and indirectly by each interviewee, and wrote down the quotation in which it appeared. I traced the reoccurring themes which were raised by each student and then coded them. *“Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for every*

piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.43). I traced these recurring codes for silencing and suppression practices by selecting, separating and sorting each interview conversation so as to begin an analytical account of them.

Critical discourse analysis was used as a means of making explicit the codes which were being used by the dominant discourses to suppress family talk. For example, the use of terms such as mother/father in notes home or in teacher assumptions or in curricular materials to reinforce the normalization and taken-for-grantedness of the traditional type family in school discourse. A series of empirically found patterns began to emerge within each of my three categories of participants; students, parent/s and school-staff. Glazer and Strauss (1967) refer to this method as the constant comparative method; *“By comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories` generality and explanatory power”* (p.24). I drew up a list of themes drawn out which reoccurred in almost all of the interviews, such as assumptions, silencing and suppression of family talk in school (Appendix 4/10/14) These patterns were pertinent to my research question on unraveling school governance of family types therefore the list is not exhaustive in the sense of covering everything that could be read from the interviews. I was mindful of advice from Miles and Huberman(1999) about drawing and verifying conclusions, and remaining open to disconfirming evidence (p.246) and checking for researcher effects (p.265) throughout this process of crystallizing data (Ellingson, 2004). *“Concepts without corresponding facts are hollow, just as facts without concepts are, literally, meaningless”* (Miles and Huberman, 1999, p. 262). Appendix 15 shows a master handout of a power point presentation which I gave at BERA (2011) while doing this analysis.

The analogy of the three monkeys-*see no evil* (assumptions), *hear no evil* (family is not mentioned in public space of school), and *speak no evil* (silencing practices around family difference) kept coming to mind. A structured focus comparison was applied to the data to trace the patterns in each participant`s view on the interactive family practices across textual discourses, contextual (school) discourses and interpersonal and institutional discourses in their school.

Table 3- Data Analysis

Code Words	Categories	Family in Text	Family in Context	Family Practices
Difference Taboo Normal Silence Embarrassment Negative Belonging	Students	School books Notes home Texts home Language class Religion SPHE Home Economics	Classroom- no family talk Counsellors office In trouble only Lunch time with friends Outside of school	Teacher assumptions Silencing Suppression Sensitizing Withdrawal Judgement
Confusion Public/Private Experts Contagion Conforming	Parent/s	Notes home Calls home equals trouble School rules Enrolment forms School ethos School Prospectus Irish Constitution	Enrolment evenings Parent/ Teacher meetings Fund-raising events Parent Associations	Standardisation Normalisation Vagueness around communication Bio- Pedagogies Adjustments
Normative Academic space School ethos Hurt	Principals Teachers School- Secretaries	Enrolment literature School Ethos Education Act 1998 Employment contracts Letters to home/s	School grounds Induction evenings Class-room Parent/Teacher meetings Counsellors office School office School entry	Family Technologies Panopticism Normalization Stereotyping Blunders/hurting Uncertainties with names Legal concerns

In the first panel all of the emerging codes were plotted, across each category in texts, context and practices for each individual. This was refined and reduced to each category or group of students, parent/s and school-staff to trace the most frequent themes for all. The influence of context was also a consideration, which will be developed at a deeper level in Chapter Five. And the practices across schools were noted to gauge similarities in the main, but allowing for socio-cultural and gender considerations in explaining the differences between schools. A number of themes were drawn out of the interviews; they emerged from the reading of the interviews which highlighted aspects of the participants` feedback which related to my research questions. I looked at ways in which people explained how they are positioned in relation to school discourse, if they are objectified and how they recognise themselves as

subjects of the school institution. In every interview, participants spoke about the suppression of family talk in school texts and classroom conversations. Many said that there is no adequate discourse to capture the essence of non-traditional families. They described how they are positioned in relation to the power discourses of the school and their feelings about belonging and normative families. Inherent in the analysis in Table 3, were fears and concerns with how individuals from non-traditional families were categorised and divided by PC practices of silencing or withdrawal from the normative families/students by virtue of they being objectified through `experts` assessments at enrolment/ethos and judged to be a risk to the school body. Interestingly, the participants who reported such suppression gave freer accounts of their positioning among trusted friends, or outside of the classroom or in the case of teachers, less inhibited discourses in the staffroom.

The key themes or patterns which emerged can be theorised through Foucault`s concepts of normalisation, standardization and contagion, together with the research of socio-cultural theorists mentioned in Chapter One. `Normal` students seemed to be heard in the classroom because dominant discourses extended agency to them, while those whose identity was framed as different did not (Hall 2008; Sleeter 2008; Lynch and Lodge 2002/2004). Students from normative families were considered to be the privileged voice while other students are perplexed by the double bind dilemma. References to family assessments reinforced Foucault`s theories on institutional power in *Discipline and Punishment* (1977), such as; *The Examination* (p.184) could be paralled with school enrollment; *Normalization* (p.177) with school assumptions, *Panopticism* (p.211) with school discipline and management, and *carceral and contagion* (p.304, p.38) with withdrawal and silencing around `different` families. Recurring themes such as assumptions around traditional family were mentioned in all of the interviews, as well as a sense of silencing and suppression around family difference (Appendix 4).

Following this I put these codes into categories by patterns such as silencing, assumptions and disciplinary practices around families. Appendix 4 shows how I related the findings from the students in each school to the findings in the other schools, through the use of a diagram of codes, categories and themes which resulted from consolidating the student interview data. Naming the patterns became easier as time went on as the interpretations of students cross-sectioned with those of their peers in the other case schools. It helped to crystallize the deductions which emerged from the data while at the same time reinforcing that there are no

essentialised truths (just as Foucault (1997), claimed) around family governance in schools but rather that these truths are contingent and discontinuous.

Some variables occurred in accounts such as in Hawthorn Heights; the name change was a big issue for some of the young men. Names did not seem to be an issue for the girls in either school even though name change is mentioned by parents and teachers in those schools and school secretaries in those schools. Interestingly, the staff or parents of the boy's school did not think it was significant at all. Students in Cogito College expressed more criticism of teachers for blunders around family differences, and in St. Brigits the girls expressed more ruptures to the official ways in which family difference is managed as opposed to how subjugated practices around family actually unfold.

By analyzing their accounts I was able to interrogate how they understand and enact their subjectivity in relation to family identity politics. Students from non-traditional families revealed the double bind of their experience of family living arrangements as personal for them at one level, while public at another, when they share and engage in everyday concepts of families with their friends and the world in which they socialize. Themes such as silencing, assumptions and disciplining practices were all reported by them. If, as Foucault claims meanings around individuals are constructed through language, symbols, signs and practices-in short through discourses, it follows then the need to examine and de-construct these discourses as a means through which to question their validity and the values which they expound. These `truths` surrounding families in schools, through government policies and family theories can be critiqued in light of their normalising power (Foucault 1977, p.304) so as to look at family construction from alternative perspectives and socio-cultural understandings. "*Once escaped from the game of truth by playing the same game differently or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards*" (Foucault, 2000, p.131).

The various discourses from a sample of students from traditional families made it possible to understand that they know that the institution suppresses family difference-they all mention speaking in private to someone, as if it was a taboo thing, but most of them had `good student` subjectivities which prevented them from openly challenging the ways in which their peers were framed. They gave insights into what it means for them to study beside young people who represent a range of other family constellations, such as single or divorced. By applying discourse tracing to student conversations from a Foucauldian perspective, one is afforded the

opportunity to trace how they make sense of their lived family experience and that of their classmates, and how they interpret their school's management of family talk.

“Discourse tracking enables scholars to critically analyse the power relations associated with change and proceed with a systematic data analysis process that is accessible and transparent” (Le Greco and Tracy, 2009, p.1517).

The Parents were then interviewed as a variety of data sources contributes to a more detailed understanding of discourses on non-traditional family entities in schools contexts. Their responses to my interview questions were interesting, but not surprising. Their understanding of family governance were transcribed and typed before analysis. Themes such as responsabilization and `good` parent emerged which revealed that most of the parents I interviewed had become subjects of the institutional discourses in order to *“play the game”* (Foucault, 2000, p.131). They spoke of topics such as privacy, school expectations, school ethos and difficulties associated with difference from a personal and academic achievement perspective. During our conversations, ruptures to the dominant constructs of family were heard in more liberal, humane understandings. One parent openly criticized his school in relation to school-home communication. The patterns in their discourses were then plotted as had been done with the students' responses. Common reoccurring themes across parents and students began to emerge, such as assumptions, silencing and counter-discourses (Appendix 10).

School-staff in each case study were interviewed as a means of getting their perspectives on how they position non-traditional families in their schools (Appendix 11). Their accounts were recorded and deciphered like all the other interviewees. Again similar patterns emerged as with the students and parents. Themes of taken-for-grantedness around the traditional family were highlighted by them, as were personal blunders in class-room conversations resulting from their assumptions or those of their colleagues. These blunders engendered fear and a sense of uncertainty in teachers around the issue of family difference since they were reluctant to make similar mistakes, or hurt a student by referring to something which the school constructs as personal. A general sense of vagueness and not knowing what to do or how to approach family diversity emerged from the reading of their interviews. Also teachers, principals and school secretaries, while sharing very different personal experiences, all seemed to want what was best for the individual student. Many expressed a preference for the traditional type family as being the least `harmful` or complicated from an institutional viewpoint.

Other ways of viewing family positioning within the post-primary sector were not really considered by them unless it affected them personally, which supports Weedon's theory that "*no individual ever approaches a discourse unaffected by the memory of previous discursive interpellations*" (Weedon, 1997, p.98). The staff members who shared most counter-discourses to the institutional suppression of intimacy were those who experience the double bind dilemma due to conflicts between their personal and professional lives. They find the system repressive and un-natural and seem to be more cognisant of the involvement of power/knowledge constructs. From the information generated in all the interviews, I embarked on a trajectory of interpreting the data and finding patterns between the descriptions given by all the respondents. I then connected the relating themes which were emerging from the students, parents, teachers and secretaries, so that I could hone in on the key concerns and concepts arising out of these phenomenological interviews so as to crystallise them, not to prove them.

The data sourced from individuals involved in each of the four schools show how contingent family discourses are and that the politics of difference is intended to suppress. Their conversations reveal that they understand that family is constructed by their school in the interest of privacy and the avoidance of 'hurt'. This topic seems to have been shaped by an overwhelming genealogy of discourse and culture relating to the idealised traditional family entity, which became apparent in the intergenerational references. Outliers or counter-discourses for each group were reflective of their positional lens (Glazer, 2005), such as taboo among young respondents', the need of conformity for parent/s and the tension between personal and professional status for school-staff.

6). Research ethics

Ethical issues such as; explaining the purpose of this research to all the participants, gaining their written consent, and giving them assurance of confidentiality, were all considerations at the outset of this study. The issue of unequal power relations between me, the researcher, as teacher/adult and some of the interviewees being student/youth was also a big consideration as was the construct of sensitivity around my research focus (Mahon, Glendinning, Clarke and Craig, 1996). Other child researchers also, such as Mauthner (1997), Alderson (1995) and Mayall (1995) were studied to guide my ethical practice. They suggested involving the young person in their own research as opposed to making objects of them, as a way of surmounting

the ethical dilemmas involved with researching them; *“recent work offers a critique of dominant discourses about childhood where children have been constructed as objects rather than subjects of research”* (Mauthner, 1997, p.16). Student conversations involved them in the social process and in the generating of knowledge about family diversity from a youth perspective as opposed to former discourses which would have constructed young people as objects of research (Piaget, 1928/1932, Freud/Greene, 2006). *“Children`s perspectives are central to research, policy and practice in areas of work-namely forensic investigative interviewing and the psychology of education”* (Greene and Horgan, 2009, p.141). I took care to present the research topic in a very clear manner by explaining my own personal and professional interest in non-traditional family entities and what I considered to be their suppression in institutional and interpersonal discourses. I was cogniscent of their rights to privacy and confidentiality, and explained their ability to withdraw their consent at any time. Their consent to be taped as part of the interview process was also gained in writing (Appendix 9/Appendix 10) with the assurance of confidentiality, and I assigned a pseudonym to all my interviewees. All the ethical considerations that are involved with researching young or vulnerable people, in particular were adhered to which involved the written consent of a parent if the case of the students because of they being legally constituted as minors-under eighteen years of age.

“In specific areas of research, there are researchers who have expertise and experience in developing, administrating, and analysing survey data. These experts are likely to be familiar with the theoretical constructs being examined” (Brends, 2006, p.632).

While I had familiarised myself with the theoretical constructs being examined, I certainly did not feel as if I had expertise or experience enough to be comfortable and relaxed about entering the lives of the interviewees. I was however more comfortable with the adults, particularly the staff in each school, more so than the parent/s or students. I found it difficult to leave the teacher hat off when assuming the identity of a researcher, but I felt as long as I was honest with people and aware of the key ethical issues around research, particularly of young people, then all would be well. As a means of equalising the power relations between researcher and student, theoretical advice on reflexivity, responsiveness, and appropriateness of questions were sought so as to allow for young people to talk more freely on their school and family life.

Parton (1991) reports that children are often denied agency due to assumptions about lack of maturity and competency to make decisions in their own best interests, and this tends to change once they reach the age of eighteen, when they are constructed as adults. Being cognisant of the ambiguity of young peoples` voice during the research process I wondered if they were saying what they did to please me or because it was what they really meant. The idea of one`s voice as unproblematic and fixed at one`s core is refuted by Komulainen (2007), since it is based on contingencies of the situated contexts and meanings, and on the dynamics of human communication and interaction. To overcome the ambiguities of these `multivoicedness` she suggests that researchers treat voices as “*real*” (Komulainen, 2007, p.24) in the interview setting, but on analysis reflect on their contingency and how they are deployed as contingent `truths`. The possible harmful effects of “*having to talk*” (Cameron, 2000) as part of child welfare research was also an issue for me, so I did not delve deeper if I sensed a student did not want to go further with an answer which may have involved visiting painful memories. I did not opt to research the family-school perspective as my concern is in raising awareness about how family unit diversity can be recognised and respected in school settings. My understanding is that the various pathways which families negotiate for themselves is what works for them, it would be very presumptuous of me to attempt to change that. If I thought that my work on the double bind of schooling family difference would improve their school-home relationship, then I would be very happy that my research made a practical and pedagogical difference.

7). Reflexivity and positioning

My position as a teacher and as a mother in a non-traditional family entity meant that I shaped and was shaped by my investigation. Foucault`s view on it is that the perspective a person has is always contingent to their positioning in a given time, in a given place.

“Foucault first directs the social researcher to the analysis of the self in terms of positionality. This notion draws attention to the ways in which the individual or self is shaped as a result of being positioned in a particular position” (Delanty, 2011, p.81).

As a post-structuralist researcher, I had to reflect deeply on how I was constructing and positioning the students, parent/s and school-staff in my talk and in my writing, since I was critiquing their institutional subjectivities, but did not want to replace one construct of `truth` with another; I felt my findings would be just one account of how various individuals understood family positioning in their school. My reflections forced me to question my own

positioning and how I perceived my power position in relation to my interviewees. I was conscious of how this power could impact on them/their family or their school image/practices as a result of my research. I had to deal with feelings around my own limitations as an `expert` in family studies and had to resist the temptation to retreat from this research in recognition of such limits. However I remembered my key academic goal was not about prescriptive solutions, but to raise concern around regimes of truth involving contemporary family types in schools, so as to question their governance as an educational and social concern.

Throughout the process, I was forced to reflect on my own particular personal lens and positioning as I listened to the experiences of others at an interpersonal level. I got the distinct impression from non-traditional family respondents that they feel they have to measure up to what is considered the `normal` family in order to prove their value as a family. I found myself relating to them in a very feminist way-feeling a loss for students like Alva, Cogito College (Chapter Six), who could not talk to anyone in her new school about her home situation since everyone else seemed to be from a traditional style family. I found myself getting angry with the educational system that does not recognise the family set-up of such individuals.

Ger in Hawthorn Heights was another student whose subjectivity was limited due to his family set-up being blamed as opposed to the school institution readjusting their discourses to include family difference. The astute and honest observations of the younger interviewees in particular were refreshingly open and promising of future fluidity in respect to family identities. They do not reiterate the standardized fears when speaking about difference in families because they do not believe the prescribed deficits around it, instead they tend to take difference on board as an opportunity to make a difference. Their optimism and inclusiveness injected hope and cheer into the whole research process.

Normative narratives about families in class-room conversations reinforced personal experiences, such as; the teacher not believing that home-work was in the other parent's house, such as; family tree assumptions about two, biological parents, such as; issues around parent/teacher meetings, and the lack of an adequate discourse in schools around family difference. Interweaving the interpretations of the students (and later their parent/s and school staff) with the research process, together with developing a rapport between them and me, as

interviewer, not teacher, was not always a smooth or as equal as the theory suggests. In the cohort interviews especially some students had more of a say than others and not knowing them well enough I found it difficult to rectify this phenomenon. Also throughout the interviews, I found it challenging at times to keep the balance right between being an interviewer and identifying with what was being said. I had to resist joining in the conversation and sharing a slice of my life, or agreeing too much when they hit on a familiar chord, reminding me of my own story or those of my children on schooling. Accounts such as Alva's and Ger's really struck chords for me. I began to make connections between what Alva was saying in the isolation she felt in primary school with that of my own daughters at her age, in a small rural school which was not ready for diversity. I began to understand why the teachers there had been distant and not forth-coming when I explained school and home arrangements, the need for a school bus passing a crèche since I was a lone parent at the time, and I remember thinking it was because the school-staff were so busy that they were not helpful. I realize now that their politics of knowledge prevented them from getting involved or facilitating family difference. They were probably afraid of social constructs such as family contamination, lower morals and/or parental and patron pressures. The political distancing of family difference positioned my daughters in a category of `deficit` as far as their peers were concerned; they were made to feel different because their family was not of the traditional type. With hindsight maybe I should not have been as open about my set-up, but in rural areas it is not so easy to be anonymous anyway, as well as the fact that issues of authenticity are important for me, and hopefully for my daughters.

I found the negative feelings around non-traditional families from `respectable` parents difficult in the sense that one of them could not think of any happily re-constituted families. I felt at times, that the journey to gaining meaningful recognition and value for family diversity to be a very long road if such attitudes continue unchallenged, as well as reconsidering the ideological realm of family discourse and the contextual knowledge around family difference and school deficit. I wonder if I challenged my interviewees enough to think post-structurally, and hope to remedy this by furnishing each of them with a copy of this thesis when it is published. I found the conversations of the six students from traditional families very useful in hearing discourses from the apparently disaffected vantage point; their objective insights on the essentialisation of fellow students and peers are very thought provoking.

On reflection more experience of interviewing and more quality time with each individual/group would have enabled a better relationship to build among all participants before asking structured questions. Also the questions I could ask would be less direct/structured if I were to begin the research process all over since some of my questions were probably too direct and maybe not as conducive to as an elaborated description as could have been.

Being post-structurally reflective now, I would ask more questions about the politics of each particular discourse and why people are positioned as they are within the school system. If I had been more post-structurally aware at the outset of this research process, I would have had a better sense of the topography and definitional landmines in order to locate the political rhizomes which work to stifle the personal and affective aspects of school life, and challenge it more. I would also be more selective in my choice of school as all the schools I choose for research had a Catholic ethos, so I am now very curious as to how non-traditional families are managed in schools with a different or a non/religious ethos.

8). Conclusion

What unfolds through this phenomenological genre is a complex sociocultural understanding of the impact of institutional disciplining techniques through formal and informal discourses involving families which provide valuable insights for my research question and also connects with broader concerns around family equity in relation to post-primary schools. All these accounts provide rich ethnographic data for me as a researcher, as well as helping to see how the various ways in which people are positioned within a specific context and role (subjectivity) impacts on their understandings and positioning in relation to the school. I am not seeking evidence here across students, parent/s, staff accounts, but would like to crystallise how double binds are knotted across their various discourses so as to envisage other ways of conceptualizing families in schools.

Foucault's post-structural discourse analysis makes it possible to disrupt the taken-for-grantedness of the way in which dominant discourses work by tracking how certain family types are valued and dominate in curricular texts, school policies and school ideology in general. His lens makes it possible to question such ideological bias and suggest alternative, more inclusive discourses.

Chapter Four excavates and analyses the genealogy of schooling and family from the nineteenth century up to present day practices through the identification of key social ruptures along the way. By untangling the connection between former power relations on educational processes and present-day power/knowledge discourses it is hoped to make connections across social, political and religious influences which still impact on present-day school-family governance at post-primary level. It will focus on the ways in which family are framed contingently in each context so as to trace the institutional arrangements which shape the disciplinary powers involving them. Chapter Four will show that the double bind dilemma which students find their selves in is not accidental, but political and structural.

Chapter Four -Discourse as Context- Contextualizing the Politics of Family Difference in Ireland`s Schools

1). Introduction

This chapter involves interrogating the context of influence- the Irish state and society whose construct of `the good family` in state and expert discourses ensured that non-traditional style families were differentiated in all aspects of cultural life, including school. The vested interest of each within the Irish context needs to be investigated here so as to attempt to understand the complexities of their interconnectedness and their links to family governance at post-primary level. The present organisational processes around the school and family as institutions are deeply intertwined with the past, and because words and concepts relating to the concept of `family` are essentially dialogical they can only be fully understood within the specific time frame from which they originate. By tracing the ways in which the State, in the form of the Department of Education and Skills [DES] and the Catholic Church understood `family`, and how such understandings impacted on their organisational aspects of the school/home assemblage, I hope to make a link between historical and present realities so as to provide an understanding of why it continues to be difficult for Irish post-primary schools to develop a more liberal discourse around non-traditional families.

Many key writers mentioned in Chapter One (Fine, 1991; Francis, 2001; Smyth, 2006; Hall, 2008; Schultz, 2009; Ecclestone, 2011) as well as socio-cultural theorists such as Vygotsky (1978), acknowledge the importance of appreciating context because it provides a vital backdrop for researching any human experience. The importance of the school context for policy enactment is also a key issue for Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011). The focus of this chapter is similar to their concern with school context as it is a key factor in understanding the organisational and cultural influences which render certain families non-normative and peripheral to the cultural life of the school.

Foucault believed that all meaning in society is constituted within language, with a specific historical context, and is never free of political intent. For example, the Irish context of policy text production mediates policies for the Irish public education sector through the Department of Education and Skills which in turn translate directives to the schools. Each school then

devises their own school policies in light of the dominant directives while also being mindful of their unique context and ethos. Foucault's analytical tool *genealogy* provides an opportunity to critique the present by unsettling and destabilising what has gone before. Genealogy helps to explain from a present day perspective, the contingency of the concept of family in Irish society, and how the church and state have worked together at times to safeguard their own separate interests over it, and at times vied with each other over its control (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball and Braun 2011; Girvin, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2005; Inglis, 1987; O'Connor, 1986; Coolahan, 1981). This lens helps to critique 'family' as a social construct by looking beyond the knowledge claims about it, to the relations of power discourses which sustain them, in order to question the organisational and cultural influences which construct non-traditional families as misrecognised or undervalued within our education system. For the purpose of this study it provides a lens on the ways in which families have been constructed in schools through state control of the Department of Education and Skills, by demonstrating their contingent and historical construct. "*Genealogy can be described as a mode of critique that aims to show the process by which something is constructed as opposed to being natural*" (Delanty, 2011, p.82).

2). A background to Catholic discourses on the family in education

The predominance of the Catholic discourses in Irish Education and its hold over families predated the foundation of the Irish Free State, and can be traced back to the time of the Reformation in England, with the subsequent rulers attempting to spread the new religion in Ireland. "*The Established Church (as the Church of Ireland was called), was opposed to allowing Catholic clergy the right to use school premises for promulgating 'popery'*" (Coolahan, 1981, p.16). However counter-discourses such as hedge schools and Mass rocks gatherings, among other complex factors, ensured that the Reformation did not take hold in Ireland. "*The influence of the Reformation was still felt only in those parts of Ireland where English rule was to be found; efforts to extend it into other areas met with fierce resistance*" (Milne, 2003, p. 36).

In 1849, Dr. Paul Cullen returned from Rome to take up the position of Archbishop of Armagh, and to counteract the (British) state's involvement in Education via the National Education Board (Coolahan, 1981, pp.12-36). The Presentation sisters (among other religious sisters) negotiated a place for the education of girls in convent schools within this non-denominational state national school system, by promising to abide by the rules

(Presentation Brothers, de la Salle Brothers among others, concentrated on the education of boys in primary and post-primary schools).

Religion could be taught only at a designated time of the day (Earner-Byrne, 2008; Muldowney, 2008; Walsh, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2005; Maguire, 2001; Magray, 1998; Coolahan, 1981; O'Connor, 1986). By the 1850/1860's the Catholic Church was confident enough to demand a separate, state sponsored education system for Catholics as their right, which resulted in a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education taking place in 1868, allowing for all Christian denominations in Ireland at that time (Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Dissenters and Quakers) to have state-funded primary schools under their patronage. A similar situation was extended to post-primary schools where privately owned and controlled schools benefitted financially from the payments-by-results scheme, which lasted until 1899. This scheme overcame the state's hesitation to fund private schools without accountability from management (Coolahan, 1981, p.53).

During the 1860's the Catholic Cardinal Cullen remarked that the women religious were "*the best support to religion*" (Magray, 1998, p.99) because they had helped to construct and reproduce the new dominant culture after the effects of the Irish famine. "*Though the nuns did not manage all Catholic girls 'national schools, by the 1880's they were training many teachers in such schools*" (Magray, 1998, p.82). This training did not apply to training of teachers from other Christian denominations. Women religious asserted their authority and powerful catholic ideology over Catholic schooling, orphanages, industrial schools and asylums. The courts favoured the nuns' right to custody over challenges brought against parents who were constructed as negligent or unfit; "*Parental influence was often overtly discouraged in preference to that of the nuns, in the reformatory system circumvention of parental influence was built into the institution*" (Magray, 1998, p.83). Irish school policies and/or family policies were not well defined at this stage; they were not regarded as in need of definition since they were subject to religious diktat. The Irish Constitution (1937) can be understood as an attempt by Irish policy makers to gain a semblance of control over the space called home, through legislative and educational structures. The Constitution, although essentially a text, must also be understood as a context for understanding family politics in educational circles. This Constitution was the creation of Eamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil Government, who were mainly devout Catholics. They saw themselves as a protectors and defenders of the Catholic faith and Irish families, as did most of the citizens of that era. Their

laws constructed the relationship between the state and the family in Article 41, and also defined the role of women within the family, as follows:

1.1 The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

1.2 The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.

2.1 In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure those mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

The reference to `inalienable` raise the family institution to the level of the divine, implying that anyone who does not follow this dictate, is going against the wishes of God, and will incur his wrath.. Fianna Fáil government ratified a Widows and Orphan scheme as part of their plan to protect the family institution. The 1927 Juries Act had exempted women from jury service (until 1975) for fear of affecting the family. Article 45.4.2 of the 1937 Constitution copper fastened these. *“Citizens shall not be forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength”*. However, this discourse rendered women dependent on men as a means of income, and disadvantaged married women who needed to supplement their husband’s income as well as widows or single girls. In Article 41.2:1 the woman’s vocation in life is framed through selflessness and sacrifice for her country, her family and for God.

These nationalist ideologies were interwoven with biblical and naturalised understandings of woman and the family. They likened women to the Virgin Mary as a model of piety, selflessness, purity and silent dignity; the juxtapositioning with Mary effectively silenced women, rendered them sexless and reduced them to child bearing vessels. *“Women were regarded first and foremost as wives and mothers, and their primary place within the family and home was demonstrated and given approval by the constitution”* (McKenna, 2006, p.40). Family ideology ensured that some aspects of social existence were simply not seen or become invisible, for example, widespread abuse or unhappiness in some families. No space was allowed for, or alternative discourses heard around, non-traditional families in this predominantly rural, isolated and largely uneducated country.

“Irish Catholics became socialised into an ideology of spirituality, frugality and celibacy. This ideology was maintained through practices which centered on individuals surrendering to the interests of Church, family and community, and through an uncritical commitment to traditional rules and regulations....It is an instinctive knowledge of what it is to be Catholic: what kinds of things need to be said and done and when and where it is appropriate or necessary to say and do them” (Inglis, 1998, p.9-10).

During the Emergency in Ireland (1939-1945) Fianna Fail introduced children`s allowance as a way of helping disadvantaged families, but it was paid to the fathers, instead of the mothers. De Valera`s speech on St.Patrick`s day 1943 epitomised the `ideal`; interconnectivity of Irish family life with politics, religion and ideology;

“...a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that man should live” (Valente, 2010, p.5).

Archbishop McQuaid`s dictates relating to social concerns between 1940-1973 give valuable insights into how the Catholic Church managed to control almost every aspect of Irish life, which would not be tolerated by Irish citizens today, for example he termed mixed athletics as *“a social and moral abuse”* (Cullen and O` hÓgartaigh, 2012, p.55), he objected to the Mother and Child Scheme because he declared that the right to provide for children`s health *“belongs to parents not to the state”* (p.88). He got reports from concerned Catholics about *“Dance halls that are intimately immoral”* (p.205) and judged the *Late Late Show* to be *“the source of all evil”* (p.231), with the Catholic Church as the key protector of the nation`s moral fibre through discursively controlling the reputation of Irish families. Until 1971, Catholic parents were obliged to send their children to Catholic schools according to Dr. McQuaid`s dictate;

“The Church forbids parents and guardians to send a child to any non-Catholic school, whether primary, secondary or continuation or university. Deliberately to disobey this law is a mortal sin, and those who persist in disobedience are unworthy of the sacraments” (Inglis 1998, p.58).

His position of power as Archbishop of Dublin meant that other bishops deferred to him when necessary (Cullen and O`hÓgartaigh, 2013). Few dared to contest the theocratic and psychological constructs surrounding the traditional Irish family, because to do so meant social isolation and certain excommunication, especially in rural areas (Scheper-Hughes,

2001). Marriage breakdown scarcely existed due to Irish peoples` reverence for the Catholic faith and for the farming way of life;

“Even the most fundamental unit of inter-personal relationships, the family is taking a severe battering in this era of change. The institution of marriage is not held with the same reverence nowadays and the son or daughter has to face the threats of annulment or divorce from their respective partners” (Southern Star, Letter 12-02-1977).

Fahey and Nixon (2014) refer to this era as one of “*patriarchal familism*” (p. 128), where the Irish state sought to promote large, two-parented, father-centred families with an emphasis on owner-occupied family farms which required stability.

“It was also an era when wives/mothers were confined in the home, where children were seen and not heard and where property distribution and normative regulation were preferred as policy instruments over income maintenance or services provision for families” (p.128).

Counter-discourses involving agency

One of the few contestations to this dominant discourse in practice was evident in the women who deviated from this social construct, or had illegitimate children. They were seen as a threat to the social and religious order, so they were effectively silenced by being interned in institutions. They forced to part with their children, as a cruel payment for their sins (Maguire, 2009). For example, the Magdalene laundries were grounded in the circulating discourses around control of babies born outside of wedlock in 1940/50`s Ireland (Cullingford, 2006), because social policy discourse was based on protecting the traditional family unit.

“In the case of convent-run penitent or “Magdalen” asylums, drunkards, prostitutes and other women living beyond the moral pale of society either sought admittance of their own accord or were brought to the nuns by friends and family...offered a cure for perceived moral failings” (p.12)

Girvin (2008) writes that Bevier`s survey (1960`s), found that counter discourses to the power and control of the Catholic Church in Ireland were heard among the better educated sections of the Irish population. However they were ignored by the Catholic Church and not representative of the general population, so there seems to be a classed dimension to the oppression of families or it may be that the poorer sections of the Irish population questioned the power of the Catholic Church less.

Counter-discourses were also heard through the media in the form of RTE 1, on shows such as the *Late Late Show*, and episodes like “*The Bishop and the Nightie*” which drew the wrath

of Bishop Thomas Ryan of Ardfert (February 1966) made it possible to challenge and undermine the moral monopoly of the earlier decades. Feminists, inspired by Mary Robinson, former Irish president, challenged the dominant family discourses of previous decades. Having their roots in the 60`s and 70`s these discourses of liberation raised the consciousness of Irish women in relation to their constructed position to men, against a background of institutions such as the Magdalene laundries, called after the adulterous woman in the bible (John 8.1-11). Such women were understood as a threat to the social and religious order due to having a child outside of marriage and so had to be incarcerated.

Feminists also challenged the ban on artificial contraceptives, as a means of enslaving them. A group calling themselves the *Irish Liberation Movement* brought artificial contraceptives from Belfast to Dublin in 1971.

Family governance through Christian ethos in schools

Hegemony originated as a concept via the Italian Marxist, Gramsci (1971). It gives the impression of one voice among members of an institution, in this instance one united voice between policy makers, DES, the State, teachers, and families. A univocal position becomes hegemonic in government programmes designed to address specific subjects in society with officials appearing to hold the same line on issues of `freedom of expression`; thus linking the political, personal, social, educational and cultural aspects of family framing. Post-structuralists use hegemony as a research technique to contest the `naturalness` of coherence between multitudes of subjectivities.

Where issues arose over the Catholic Church and state in the past, with competing discourses as to which one of them had greatest control over family living, there was never any doubt that between them that they had the control. They therefore, had to develop a mutual `friendship` to safeguard their vested interests. *“The church offered the state continuity and stability and in return sought its support for continuity and stability in its own work”* (Nic Giolla Phadraig, 1997, p. 609).

The Christian `ethos` has been a central aspect of state bio-power, and disciplinary power from the nineteenth century up to the present day school governance. The protection of the Christian ethos through state protection of `freedom of conscience`-permeated the organisational processes of each school, in order for them, as the key stakeholders with

property rights to influence and shape school policies. Indeed, by the 1950s the Churches had a higher profile in school governance than the state, so much so that the Minister for Education at the time General Mulcahy was referred to as the “*minister without portfolio*” since he was allowed little or no control. He made a statement to Dáil Éireann in 1956 expressing his sentiments about his power and function as Education minister; “*You have your teachers, your managers and your churches, and I regard the position as Minister in the Department of Education as that as a kind of dungaree man, the plumber...who will take the knock out of the pipes and will link up everything*” (O`Connor, 1986 p.1). Nobody was surprised by Mr Mulcahy`s honesty since they were aware of the delicacy between the Church`s partnership with the state in Education, but this statement did provoke concerns about reassessments of education policy in relation to European demands. The *Investment in Education* initiatives, by Lemass and his government in the late 1960s, in conjunction with the OECD helped to modernize Irish education by bringing it into line with European cries for a well- educated work force. The IIE referred to human capital and the need to educate the young population for economic growth. O`Sullivan (2005) refers to this watershed in education as a move from a Theocentric to a market paradigm; “*Education as well as having its own intrinsic values, is a necessary element in economic activity*” (p.350).

Today the hegemony of freedom to express a Christian ethos is maintained through patronage of approximately 94 per cent of post-primary schools, and managed by their Joint Managerial Board [JMB]. These schools are privately owned and managed but receive full state funding for incremental salaries and capitation grants. The majority are religiously controlled and owned and educate 54 per cent of second level students, so it ensures that the respect and veneration for Religion and associated beliefs such as marriage, pro-creation, anti-abortion, etc., are all safeguarded in their establishments. The second-level sector comprises five distinct school types: secondary, vocational schools, community schools, community colleges and comprehensive schools. All schools in the second-level sector are governed by Department of Education and Science circulars, rules and regulations and education legislation. They follow a centralised curricula and examination system. There are 732 second level schools in total of which (8%) are fee-paying schools.

The majority of the secondary schools are Roman Catholic, mostly owned and managed by male and female religious orders, while a small minority of schools are managed by Protestant, Jewish or Independent bodies. The school trustees (generally the bishop or

religious order) are the owners of most secondary schools as well as the employer of those who work in the school. Vocational schools and community colleges are state established and are administered by Vocational Education Committees (VECs). They are non-denominational in character (Lynch and Moran, 2006) and educate 34 per cent of all second-level students. Traditionally there have been clerical representatives on VECs, as they were jointly managed by a religious order and the VEC (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). That has changed due to the Education and Training Bill of 2013. Community and comprehensive schools are also State financed and managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions (Department of Education and Science, 2004). Community schools are multi-denominational but generally tend to be largely Roman Catholic in ethos (Lynch and Moran, 2006). Comprehensive schools are singular in denominational ethos, being either Roman Catholic or Anglican in nature (Hyland, 2006).

The state's protection of freedom of conscience is evident in literature such as The Education Bill (1998), and Articles of Management for Catholic Secondary Schools (2003) and *The Deeds of Variation of schools under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church* which will be explored in Chapter Five. The hegemonic position of educational managements ensures that there are very few available spaces for alternative debate, so consequently, acts as a panoptic, a way of shutting down diversity out of fear of repercussion. For example, discourses heard during Catholic Schools Week 2012, at St Mary's College Dundalk, noted that all key note speakers expressed similar views on the Catholic church's involvement in Irish education. It was a balancing act between assertion and assumption when Cardinal Seán Brady asserted that the Church held the view that the children of Catholic parents have "*first claim*" on admission to Catholic schools, and the Director General, Sr. Marianne paying attention to the;

"Enormous contribution generations of religious sisters, brothers and priests in partnership with lay teachers have made to the education of children in the Catholic tradition." She also welcomed the "establishment of new forms of trusteeship for schools which will foster the Catholic education needs of children for generations to come" (Dundalk, 2012).

Self-congratulatory oratory highlighted their finest moments in Education in the past, while reminding the nation of the debt they owe to the Catholic educators of former years. Such rhetoric serves to reassure listeners of the credibility of the Catholic Church and its essential role in the continuance of educational affairs.

3). Legal constructs of family and key moments of change

The legal production and regulation of families is deeply rooted in Irish history as far back as the mid nineteenth century, and has been very much influenced by the political and religious politics of British colonisation. This external control was replaced in 1921 by internal control in the guise of the Free State, but was complicated by the Catholic Churches hold over mainstream Irish discourses. The metaphor of a theocracy is apt in capturing the power of the Catholic Church over the state and thus all of Irish society up until the 1960s when a loosening of the discursive binds began. The laws and regulations through which they governed served to discipline all aspects of morality, education, family and so on.

To understand these tensions in Irish society which involved the family, I organise my account of ruptures, or cultural reinterpretations and augmentations to legal constructs of family into three interlocking areas: Firstly the ruptures to the Church /State relationship involving families: Secondly, ruptures to the Catholic Churches control over family life-in schools and homes, and, thirdly, ruptures to the Catholic Church`s governance of family through European legislation. All three aspects relate to family legislation which was constructed as contravening the centralized rhizome of theocracy.

Firstly, the ruptures to the Church/State legalities involving family in education politics due to ownership and ethos issues; The Catholic Church`s position in the education of Irish children was guaranteed through their ownership of the school site/building and their consequent hold over school management and ethos. However parents were constructed as the legitimate actors in the education of their children according to the 1937 constitution. *“The rights of parents in respect of their children are most sacred God-given rights, inalienable and imprescriptible by virtue of our Constitution, and only for the gravest reasons may parents be denied or deprived of their rights”* (Barrett, 1955/Daly, 2009, p.196).

In theory `the family` appears to be given priority and precedence in the constitution as the main stay for the rearing of children, with the state as the General Protector; but in effect the state and the Church take responsibility for the academic and spiritual formation of the nation`s youth, and still does in a less obvious sense. Sometimes the construct of parental responsibility suit the Catholic Church and State/schools while at other times the parents are dismissed if the situation does not suit (Coolahan, 1981, p.157). Such discourses tended to

dismiss the parents` as uninformed and not qualified to deal with matters of a higher nature, while the parents cede power to what they understand to be a stronger and more informed force than themselves-the education system. For example, in 1950 The Council of Education showed disregard for parental rights and concerns when no voice was given to their representatives, despite Minister Mulcahy`s emphasising the rights and responsibilities of parents in the matters of education; *“Whatever the function of the state was, it has no power to interfere either with the rights of the parent or with the authority of the Church”* (Dáil Debates, 1948/Daly1998, p.200).

A further example of parents being dismissed was when parents complained to the Department of Education and/or the school authorities about teachers who were administering excessive corporal punishment. The Minister for Education Richard Mulcahy responded by sending a circular to schools, relaxing the rules about corporal punishment (DES Circular IML, 17/56 Sept, and 21/56, Dec. rescinding it/ Daly, 1998). In response, a Schools Protection Organisation was set up in Dublin, in 1955, to fight for the rights of parents and students, to prove that they (the parents) were responsible. The role of parents was invoked again by the Catholic Church in the 1968 against the state`s pro-active agenda particularly in post-primary education (community schools, free post-primary education, school transport).

A comment by Sean O`Connor, a leading official in the Department of Education (1968), triggered the outrage of the Catholic Church when he suggested they step back a little from their control of schools. A responding article entitled; *“Have the Snakes come back?”* encouraged parents in the name of religion and the family to join in the struggle to defend traditional Catholic educational structures from international influence. *“The pamphlet`s rhetoric about the family was intended to serve its primary ideological purpose of mobilizing Catholic parents against the educational policies of the Irish State”* (Walsh, 2008, pp.416-415). O`Connor replied that; *“No one wants to push the religious out of education; that would be disastrous in my opinion. But I want them in as partners, not as masters”* (O`Connor, 1968, 249/ Walsh, 2008, p. 423). Again, in the 1980`s a senior official in the DES wrote; *“The parents` only place in the system was as providers of children”* (O`Connor, 1986, p.34). Since then the State has gradually and more explicitly become pro-active in acknowledging the constitutional rights of parents as the primary educators of their children.

“The government is committed to promoting the active participation of parents at every level of the education process. It also supports the right of parents to be consulted, as part of the collaborative process for educational decision making and policy making at school, regional and national level”. (1995, p.140)

The state also explicitly acknowledges the moral and property rights of religious denominations more often, in managing their schools as evidenced in the *White Paper on Education Report* (1995) and the Education Acts (1998, 2012). Daly (1998) writes; *“these histories reveal how the division of responsibilities between church and state with respect to education contrived to restrict the role of parents”* (Daly, 1998, p.196). However it is important to note that the constitutional protection of parental rights to send a child to whatever school s/he/they choose is maintained, and new agencies and legislation have emerged such as the National Parents Council.

A second example of a rupture to the Catholic Church`s control over family life occurred with the divorce debate involving legal discourses pertaining to church/school and family, which impacted on Irish social policy (Coolahan, 1981; Alvey, 1991; O`Sullivan, 2005). Various and often contradictory discourses circulated when a campaign to change the Irish Constitution to legalise divorce, began in 1960s. The Catholic Church, supported by the political parties, expressed the most persistent opposition to what they perceived as a threat to Irish family life-Modernisation. The schools, though not directly involved took the anti-divorce stance in their responsible role of safeguarding the family as well as their Catholic ethos. Archbishop Mc Quaid of Dublin stated that; *“Civil divorce is evil and contraception is evil. There cannot be, on the part of any person, a right to what is evil”* (McQuaid, 1965/Girvin, 2008, p.80). Newspaper commentaries and letters to the editors reflected the dominant sociocultural discourses which were infused by traditional patriarchal and theological values and compounded by risk discourses such as, social disintegration and loss of family farms if the family structure was to be undermined. These powerful anti-divorce constructs cited theories on child vulnerability, economic deficits and moral decay. Professor Patricia Casey of University College Dublin [UCD] quoted studies from abroad with prescriptive deficit outcomes by researchers such as Judith Wallerstein (Chapter One) of the University of California as saying; *“Children from divorced families do less well academically, have less social skills and are at a greater risk of depression* (Irish Examiner` 09-02-04). She did not qualify her statistics or explain how Wallenstein measured her samples. It seems that these negative findings have never been counter-balanced by less

biased data therefore negativity remains in the Irish institutional psyche, as will be evidenced in Chapter Six.

As recently as 2009, the now retired Pope Benedict XVI stated that “*government legislation should be aware of the common good that the traditional family offers society, and protect it, with financial assistance if necessary*”. He also added “*The Catholic Church is against divorce and homosexual marriage and has ascribed many of society’s ills to the breakdown of the traditional family*” (‘The Irish Times’, 14-05-09, p.3). These discourses serve to work on preventing both personal and social liberation; they serve to inculcate conformity to the traditional family as the only way of being family, despite the unjust and exclusionary effects it has on non-traditional families.

A third rupture to the ‘Catholic Church’s governance of family began in 1973 in the guise of European legislation. It was to become a major rupture in the Church’s regulation over Irish life as it generated global discourses which challenged Catholic patriarchal familism. Organisations within the EEC such as the Council for the Status of Women ensured that Irish women could avail of the same privileges as their European counterparts. The marriage bar on women working was lifted in 1973 and in 1975 their exemption from jury service was reversed (O’Connor, 1998). 1994 was declared “*International Year of the Family*” by the United Nations, and this prompted the Irish government to refocus on family policies and funding. A family research programme began in 1999 under the direction of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. Family modernization discourses intertwined with economic and equality debates during the *Celtic Tiger* period of the 1990s resulted in an increased number of women and mothers of young children taking up employment outside the home.

“This phenomenon of maternal employment signalled a discernable break from the traditional conventions of motherhood epitomised by the ‘Catholic social policy’ principles of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland” (Rush, 2009, p.1).

These discourses contributed to changes in women’s liberation, such as the ban on divorce being lifted in 1996, in order to help couples in crisis, despite the Catholic Church’s teachings and condemnatory discourses against it. Article 41 of the Irish constitution was amended by the fifteenth amendment of the constitution act 1995, and was signed into law on 17 June 1996, providing for the dissolution of marriage in certain specified circumstances. These divorces were structured along the lines of a ‘no-fault’ divorce, which results in many couples contesting each other for a four-year long period of legal limbo over custodies and assets,

with `experts` encouraging self-interest and distancing among the adversaries. What often results are state funded reports such as McMahon and Moore`s (*Post-Separation Parenting Report*, 2011), as mentioned in Chapter One.

4). Double binds for school staff in Irish school contexts

Many educators today, because they have been subjects of and excelled within the disciplinary power of the Irish education system, have been prejudiced by the negative discourses of crisis family intervention cases and by the deficit research results from abroad about non-traditional families (Smart and Neale, 1999; Lillard and Gerner, 1999), and/or by their own insular and religiously dominated schooling (McGahern, 2005; Girvin, 2008; Hyland, 2006). These factors position teachers at the nexus of bio-power and disciplinary power where they are expected to be agents in the observations and an integral part in enacting phenomena, often unconsciously, around family structures. Church discourses are reinvigorated for educators, particularly principals on a frequent basis through conference networking which align schools with the `missionary` discourses of zeal such as "*State and Church in Irish Education: Sharing Responsibility for Renewal*" (2012) run by the Joint Managerial Board. Many of them are conditioned to believe that the traditional and religious construct of family is the only one, and if it does not, it is different/disadvantaged, socially and educationally (this is reflected in the data I gathered about and from school personnel in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). The Education Act (1998), and Equality Acts (2000/2004) also treat of school ethos and equality, which seem to be contradictory and can impact on teachers who consequently find themselves in a double bind. "*Boards may suspend or dismiss teachers in accordance with procedures agreed from time to time*" (Education Act, 1998, 24.3). This Act does not elaborate on the reasons why, or say what the "*procedures agreed*" entail. Some educators I interviewed who live in non-traditional families expressed fears around such vagueness (Chapter Eight).

Many teachers sense that the politics of difference remains constant in schools and so take on certain forms of recognition which are constructed as professional and legitimate, such as the `good` teacher, the `committed` teacher and the `respectable` teacher (Francis, 2001, Allen, 2011, Prado, 2011). Because `difference` is constructed as negative and illegitimate, teachers tend to hide and repress that aspect of their identity. They are positioned in a double bind, wanting to belong to the `good` subjectivity but not wanting to go against his/her authentic self either. It is a no win situation.

In the past if teachers did not reflect the school ethos in their life world or if they were `different` to the ideals laid down for them by the terms of their contract, they suffered harsh consequences, such as dismissal from their teaching position. A discourse of silence was used as an instrument of bio-power to maintain the status quo family prototype. One well known victim was the author John McGahern in the 1950s:

“Following a BBC television programme, I received letters from men who, like me, had been trained in St. Patrick’s but were now teaching in Birmingham and Glasgow and Newcastle. According to their letters, they had been sacked because they had run afoul of a bishop or a priest, or had infringed some article of Catholic dogma and had no recourse but to disappear silently into Britain” (McGahern, 2005, p.252).

McNamara and Norman (2010) write about silencing in relation to teachers` personal lives today, not too unlike Mc Gahern’s and colleagues` predicament back in the 1950`s. They focus on the difficulties for Irish teachers and how vulnerable they feel as minorities because their sexual identity clashes with the morals of their faith based school. For example, LGBT teachers, despite their privileged work position, have a subordinate social position which results in a sense of a dual identity, or a double bind. The authors, McNamara and Norman, challenge the social and religious perspectives which facilitate and endorse such segregation.

Gay and lesbian teachers in schools were fearful of their positions since the churches had sought and obtained exemption from the legislation designed to protect minorities from the discrimination in employment. These findings suggest that faith-based schools in protecting their own particular ethos may become inhospitable places for minorities who are perceived to be outside the fold” (McNamara and Norman, 2010, p.545).

5). Double binds for students in Irish school contexts

Irish researchers such as Devine and Kelly (2006) write about ethnicity and children`s interaction in schools involving power matrices reflected from the adult world; They write about young people drawing on these discourses of difference and normality in schools; *“With respect to ethnic identity, assertions of Irish identity may revolve around being White, Catholic and part of the settled community”* (Devine and Kelly, 2006, p.129). I am asserting that this normative identity also involves having married heterosexual parents which positions students from non-traditional families in Ireland on the margins of school life. Lynch and Lodge, influenced by Fraser, highlight this theme in their discussion on the `politics of difference`. They distinguish between non-recognition (denial of their existence or lifestyle) and mis-recognition (negative representations), (Lynch and Lodge, 2002, p. 145). They claim

that numerous students are rendered invisible in our educational settings due to their `differences` from the norm.

“The culture of disrespect for differences is not entirely a product of peer culture. It is played out within an education system which, for a long period of time, has been characterized by segregation and lack of recognition for difference and diversity, in its institutional processes and structures” (Lynch and Lodge 2002, p.145).

They discuss how differences in students such as sexuality, ability, ethnicity and religion are managed in schools through non-recognition and mis-recognition. Lynch and Lodge (2002/4) relate similar findings from staff and students whose family type was constrained and limited by the schools family norm. They have to deal with misrecognition issues such as difference, silencing and deficit;

“Such attitudes can mean that those that do not belong to families that do not fit the traditional norm can experience a failure on the part of educational institutions to provide the conditions necessary to enable full participation. Some individuals may experience rejection or lack of recognition because of their different family status” (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, p.33).

Their publications highlights the need for inclusion of all family types since many students and staff, experience humiliation and are made to feel unwelcome because of their different family status. In the case of students, Lodge and Lynch found that some teachers were very aware of students` family circumstances, but sometimes they used this information to explain a student`s poor academic achievement and/or behaviour.

“The impact of statuses such as ethnicity, family and marital status, sexual orientation and religion have been the subject of relatively little discussion and analysis” (p.1). *“The nuclear family has tended to be regarded as the normal or average family. Not only does this render invisible the one-parent family unit, but it also means that families consisting only of adults are excluded”* (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, p.32).

It also renders invisible families which have same-sex parents, parents who are separated, divorced or reconstituted. Elizabeth Kiely (2004) critiques the Irish Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme in post-primary schools as silencing and limiting for students since it equates sex with heterosexual copulation only, and also fails to deal with a discourse of desire. She highlights non-recognition of gay or lesbian issues since *“assumptions of heterosexual pervade the materials”* (Kiely, 2004, p.261). She draws on Foucault to comprehend the governance of sexuality in schools and similar to my own research, questions the influence of `expert knowledge` as a means of putting an issue beyond

question. She also questions the input of Catholic conservative groups and individuals in distancing private matters from the realm of the public; *“the need to attend to the politics of desire in order to analyse critically or subvert constructions, which can be viewed and experienced as oppressive or disempowering”* (Kiely, 2004, p.264).

6). Conclusion

Foucault’s perspective critiques the representation of State/Catholic Church control today in their dealings with students, parents and teachers: Their disciplinary power is still working through the management structures of interviewing new staff; their representatives are on boards of managements (JMB, CORI). Their influence on curricular and structural rhizomes such as the Pastoral Care, RE, RSE, is still very obvious. Their system of governing populations through care and individualization has changed but *“the lash goes on”* (Yeats, Sonnet 49), albeit in a more subtle and complex way (Foucault, 1977, p. 195). The lens of a post-structuralist critic becomes necessary to see this unwieldy power as like the rhizome which works ‘underground’, involving individuals in their own self-governance through *“technologies of the Self”* (Foucault, 1988), so that the arrow of blame becomes one-directional; back onto the self. As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, the interviews of each student, parent and staff member within each specific school setting are presented in this study as a means of tracing how discourses are intrinsically connected to context, by interweaving policies and practices, to suit their school’s specific construction of family difference.

The next chapter suggests the vagueness around school ethos and its interdiscursiveness with history, religion and professionalism serves as a type of panoptic for school-staff and parents in adjusting them to the standards and expectations of the school. The absence of a clear protocol of what each school ethos entails and expects adds to the complexity and fears generated around ‘difference’ and ‘deficit’. Foucault’s conceptual tools of genealogy, governmentality and bio-power in institutions help to make parallels between former and present forms of governance in post-primary schools through the lens of discourse analysis. They help to reveal as Yeats (Sonnet 49) terms, the continuance of control albeit in another guise; *“Hurrah for revolution and more cannon-shot, a beggar upon horseback lashes a beggar on foot. Hurrah for revolution and cannon come again, the beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on”*.

Discourse as Practices connect *Discourses as Text* and *Discourses as Context*. Thus my concern with how institutional power constructs and restricts such diversity is dealt with again in the following chapter. In an effort to denaturalise the process of family suppression the next chapter focuses on the textual representations of normative families in order to explore how the rhizome of school-family relations are constituted and normalised through hegemonic school discourses. It involves textual analysis of the written circulars, legislative memos, school programs and curricular materials to trace the processes through which these discourses contemporarily establish themselves as normative or common sense. Educational Acts, policies and educational texts, nationally and locally such as department circulars and NCCA directives, school policies, letters to home and so on are analysed, with the hope of making links for the reader between the influence of DES and broader sociological understandings of the `family` in local policies and practices. By linking the politics of recognition to that of Foucault`s governmentality in institutions I can trace connections across `truths` in literature (Chapter Five) about non-traditional families, to school disciplinary discourses involving these families, to empirical data on how students/parents/staff report such practices in order to reveal if the double binding of subjectivities in schools is political. How these texts manifest themselves in school practices is the subject matter of later chapters.

Chapter 5: Discourse as Text-Policy and Curricular Analysis relating to the Discursive Construction of Families in Schools

1). Introduction: Dominant state discourses impact on school policies and curricular guidelines

This chapter looks at education policy and curricula as forms of discourse. They are written as key texts which in turn have specific knock-on social and personal effects within various school contexts. *Text* is understood as language in use in printed and written text, while *genre* is a recognition that different texts are devised to serve institutional needs, such as `social cohesion` (Fairclough, 2003, p.128), representing a particular perspective, for a specific aim. For the purpose of this study of educational texts, policy statements and curricular materials as well as the language employed by key policy makers and practitioners, the term discourse as text is employed so that the purpose of policies can be examined. The broader socio-cultural texts and contextual aspects of these school/education texts were examined in Chapter Four.

These written materials or policies are the means through which the state and the DES communicate with schools, thus influencing school practices. Texts from the DES are taken up and translated into school discourses such as; curricular programmes, administrative guidelines, management responses and school site policies. Curricular guidelines ensure standardization across academic and examination areas at a national level, while providing accountability by school-staff and management to the DES. Curricular policies are generally characterised as sets of laws or guidelines which are laid down for all schools to ensure standardization and the efficient running of the education system at national level, with the tone being very much a mixture of legal and best interests of child/student approach, combined with a sense of culture as treated in Chapter Four; Coolahan (1981) states, “*The secondary schools are private institutions but if they wish to benefit from departmental grants they have to comply with the regulations of the Department for recognised status*” (p.161).

The power of the State over schools is legitimated through dominant policies and materials since they contribute to the engineering of `beneficial` initiatives involving the home and the school. Such initiatives include the Home/School Liaison Programme and the Pastoral Care (PC) programme. In continuing with the analogy of the panoptic (Foucault, 1977 p.195) one

could describe the texts/policies behind educational practices as the rule setting agenda for the workings of the Department of Education and Skills, which seems to assume a dynamic interface of change: For example, in the glossary of terms introducing the code of behaviour guidelines for primary and post-primary schools: *“The guidelines adopt the legal definition of parent as set down by the Education Act, 1998”*, and also it explains that; *“In these guidelines, the term “must” is used to denote legal obligations; the term “should” is used to denote what the guidelines expect of schools”*.

2). Discourse as text is influenced by school ethos

The Department of Education and Skills could be a key player in mediating family change in a positive manner, since its overall message has the capacity to change society`s attitudes and practices, but it seems reluctant to do so, and goes so far as to appear ignorant of the social changes to family forms when issuing guidelines or directives for amendments to curricular material. Irish policy production in Education is unique in the sense that while the State helps circulate dominant discourses in the form of texts, the ethos of the various schools, even if vague in reality, is highly influential in determining how or if policies are implemented. The Education Act (1998), a product of the rhizome of sociocultural interests, is the key legislative document which sets the official tone for the normative regulation of all school activities. It outlines in Section 51 issues involving school; ethos (14.2b), parent associations (26.3), staff conduct (24.3) and inclusion (14.2e). It authorizes the interventions of DES and the National Education Welfare Board [NEWB] in areas involving families (9.d/ 4a).

In keeping with the complexity of discourses however, that does not mean that all school texts are directed in a top down manner. The official policies from the State and DES convey the directives to post-primary schools, who in turn, adjust them according to the shape of their school ethos and pedagogy. This is in keeping with the Education (Amendment) Act (2012, 14: 5v); *“The right of schools to manage their own affairs in accordance with this Act”*. Local texts are generated by each school; taking their students, staff and context into account, while being mindful of broader social forces such as legal and departmental directives. Wenger (1998) in writing about local and broader influences on communities of practice notes that they are rarely *“self-contained entities”* (p.79), because of *“the locality of engagement”* (p.131). Schools write up on all aspects of their life in policy form and an examination of these texts sharpen their focus on policy thinking and their design of services in essential areas such as; admission, Pastoral Care; bullying; discipline and so forth, in line

with their unique setting. Sample department texts are availed of by schools, and incorporated into their own policies as a way of structuring relations with, for example, homes. *“Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set”* (Ball, 2006, p.46).

Policies are also subjected to the agreement of schools` Board of Management, in line with the union of religious schools governance, the Joint Managerial Board (JMB). The JMB stipulates that local policies must be in keeping with their religious ethos. Articles of Management for Catholic Secondary Schools (2003) and *‘The Deeds of Variation of schools under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church’* states that; the trustees *“shall not do anything or permit anything to be done in relation to the School, or management thereof, who would have or would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the Roman Catholic Ethos of the School”* (Hyland, 2006, p.209). Section 15(e) of the 1998 Education Act recognises the unique ethos of each school but requires schools to; *“Have regard to the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society”*.

This arrangement seems to suit the State since it adopts the pastoral techniques of reverse philanthropy in their governance structure, while maintaining a semblance of holistic education. For the purposes of this chapter, Foucault`s lens is applied to educational texts as a critique of how the system represents or misrepresents families in texts by designing them as an absent presence within the PC discourses. The Education Act (1998) seems to allow for inclusiveness through the guise of a liberal agenda while resolving the State/Church ownership issue with the trustees of the schools, by adhering to their ethos throughout the PC programme; *“To promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school”* (Education Act, 1998, p.51.9d). This document through its normative discourse implicitly sets a precedent for educators to assume that all students have two parents involved in their education. It also sets a precedent that justifies school provision for health education, and risk assessments which were not part of the schools` remit before this. The spiritual and academic aspects of schooling were the key components of education before now.

Vagueness around legalities and school ethos act as a panoptic

Family Policy Matters (Hantaris, 2004) reflects on the ambiguity of the relationship between family change and the policy responses in EU member states, by comparing the micro and the macro level discourses. It asks the question; “*What are the challenges arising for society by changing family structures?*” Family law has been responding to the increased pressures around family living such as the Civil Partnership Bill (2010), the legal status of illegitimacy and the constitutional change to Article 41.3.2 (1996), “*A court designated by law may grant a dissolution of marriage where.....*”. Solicitors must advise their clients about non-adversarial means of divorcing, which is a healthier option for parents and children in the long term. However there are many potential loopholes in Irish legislation around this unexplored episteme, thanks to the influence of history. Articles 42.1, 42.2, 42.3 emphasise the rights of the parents over the state in providing for a child`s education. The step-father, or step-mother seem to have no place in the legalities and becomes only the mother/father`s lover or spouse, they have no rights under the Irish constitution.

Daly (2009) writes about such challenges for Irish schools educating the children of divorced and separated families;

“There still appears to be little support for educators in dealing with the impacts of family turmoil in the classroom. Schools in particular find themselves in the eye of the storm. A marital breakdown, feuding parents, with a child stuck in the middle, can result in a school acting de facto gatekeeper of parental contact with the child” (p.360).

Daly continues her argument for better education in this area and highlights the difficulties which non-custodial parents face by not being allowed to get involved in their child`s education. She quotes work done by O`Mahony (2005) about the right of equal consultation with both parents as an essential aspect of teacher-parent communication. She concludes her analysis with the avocation; “*Schools must now be able to adapt to changing family structures*”(p.362) In Britain, the Children`s Act (1989) and the Family Law Act (1996) both require estranged parents to collaborate about their children after they divorce. American courts insist on divorce education for parents, particularly in adversarial partings; “*Education law is not a particularly well-developed discipline in Ireland*” (Kilkelly, 2008, p.231), the legal focus still being on property and child maintenance.

The question needs to be asked, what challenges do changes in family composition present for schools? *“Principals and schools generally are struggling to cope with all the pressures and fallout that family problems bring and sometimes their response to a non- custodial parent’s desire to engage actively in the child’s education is to brush the parent off as a quick fix”* (Equality Authority 2002, p.67). The rights of children are now recognised in the Irish Constitution since its amendment in 2012, so the focus on the rights of parents and the duties of school managements will need to be amended in order to consider issues such as student name/s since some students wish to alter their surname after a parent moves out (see Chapter Six), but schools are legally bound to register the name on the student’s birth certificate. Students will have to be included in issues such as who receives their report card, or who attends their parent-teacher meetings, or who has a right or claim to collect them from school- especially in acrimonious situations.

Parent/s are responsabilized, given parent subjectivities- which Ball coins *‘favoured subjectivities’* (Ball 1990, p.32), via parent associations, and structures such as the National Parents Council Post-Primary in policy discourses as part of the partnership ethos of the state (PACCS, 2007). *“Presently partnership is mentioned in virtually all policy documents emanating from the Department of Education and Science”* (Mac Giolla Phadraig, 2005, p.93). The legislative influence on these policies is rooted in state laws (Articles 40-44 Constitution) and Acts which impact on aspects of Education, such as; the Education Act (1878/1998/2012), ASTI Act (1998) Equal Status Act (2000/2004), and the Employment Equality Acts (1998, 2004), Education Welfare Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005), all of which can be re-configured on the basis of the religious ethos of a school. The publication on *“Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers”*, presumes *“parents”* throughout its references as opposed to *“parent/s”* (2007, p.27) except it qualifies the term parent in the glossary of terms, *“The term “parent” is used in the codes to denote both natural parents (plural again) and legal guardians”* (p.11). The second edition of this code states that;

“Teachers should be committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity including those differences arising from gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community and socio-economic status, and any further grounds as may be referenced in equality legislation in the future” (2012, 1.3).

On page seven, of the Teaching Council’s code of conduct, teachers are advised in the interest of professional integrity to *“avoid conflict between their professional work and private*

interests which could reasonably be deemed to impact negatively on pupils /students” (2.5). There is no clarification as to what could impact negatively on their professionalism, but the discourse is so broad, like that of the school ethos and Education Act (1998) that it may act as a panoptic for teachers; especially those whose teaching position is not secure, divorced teachers, unmarried teachers who are mothers, separated parents who want to be on boards of management or want to enrol their children in Catholic schools (McNamara and Norman, 2010, p.538, Clarke, 2006). These texts, within the rhizome of older legislative ones, such as Article 37 of the Constitution, may reflect the prevailing silences and the double binds around non-traditional family practices within present school structures. The way schools seem to be interpreting respect for family status (Teaching Council, Code 4, p.39) is non-recognition and non-reference as opposed to valuing diversities.

Students and parents who want to realize themselves as part of a school community, tend to unquestioningly adjust their discourses according to the long established protocols around topics such as family. The normalizing effects that such discourses in the form of for example texts, policies and curricular materials draw families into the web of PC disciplinary technologies; *“The specific techniques by which a government in the framework of the state was able to govern people as individuals significantly useful for the world”* (Foucault, 1988, p.154). State and Religion still seem to unite in their control over the education of youth in Ireland, even in the twenty-first century. Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, 2007, 2012) advocates respect for students, parents, colleagues, school management, co-professionals and all in the school community, and is a perfect example of contradictions circulating between that of the school ethos and that of the professionalism of teachers;

“They should interact with them in a way that does not discriminate and that promotes equality in relation to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, age, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling Community and socio-economic status” (2007, p.39).

Panopticism from outside agencies position families as subjects in relation to power

Schools also draw on the expertise of outsiders who use developmental `truths` of childhood and youth to regulate and discipline families across the school-home context. The citation of, and dependence on networking, with the outside agencies, for example, the Education Welfare Officers[EWO] are framed as a priority by the dominant and expert powers. In St. Brigids the policing of attendance is constructed as a major responsibility for the school, in

line with the Education Act of 2000. They send returns of absences regularly to the National Education Welfare Board. The parents are responsabilized into co-operating with the school as they are required to write notes about their daughter`s absences and must co-operate with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in relation to a daughter`s attendance. The EWO visits the school regularly, and *inspects`* the register.

“The EWO with parental co-operation will offer help where there are genuine difficulties. However where attendance remains low, parents or carers could face legal action being taken against them” (St. Brigits PC policy).

At the back of the code of behaviour booklet in Hawthorn Heights, procedures for notifying the school about reasons for absence from school are outlined together with protocols for dealing with unexplained absences or long term absences; *“The school keeps a daily attendance record of all students which is submitted to the Board of Management and the NEWB at the end of the year”*. Their Discipline policy works to reinforce the policy of care in this school and is based on a code of behaviour in accordance with Guidelines issued in 2008 by the National Educational Welfare Board as laid down by the Education Welfare Act (2000:23) (Hawthorn Heights) Sanctions such as suspension or expulsion will be directed at students who fail to comply with the school rules. Counselling is offered to these students as a means of rectifying their behaviour. There are definite procedures to follow in the referral procedure; the student`s class-teacher refers him after all other means have failed to address the problem, the referrer must complete a referral form so that an inventory of needs can be drawn up by the counsellor.

The National Educational Psychological Service may be contacted if necessary, what Foucault would term the *‘expert’*; *“People looked for validation in sociological, psychological, medical and psychiatric knowledge”* (Foucault, 1972, p.219). This provision is also enshrined in the Education Act (1998) *“Ensure that students have appropriate guidance to assist them, in their educational and career choices”* (51:9c). It does not qualify what it defines *“appropriate”* as, but this is another example of where panopticism over student lives is legitimised and placed above scrutiny, through vague power discourses.

In Cogito College`s discipline policy, legal discourses are employed in the area of smoking, Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Act (2002). In the area of school attendance, Education Welfare Act (2000), and appeals to expulsion, Education Act (1998). These legislative discourses, combined with threats of sanctions such as fines, detention and

suspension are held over the families as a means of compliance with school governance, and can be seen as disciplinary threats. Procedures such as these should be reflected on and the constitutions of subjectivities resulting from them considered, rejected or even affirmed.

`Regimes of truth` and pastoral care structures

The Pastoral Care structures are designed by curriculum developers, teachers and policy makers (`experts`) to safeguard and implement their vision for healthy young people through education. These discourses position the school as a neutral, benevolent arbitrator which educates students to resolve all social ills which beget them. The Pastoral Care programme is designed to preempt as many risk factors as is possible, so that, being enlightened about the dangers to their health and life chances, a student/family will be knowledgeable enough to make the correct choices in the future. Freedom in liberal schools seem to be contingent on what society considers to be `normal`, so that most common sense literatures seem to reproduce the dominant family model as the only authentic type, giving rise to confusion, identity issues and exclusion for some families. A crucial aspect of PC hierarchy of expertise is that it conveys the impression that their expertise is limitless and that the `experts` are speaking in terms of universal truths. Research has found that the creators of these policies base much of their decisions on research findings without directly referencing their basis, in order to create a sense of certainty while making it more difficult to challenge their decisions (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1998). Ordinary people, not realizing the way discourses work, are impressed by this rhetoric of expertise. It is achieved by giving them their concepts, desires, beliefs, and actions through epistemes, such as liberalism which presents itself as a critique of excessive disciplinary power in the name of the rights and freedom of the individual and/or parent. *“The battle to define what an individual is and what her or his proper relation to society might be is taken out of the hands of actual individuals and treated as the possession of experts”* (Ransom, 1997, p.75).

Pastoral Care structures work with/on individuals by isolating them from the school body, in a confessional style relationship with an `expert`/counsellor or trusted teacher in a private space away from the classroom and friends. Suppression of intimacy is maintained by isolating the affective and familial aspect of student life in the private space. Discrete entities are established between private and public through the carving up of these spaces. Harwood and Wright (2012) describe the construction and containment of such risks as `bio pedagogies`,

which tap into broad concerns about the nature of childhood and adolescence, and which legitimate schools purported need to protect young people from future risk.

“The constitution of young people as future adults and as “at risk” thus brings them into politicised discourses which attempt to normalise, govern and regulate their weight, behaviours and lifestyles” (2012, p.119).

Dean (2010) traces pastoral power, police and reason of state from medieval times, marrying the Christian doctrine of pastor with secular ruler through bio politics; *“Bio-politics is concerned with the family, with housing, living and working conditions, with what we call ‘lifestyle’”* (p.119). Foucault understands circulating public ‘truths’ or ‘knowledge’s’, such as the Catholic Church’s claims about family stability and social capital to act as technologies of power, mediated through institutional policies, to keep control over society’s personal lives. ‘Truth’ games leave little space for other ways of being family in Irish society or in school institutions. These unsubstantiated ‘truths’ are contested by reports such as, *“Arguing parents damage children’s skills”* (Pappas, 30-03-2013) and *“Family Relationships and Family Well-Being”* (2012) which found that *“disadvantage is linked somewhat more strongly with parents capacity to love (or at least live with) each other, and that has knock on effects on children”* (p.89). This report found that low levels of conflict among couples, whether married or not, is what contributed most to children’s well-being (p.82). Yet, the findings of reports such as this do not seem to penetrate the hegemonic discourses which fail to question the idealisation of the normative family type.

3) Pastoral care policy and structure

The Pastoral Care policy of each school defines how they structure all aspects of policy affecting every area of school services other than the academic, even though there is a definite crossover between both. The PC policy defines all others at local level, just like the Education Act (1998) does at a national level. Presently, every school is obliged to furnish a copy of each policy annually to their Board of Management [BOM], particularly that of Pastoral Care because it draws together every other policy which relates to well-being, health and personal development, such as SPHE, RSE and RE. Subjects such as career guidance and counselling share some of the discursive elements of SPHE and RSE, as well as RE, so today they are all generally encompassed under the umbrella term of Pastoral Care or Guidance. Initiatives driven by the Education Act (1998) include; Child Protection Guidelines (DES, 2004), Child First Guidelines (2011) and Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools (NEWB,

2008). These form the framework around a whole-school pastoral approach of putting the child at the centre of educational care;

“No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with a child and family should make it clear to all parties involved, although they can be assured that all information will be handled taking full account of legal requirements” (Child First Guidelines, 2011, p.16).

My analysis of local policies has shown that they tend to have direct quotations from the government guidelines (drawing heavily on the Education Act, 1998) in relation to their aims which indicate that state policies very much influence school planning at a local level; *“Care for individual life is becoming at this moment a duty for the state”* (Foucault 1988, p.147). Sr. Úna Collins (1999) has been very involved in the formulating and structuring of a formal Pastoral Care programme in Irish post-primary schools; *“My thesis (1998) in that paper was that pastoral care as we now define it was always the experience of the ‘good’ school in Ireland, but it was not named or formalised”* (1999, p.7). Her aim for PC was to provide *“genuine human and social education, so that the affective dimension of the young person can be educated”* (1980, p.7). She traces the journey of PC implementation in Ireland from 1974 to 1994 in her most recent publication (1999). The provision of a formal PC programme was not initiated in Irish schools until the 1990`s, in line with a number of cultural changes such as the Education Bill (1998) and the enculturation of Irish school life as a result of social changes, such as, the decline in religious vocations and fewer religious personnel in schools. The subsequent spiritual vacuum that resulted was expected to be filled by re-responsibilizing teachers and parents via quasi-secular techniques.

“Pastoral Care evolved through phases in which concern for ‘knowing’ and ‘tracking’ children in new and comprehensive schools gave way to the development of more focused forms of guidance and counselling of an academic, personal, social and vocational nature, culminating in the 1970s in more fully developed programmes of personal, social, and vocational education” (Collins and Mc Niff, 1999, p.17).

The Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Schools [IAPCE] which is located in the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, supports the pastoral teams in all post-primary schools in producing and disseminating resource materials on Pastoral Care, whole school development and classroom management, and through the provision of in-service training for teachers.

“In the past so much of the pastoral activity of the school was carried on in an unconscious manner. No longer is this sustainable as schools now face greater challenges to support students at every level, to provide appropriate training to staff, to put in place effective structures to address particular issues such as bereavement, special needs, crisis response, pastoral roles. Therefore a formal

policy in the area of pastoral care is essential” (1999, IAPCE/DES, www.sdpi.ie).

The concept of Pastoral Care has a religious context, originating in Judaism and incorporated into Christianity by clergy in their concern for the poor and marginalized, including the *‘lost sheep’* (Luke:15v. 4-8). The image of the pastor as the shepherd looking after his flock is the basis of the pastoral analogy, taken from Psalm 23 *“The Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want”*. Today the understanding of PC has broadened to encompass the whole school support structure, of holistic psychology, moral, aesthetic, and social as well as an academic framework of well-being discourse. However it still maintains the construct of protecting the *“flock”* from danger/contagion (Foucault, 1977, pp.172, 195); this involves an assortment of techniques threaded through the entire school’s pastoral care/power which aims at steering teenagers on the correct course of life, through *‘right knowledge’*. Foucault’s writings on the panoptic surveillance in ancient prisons (Foucault, 1977, pp.95-229) can be paralleled with the gaze of school managements on family lives today. This involves the regulating gaze of an institution on individuals with their consent. It works on the site of the individual and produces individualizing effects-such as the *“docile”* body (Foucault, 1977, p.138). Anyone who is judged to be outside the norm is disciplined by a number of techniques until they conform to the standards of the institution. If something is understood to be a risk/harmful to the student’s academic life it is constructed as a negative which needs to be tackled through awareness raising initiatives. *‘Black sheep’* are separated from the group until they have amended or adjusted their ways or lifestyle.

Pastoral Care was designed to suit institutional structures, what O’Sullivan terms a *“bounded expertise”* (p.63) which favours schools. *“When the human capital paradigm, with its linking of the school and the workplace in a rationale for expanded educational opportunities presented itself, it had no difficulty in membership parents”* (O’Sullivan, 2005, p.154). O’Sullivan traces the diverse interests which made demands on the Irish state education provision from 1990’s onwards (as outlined in Chapter Four), which resulted in the theocentric paradigm being replaced by a mercantile one.

“As the years progressed, religious- inspired justice ideals were joined by capitalist, social democratic, social rescue, health and civic rationales in advocating state action in pursuit of the common good, social transformation, a vocational curriculum, modulated bodies, shaped identities, and the amelioration of an increasing litany of social ills from teenage pregnancy to political apathy” (2005, p.174).

Nowadays state policies tend to ring-fence the DES and schools by exonerating them from everything confrontational because they are constructed as sites where all of society's problems are resolved, and "*disallowed knowledge's*" (Youdell 2011, p.86) are masked by the education assemblage and examination demands. This research critiques the health promoting agenda of an apparently neutral and benevolent state which produces diagnostic literature which seems to construct a particular subjectivity in students by their use of prescriptive literature such as the pastoral care guidelines.

The appeal of PC lies in its progressive, scientific and problem solving claim as a cure for all of society's ills. Marginalised, suicidal, undisciplined, broken or homosexual students can in confidence, visit an expert to bare his/her soul and inner most thoughts. The external disciplining regulation of human bodies in social institutions to effect "*the means of correct training*" (Foucault 1977, p.170) seems to have evolved to allow for more humane, people centred approaches which involve educating students and parent/s about risks and dangers to their health and educational aspirations, so that they will be induced to discipline themselves- what Foucault termed *Technologies of the Self* (1988). Governmentality expert, Fimyar (2008) argues that the concept of `risk` plays a crucial role in modern democratic states in incorporating the agency of subjects, such as students and parent/s in their own self-management. Alarmist concerns surrounding global childhood crises, such as obesity [WHO, 1998], and European health promoting initiatives in line with the OECD, also contributed to discursive changes, such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) which sought to standardise educational provision as a means of surveillance for young peoples` attitudes and behaviour, especially those outside of the norm.

"Social Personal and Health Education is situated within the broader framework of European policy in this area. Contextualising health promotion within appropriate settings such as schools is deemed a strategic goal of health promotion generally (WHO 1986). SPHE is deemed to be health promoting. The SPHE programme provides students with dedicated time and space to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development" (Department of Education and Science, 2001, p.4/Geary and Mannix-Mc Namara, 2012).

A range of techniques of surveillance within schools, and disciplinary health discourses for families problematize young people's bodies to the point of creating a `moral crisis` which justify school bio politics as argued by Kiely (2005) in relation to the health promotion focus of relationships and sexuality education. Lupton (1999) replicates this notion when she asserts

that “*healthiness*” is replacing “*godliness*” as the yardstick of accomplishment and proper living in contemporary society. “*The identification of group risk is rarely seen as sufficient in itself, rather the focus often moves away from the group and onto “individual susceptibility”, that is, onto the risk posed to the individual*” (Rose, 2000).

Pastoral care curriculum/ text

In keeping with the imagery of Foucault’s panopticism and its parallels with Pastoral Care policies in schools, a selection of relevant curricular directives surrounding it in the form of academic subjects such as Religious Education (RE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) are analysed. All aspects of holistic or personal and social education curriculum are treated under the umbrella term of Pastoral Care programmes in school. Foucault might consider PC a form of manipulation of individuals who trust school personnel with their personal stories and safety;

“The techniques, the practices, which give a concrete form to this new political rationality and to this new type of relationship between the social entity and the individual....recognized the necessity of defining, describing, and organizing very explicitly this new technology of power, the new techniques by which the individual could be integrated into the social entity” (Foucault, 1988, p.153).

Pastoral Care delivery in schools has evolved into a design of school services which include the many discursive modes, stated and enacted, through which the school is governed. It generally involves five “*pastoral tasks*” as outlined by Best (2002);

1. Reactive pastoral casework undertaken on a one-to one basis in response to children with social or emotional problems
2. Pro-active, preventative pastoral care which pre-empts critical incidents for students
3. Developmental pastoral curricula which delivers programmes to promote student well-being, such as SPHE or RSE
4. The promotion of an orderly and supportive environment which *promotes school spirit through mutual care and concern*
5. The management and administration of pastoral care in the form of structured and supportive planning and delivery of all of the above.

Best (2002) reviewed the UK’s Pastoral Care and Personal-Social Education programme mainly through textual analysis of nineteen years of a journal entitled “*Pastoral Care in Education*”. He identified a whole range of possible topics which come under the auspices of P C such as; transferring from one school to another, school stressors, match and mis-match

between family values and school, bullying, self-esteem, exclusion, parental illness, peer-support, loss education, examinations, and sexual abuse. Best refers to casework which generated seventy seven “*potential pupil crisis*” categorised as individual, family, peers, school, and community and global. Such framing of risks probably generate discourses-of-risk which Beck (1998) writes about. The pastoral curriculum aims to highlight as many of these topics as possible with the intention of providing a broader education for students as well as ensuring their safety.

4). Family policies and their configuration in each school context

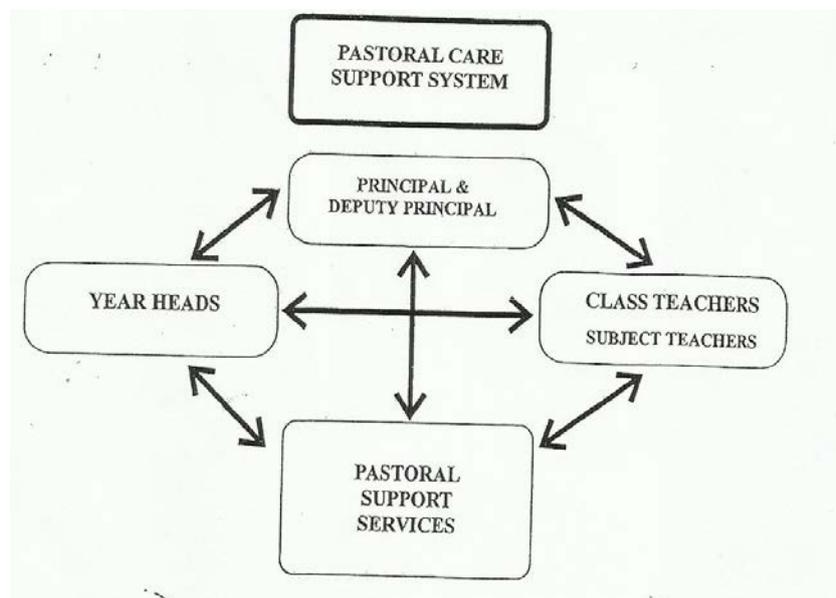
Of the three main schools I visited, one school, Hawthorn Heights, called their concern for the whole student, ‘care’ or ‘counselling’, while in St. Brigits and in Cogito College this care is termed Pastoral Care. All of the other policies in each school interlink with the overall ethos and philosophy of care for the individual’s well-being; academic, social, spiritual and physical. All teachers are involved in the administration, directly and indirectly of the school’s Pastoral Care and counselling in every school. In Hawthorn Heights, it is evidenced in their questionnaire; “*What do you think are your responsibilities in the area of school Guidance provision?* By involving all parties, staff, students and parents the groundwork is laid for the panoptic system to circulate knowledge about the student.

“The disciplinary institutions secreted a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct; the fine analytical divisions they created formed around men an apparatus of observation, recording and training” (Foucault, 1977, p.173).

The PC policy in St. Brigits begins by outlining that, “*Pastoral Care supports the academic, behavioural, emotional and spiritual needs of the students*”. Their principal has overall responsibility for the provision of support and services with the funding s/he receives from the DES annually, and all the staff, particularly the class-teachers are involved in implementing the PC programme. Similar to Hawthorn Heights and Cogito College, every staff member is responsible for the pastoral care of students. The interconnectivity of socio-economic and gender politics with family discourse was mentioned earlier as inseparable aspects of this research. It is considered here again as factors involved in understanding why family politics are configured differently in each of the schools which I researched. There is a classed context in all three schools, with a middle class social and economic concern reflected in all local educational policies.

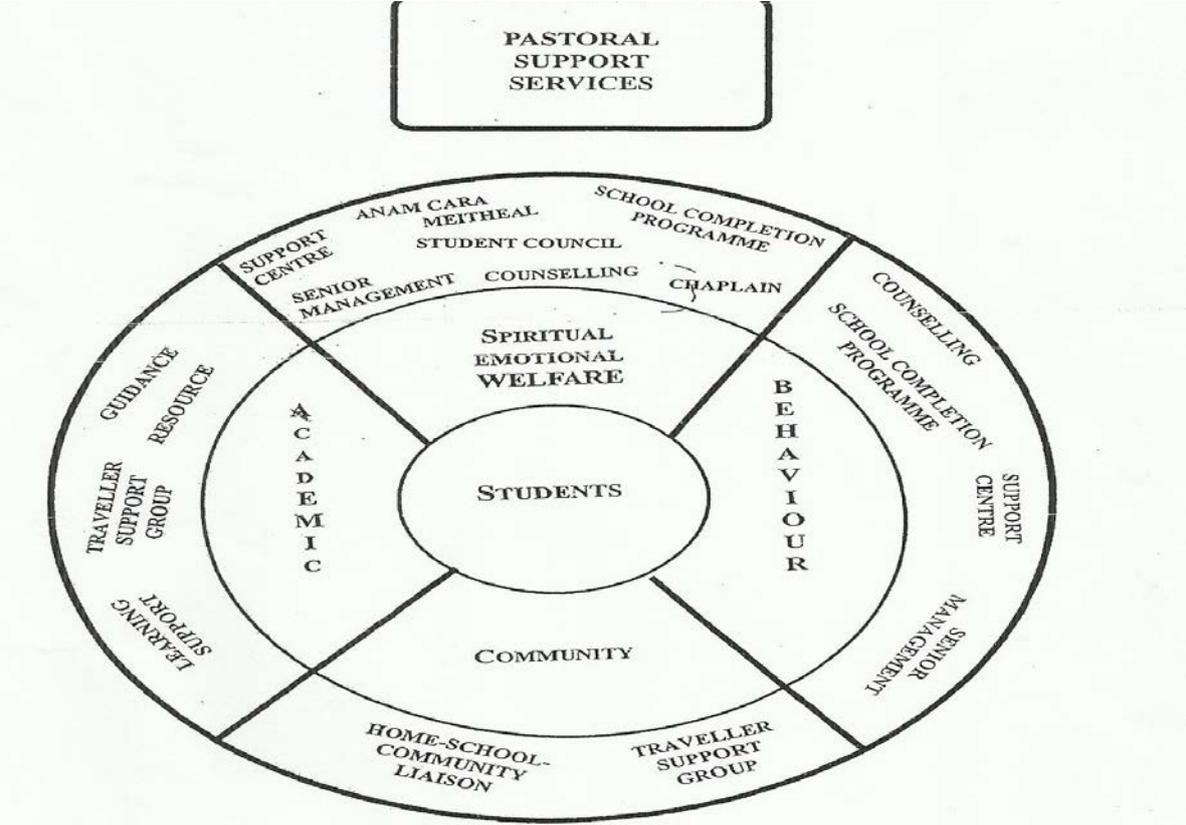
Figure 1 provides a visual layout of Pastoral Care Provision in each of the schools I researched.

Figure 1-Pastoral Care structures in schools



The dominant policies from the DES are standard irrespective of at what socio-economic background its policies are aimed. Hawthorn Height`s School and Cogito College are both located in middle class areas, whereas St. Brigits is located in a working class area. Various studies on school choice and class reproduction in schooling (Reay and Lucey 2000; Smyth 2006) have highlighted the continuance of the production of inequalities through schools. My study found a similar theme of surveillance and intervention especially in the working class background of St.Brigits school, with the middle class `expert` policies designed to adjust the families to the standards and type of the middle class system. The dominant discourses at St. Brigits texts are laced with personal deficit such as “*facilitating students in coping with emotional/behavioural difficulties which may be affecting their progress at school*” (St. Brigits` PC policy, p.7). St. Brigits consists of a very wide range of services including; learning support, resource support for students who may require reasonable accommodation for state examinations (RACE) or with the Educational Psychologist Service, Guidance, the Resource Teacher for Traveller groups [RTT] Home-School Community Liaison, Chaplaincy, Anam Cara, Student Council, Meitheal, and the School Completion Programme (SCP), as is evident from Figure 2 on the next page.

Figure 2: Pastoral Care diagram in St. Brigits policy on PC



Here the family is explicitly constructed as the client with the school as the deliverer of an educational service. Words such as “referral” and “targeted” construct the student and their family as clients or perhaps patients with the school in the benevolent position of providing a service to students to enable them to make the most of the educational opportunities being offered. Needs are identified on entry to the school and on-going monitoring and assessments take place to encourage students to stay in school. Rewards for good attendance are given in programmes such as JCSP and LCA. The School Completion Programme is an initiative to reduce early school leaving through a variety of in school and after school initiatives. Any student, who does not conform to the criteria laid down by the school for inclusion, will be singled out for adjustment until they can be responsabilized to become one of the regular students. Interestingly, this policy refers to parents throughout the document which implies that a set of parents exist, despite the fact that almost fifty per cent of these students come from homes with a single mother. The analysis of such wording points to it as an example of normalization for the families and staff for whom it is intended.

The involvement of all school personnel in the panoptic culture of care is a type of hierarchized observation with everyone from the top down to the class-captain involved in its operations. “*A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency*” (Foucault, 1977, p.176).

The opening lines of the Pastoral Care Policy in Cogito College indicate all the parties to whom it applies, namely teachers, student council, parents` council, and Board of Directors. It outlines the links between these roles and areas of school life by describing the responsibilities of these pastoral personnel, how they liaise with the help of the pastoral structures, they link the various policies such as SPHE, RE and RSE which relate to these roles, and it outlines the responsibilities of the PC team. The desired pastoral outcomes include; “*the creating of and support for a structured, tiered system of reporting and procedures, to define roles and responsibilities in the PC system, to promote and support whole staff development and training, the creation of an updated and accessible record system, and the development of pride in self and community*”. A monitoring system oversees lateness, absences and discipline. The role of class teacher and subject co-ordinator is outlined and its voluntary nature acknowledged. Similar to the procedures in other schools, it seems to be more focused on pastoral power than on pastoral care; there is a focus on institutional efficiency more than concern for the individual student. The panoptic lens on the individual is embedded in these texts, together with the responsabilizing of teachers to carry out its operation.

A politics of family adjustment

A series of family technologies such as enrolment evenings, family profiling, examinations, notes home and Pastoral Care all encourage families to yield to the governance of their school. Parent evenings are held in all three schools for induction information, liturgies, and information seminars and for celebratory events, such as prize giving with parent/s being invited to join in. Such evenings are suffused with power, what Foucault`s terms a mechanism that works in and through institutions to produce particular kinds of subjects, knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1977, 1972). Foucault claims that power works in a “*capillary*” fashion into the “*very grain*” of individuals (Foucault, 1980, p.30). This may explain why individual parents, teachers and students freely enter into the processes of school life without realising the personal cost or why they need to be moulded as subjects to the requirements of the

school establishment. These mechanisms work on parents who aspire to be part of a whole-school identity, participants in an educational team, through words, symbols, ideology and a host of various assemblages which mediate what the relationship between `the good parent` and school entails. New parents to these post-primary schools, understandably, are particularly concerned to establish their identity as a `good parent`. `Good` parents who measure up to the expectations of the school and are complicit in maintaining the status quo are generally very welcome in school. The good parent visits on appointed times when the school wishes, conforms to the traditional family type and has both parents visible at school meetings, such as parent/teacher.

Parent/s who do not fit to the specifications of a school may be judged to be a potential burden on the school system. This process is understood as control of the subject, or `subjectivity`, when an individual allows him/herself to become a product of the school culture in order to blend in. As a result of collective discourses involving school ethos, educational attainment and son/daughter actualisation, the parent/s may feel obliged or are required to put personal identities and principles aside in favour of the school body, its image and its ideology. Their new subjectivity is constructed within the hegemonic forms of family identity, the discourses of DES, NCCA, School policies, school personnel, and fellow-parents and even through the institutional and subjective voice of their young son/daughter who does not want to appear different from the rest of the student body.

The collective truths of the school body are created through normalizing power and become so internalised by the individuals in school communities that they become, what Foucault terms, "*technologies of the self*";

"Technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality"(Foucault, 1988, p.18).

Distancing practices such as appointments and invitations to come in are constructed so that parents do not arrive unannounced or too frequently. A sense of responsabilizing of parents to maintain a distance is evident in the policies as they mention the school`s expectations in the same line as the school charter, and induction is mentioned to forewarn them that allegiance to the school is part of the school`s plan for them. "*Parents are invited to make appointments*

at any time during the school year to discuss the guidance needs of their son” (Hawthorn Heights). Deetz and Mc Lellan (2009) refer to this process as “*distanciation*”. “*The guidance needs*” are a gentle way of inducing the parents to refer their son for counselling. Parents who enter this contested and fraught public sphere of Irish education typically do not understand the power plays involved in the multiple ways in which the school frames their involvement.

5). Enrolment procedures are similar to Foucault’s “*examination*”

Enrolment into post-primary schools heavily involves standardisation and normalization. The assumption in the induction texts is of a set or pair of parents or guardians. A complex and heterogeneous assemblage of school discourses makes it possible for these new families to be evaluated, problematized and rendered amenable to administration through pastoral care structures, which begins with their entry to the new secondary school. “*It was of the utmost importance for tutors to build up a profile of each student, taking into account the positive value as well as the limitations of the child’s background*” (Collins, 1993/Collins and Mc Neff, 1999, p.104). The information given by the family about the prospective student privileges the school by enabling them to police the new entrant. Disciplinary powers allow the school to create a recognizable ‘good student’ by positioning her/him into their given categories.

“The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of normalizing judgement; it is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (Foucault, 1997, p.184).

There is a strict procedure for admittance to Hawthorn Heights which is outlined in their information pack. The parent/s completes an application form and includes a fee. The mother’s name and father’s name are required and their mobile numbers, as well as a guardian and an emergency contact number. Education information such as present teacher and school name (primary) and roll number are also necessary, as well as the names and ages of his siblings, and information regarding his father or uncle’s as former students. The signature spaces allow for Father, Mother and/or Guardians signature. The guidance counsellors meet with the student about six months before he begins his education there in order to administer a series of standardised tests. Their welcome pack states “*To fit in, you must know about ‘the way things are done around here’ and why!*”. It also mentions the school’s roots, curriculum and vision. A release of information consent form which is signed by all parent/s on registration night allows for all contingencies. Its opening line reads “*In order to provide the best service we need to acquire information from his parents/guardians and his primary*

school. *To conform with regulations please complete the consent form below*". The word "service" constructs the student and parent/s as clients of the school, while the word "best" suggest standardization and targets to be met. The obtaining of information about each student's background gives the school the power/knowledge advantage to enable the panopticism to find areas of personal life to be improved or adjusted; *"to form a body of knowledge about these individuals, rather than to deploy the ostentatious signs of sovereignty"* (Foucault, 1977, p.220). There is a definite guidance programme for each year group which includes educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal counselling, as required.

Difference to the family norm appears to be equated with deficit and difficulties, almost as a way of suppressing diversity, making it invisible or taboo. For example, the list of practical considerations for students entering Hawthorn Heights invites parents to disclose all of his 'differences'; if he has been receiving learning support, if he has any medical condition or has an exemption from Irish. They are also asked to furnish information in relation to custody issues, and the correct version of the student's birth certificate;- *"otherwise difficulties could arise especially when taking state Examinations or applying to College"*. This accumulation of evidence or literature around the student's family makes it easier for the school to categorise it into a good or not-so-good one, and to contain any perceived threat which this family may present for the smooth running of the school establishment, thus holding them in a mechanism of objectification. What the schools term "standardisation", Foucault calls normalization. *"It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity there is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences"* (Foucault, 1977, p.184).

The entrance policy in St. Brigits is of a similar vein to Hawthorn Heights, and is incorporated into the Pastoral Care Policy. It consists of; information in relation to the school system, its supports and the education necessary around availing of these support structures. Induction day is the first day in which students are exposed to the school's criteria and sixth class teachers from their former primary school are liaised with to *"identify needs"*. Their PC policy describes the implementation of the programme with the deputy-principal organising information meetings for *"parents of first years, and meets parents of all new entrants on an individual basis"*. Each new student is then categorised by the school personnel and labelled

as normal (not as risk) or not (‘at-risk’ or a ‘risk’ to the school body). The power/knowledge practices here decide the subjectivity of the student on entry to their school. The techniques and practices of pastoral care and guidance around these students will determine the type of person they are allowed to be in this establishment.

In Cogito College admission procedures are outlined in relation to the allotment of places for first year students. Priority is given to, the sisters of current and past-pupils, the daughters of current staff, and the daughters of past-pupils in that order. An application form including the student’s name, date of birth, address and birth certificate, together with parents’ or guardians’ names, addresses and telephone numbers, have to be furnished before enrolment. The technologies of self-governance which are offered to families who need to shape themselves in line with the normative families who are frequenting the school (bio-politics) are exemplified in the discipline policy. This involves a code of behaviour which all students must sign before entry to Cogito College. It outlines the rules and expectations which the school has for all its students;

“The code of behaviour is designed to help our students to develop ‘self-discipline’ as the means of achieving some order in their lives and as preparation for future citizenship, it enables the school to provide guidance, understanding, leadership and moral support to all our girls. We are committed to providing a socio-educational ethos in which our students can mature into responsible young women capable of coping with the challenges of a rapidly changing world” (Cogito College).

This school is constructed as the service provider of guidance and support while the student is expected to become responsible for one-self. References to the changing world and future citizenship create a sense of universality between the work being done, in this school with the bigger picture of what education stands for. The jurisdiction and limitations of what the school can provide are outlined clearly for all families. The possessive pronouns “we” and “our girls” give the appearance of ownership and personal investment in the students, while encouraging allegiance to the school system and its operations. Authority within the school is associated with achievement rather than the individual student attending it. Targets for achievement academically and socially are guided by the written rules of policies and procedures within the schools hierarchy of posts of responsibilities rather than by the personal considerations of its obligatory scholars. The requirements for school uniform are outlined also as well as the expectations which the school has around it. One of the rules begins with

“students must accept the authority of management and all school staff during the school day and when on all out-of-school activities”.

6). Discourse as curricular text generates `normative` families

This section investigates how the politics of family adjustment in schools work to construct the traditional type family as the “*normative family*” through the discourses of texts in curricular materials such as; SPHE, RSE, RE, Home Economics and Language classes. These dominant texts are analysed as a means of understanding how national directives through curricula constructs of family interlink with the PC policies at local level in order to render some family types invisible in school settings.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE): While a text *per se* cannot become a strict mandate for school action, it is limited by the mediating action of a given school history, school personalities, priorities and community. However, departmental policies and curricular constructs of family type do set precedents and directions for schools to follow by circulating certain knowledge (`truths`) about ways of being family and arranging school spaces around it, so that other ways of being family are unthinkable or unrecognisable to individuals operating there, other than those directly affected. In that sense, policies become prescriptive of what dominant discourses are allowed to circulate while shutting down subjugated discourses. For example, Lodge and Lynch`s report (2004) found that several textbooks and syllabi material showed traditional biases in terms of marital and family status. The nuclear family was regarded as the normal family, with one parent or families consisting of adults only, rendered invisible. Because of such constructs in curricular material, they found that students belonging to non-traditional families could experience “*a failure on the part of educational institutions to provide the conditions necessary to enable full participation*” (p.33).

The blanket term of parents/guardian no longer adequately captures the life world of many students but the general term “*parents*” is referred to in the; substance abuse policy, in the pastoral care policy, the critical incident plan and in the SPHE policy in each school. The admissions policy and the anti-bullying policies in all schools refer to parents/guardians.

In the SPHE teacher`s book (Mc Auley, 1996) the topic of family and separations and unions such as same-sex couples are avoided, while relationship skills are emphasised. Mc Auley writes about the religious dimensions of relationship education when he quotes scripture

references about love (p.188). He expands this relationship to incorporate sociology, psychology and psychiatry in an attempt to align himself with the `experts` and to give the impression that the SPHE course book is not restricted only to Catholic definitions. He also quotes Jack Dominion as his balancing source from psychology, but fails to print that Jack Dominion is a very well-known and respected Catholic priest who writes a lot about Christian psychology.

However the *Awareness on Homophobic Bullying Guide* (March 2012), issued to all schools, is a step forward in recognising same-sex relationships, that is provided school personnel use it. Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) was added on in the late 1990`s (DES manuals, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1999, 2000) as part of the SPHE provision, to standardize the provision of sex education.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE): In the Department of Education`s RSE programme (1999) for junior cycle, the terms parent/s, or guardian are used so there is a sensitivity to alternative family forms in one sense, while on the same page the assumption of a nuclear family is clear when students are asked “*What do my Mum, Dad and siblings do for me and what can I do for them?*”(p. 144), in including such questions, I feel that there are implied assumptions of the normative family type, as well as an implicit criticism of any family, other than the idealised traditional one. Gendered- subject curricula also seems to play a part in normalizing male/female, and familial social relations (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; /2004, ESRI, 1999). Resource materials for senior RSE highlights the importance of family life for individuals and for society, but again it assumes a nuclear family unit. A student`s sheet (39) is printed (pp. 140-141) to introduce the topic of family separation and the stresses attached to it. However, the topic is not developed any further and it leaves the student with unanswered questions and the sense that a family break-up is always something negative, as opposed to developing the balance of the good and not so good aspects of a split, and the benefits to personal well-being which may develop consequently. Homosexuality is dealt with in this section also in encouraging tolerance and understanding for it, and outlining that it is illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of their sexual orientation (p.157). However, same sex unions and gay adoption laws and practices could very easily have been incorporated into this section for discussion if the authors of this curriculum were serious about true inclusivity. Kiely (2004), in her work on the introduction of the RSE programme in Irish schools, highlights the narrow and restrictive discourses which were used to frame and

deliver the programme. She claims that the RSE material constructed parents as irresponsible, and the reason for many of society's social ills; *"In the RSE material there is no deviation from the notion that the family, particularly in its most idealised form, is the proper locus for the socialisation of children"* (p. 283).

The Religion Programme (RE) deals with community and family life, but presumes the traditional type family in all of its literature. The Irish Catholic Bishops conference policy on RE (2006) in Post-primary schools, presumes "parents" when it refers to parents and guardians; *"The rite of Baptism names parents as the first educators in faith of their children; a strong religious identity is normally established in households where religious faith is alive and active"* (p.20). The section on morality at junior and senior cycle is grounded on the religious rules of the various world religions. The Ten Commandments are the basis on which Christian moral decisions are based (Boyle and Boyle 2003, p.3). The sixth commandment says *"You shall not commit adultery"* (Exodus: 20 v.14), and Matthew's gospel constructs Jesus as being against divorce, even though it had been allowed under Jewish law. *"Anyone who divorces his wife, except for the sake of fornication, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery"* (Matthew; 5 v.31).

The Religion texts at junior or senior cycle levels do not make explicit reference to church annulments, or to artificial contraceptives or homosexuality. Morality and conscience are dealt with in the RE syllabus for Leaving Certificate, but morality only extends to personal and social sin, with references to St. Thomas Moore and the *Gaudium et Spes* (1962-65). The SPHE area is now expected to cover topics which are constructed as controversial in Catholic schools, but statistics have found that the delivery of even this content is very dependent on the ethos and personnel of individual schools.

Home Economics: Literature from the Department of Education and Science refer to curricular changes in relation to changing family forms in e.g. Home Economics where previously, *"the syllabus suggested that one-parent families could be 'problem families' experiencing poverty, isolation and emotional difficulties and lacking role models for children"* (Department of Education, 1969/Lodge and Lynch, 2002, p.33). In 2006 the EDCO *Lifewise* textbook for the Junior Cycle defined a family as; *"A group of people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption"* (p. 234). A 2010 edition *Design for Living*, by Gill and Macmillan added to that definition; *"They usually share the same name and home and*

have a close relationship” (p.265). Such assumptions may shape cultural and familial thought by influencing how students think about and understand how family systems work. Family by choice is not mentioned here nor is a sense of diversity. Divorce is mentioned as being introduced in 1996, and the term blended family is used to describe remarriage and stepbrothers/sisters. However the new arrangements are followed by the qualifying statement; “*In many case this works out without any difficulty, but in some cases it takes more time to adjust; The children of divorced parents will have time with both parents and living arrangements decided by themselves or by the courts*” (p.266). Words such as “courts”, “adjust”, and “living arrangements” do not convey family adjustment in a positive light and may infuse fear into young students, together with anger if the student is sensitive to the assertion that s/he “*will have time with both parents*”.

Language Classes: The images of family presented in language classes also privileges the hegemonic image of the traditional family, with diagrams of family trees in *Maoin 3* (Mentor) and *Fonn 3* (Ed. Co). *La Vie en Famille* is a part of the French junior cycle programme where students are asked to introduce their family, and discuss family relationships as well as discussing family chores (unit 2.1). In *Klasse 1* (Folens) first year German students are directed to identify the members of their family and decipher a cartoon image of who is who in the family line-up. Senior language classes also cover the topic of family, and often involves students being asked to write an essay describing their family in French/German/Latin/Irish/Chinese class as a way of encouraging students to express themselves though the medium of the new language. However the discourse of language teaching cannot be abstracted from questions of power and difference, so often students improvise by describing their family as the normative type when verbalising about it in language class (Chapter Six). Students report that they describe theirs as a `normal` family for fear of teacher and/or peer rejection. These negative constructs involving non-traditional families are unlikely to be good for the self-esteem or confidence of students whose life-world is suppressed and/or judged as inferior to that of the normative.

However, English and Irish literature and poetry such as *Whitsun Weddings* (Larkin) and *Purple Hibiscus* (Ngozi), and Irish plays such as *Sive* (Keane), and *Circle of Friends* (Binchy) which touch on topics such as being “*outside of wedlock*” and a “*bastard child*” all present opportunities to open up conversations about family living.

7). Conclusion

This chapter has unearthed the apparent improvisational nature of post-primary schools care programmes and their central contribution to non-traditional family entity exclusion through Pastoral Care discourses and assimilation practices, which downplay differences and emphasises sameness. This normalizing in terms of equality claims is similar to the difference-blindness idea of not recognising family difference (Castagno, 2008). Many students appear to be positioned on the fringes of the school community because of dominant `expert` theories which inform educational discourses. Thus students from non-traditional family entities are struggling for recognition and validation for their family type which seems to be non-existent in the DES policies, school policies, curriculum or text-books. This treatment of families by schools and DES literature shows that the exercise of power suppressing family difference in schools is structured and intentional, and has shifted from control of the body to control of the mind to control of human space. The family becomes political when its representations of family in policy and curriculum are normalised and difference is not valued.

“Policy is both text and action it is what is enacted as well as what is intended” (Ball, 1994, p.10). Ball (2003) writes *“Greater attention has to be given to the ways in which inequalities are produced in the complex interactions between the cultural, social and material sites of home, school and policy-to the interlocking of inequalities”* (p.7). His research on educational policy suggests it is the dominant policies which reproduce inequalities in schools since policy is what informs practices in each school context. He suggests if school policies adjusted to social and personal realities, then the gap between what the power construct of family is, and the reality of what family is for many students today, would be narrowed to allow more integrating practices around families in post-primary schools. Ball critiques schools for adjusting to dominant policies; as opposed to policies adjusting to social and school requirements; *“There is a privileging of the policymakers reality”* (2007, p.48). He points to the understanding of the production of texts as a solution and asserts that *“we must take families seriously”* (2003, p.7) in moving forward. His focus is on socio-economic issues and school`s reproduction of inequalities for families but his work can also be used to illuminate contemporary family unit policies in schools. He claims that people do not speak the discourse prescribed in texts; it speaks them since they take up the positions constructed for them within policies (p.48). This leads to the question, if that is why non-traditional

families cannot take up their subjectivity as members of any family type in schools, except that of the traditional type since that is the only one which the power relations allow for in their discourse. His work reiterates Smyth's (2006) work on the gap between student and school consciousness.

The school system seems to have been created in a strategic way through Pastoral Care discourses, which involve structures and educational policies, to perpetuate dominant literatures characterized by assumptions about family which reinforce social inequality and legitimate family technologies of adjustment by enabling the dominant cultural group to maintain their advantage in education and in society in general. The subjugated literatures within individual schools, such as the school policies, are mediated in accordance with these structures, and are accountable to this bureaucracy. Knock on practices such as counselling, which involves segregating individual students from a subject class if they are judged to be problematic or in need of pastoral care may result. This action continues to be equated with trouble and stigmatization, an act which Foucault would claim is not accidental. In school texts, the consequences of family differences are viewed rather narrowly in terms of the impact on schools and classrooms, and the students who are perceived as different are labelled as the problem in schools rather than the system itself. Lodge and Lynch (2004) had similar findings in relation to curricular materials and differences in family compositions. They referred to curricular school materials and the need for them to;

“Ensure that parity of esteem is afforded to those who are divorced, separated, widowed and single as well as those who are married. There is a need for education programmes concerned with relationships, health and sexuality not to pathologise particular marital or family statuses” (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, p.32).

In Chapter Six the discourses of students within particular school contexts` are investigated so as to trace their observations about the topic of family in their school. Fourteen students were interviewed, as explained in Chapter Three, and semi-structured questions were asked with the hope of understanding how families are positioned from their perspective. This next chapter discusses and analyses data collected on family discourses pertaining to and constituting of students with the intention of gaining a better understanding of how school and home are constructed relationally, and what impact a school context has on that relationship. Because my special interest involves researching family discourses in educational settings, I decided to begin with the key agents-the students to see if their post-primary school

recognises and values various family compositions and to hear how they understand their own family positioning in relation to the institutional discourses. I wanted to draw out their experiences of resistance and agency also. My focus was on what appeared to be the disempowered social position of non-traditional family entities within school structures and the need to attend to it from a social justice, rights and moral perspective.

Chapter Six -Student Discourses: The Double Bind of Family Difference for Students; “As if there was something wrong with my family!”

1). Introduction: reframing school-home relations

The school as an institution plays an essential role in building socially cohesive communities through their nurturing discourses which should value familial, social, religious, cultural and political differences. The dominant policies of each school explicate their respect for all types of student diversity which should include family type differences, but for whatever reason, family seems to be the most muted topic of all. I am investigating why this is so, if it is by accident or by design and what students` considerations are on it. This research utilises a Foucauldian lens on how power and knowledge work to make individuals subjects of particular discourses (subjectivities) as opposed to setting subjects free. Dominant school discourses seem to produce meanings about particular families and regulate school-home relations through disciplinary practices which validate the traditional family.

Analytical tools of 'discourse' as they relate to the notion of family stratification in particular, will be exemplified in two key ways in this chapter as a means of understanding how schools work to suppress any other conceptualisation of the school-family relationship other than that of the status quo;

1) Through the suppression of family diversity in dominant discourses in school institutions such as regulatory mechanisms assuming two parents when sending notes home, two chairs for parents at parent-teacher meetings, admission forms requesting both parents names and contact numbers etc., and

2) In the silencing of intimate relations between teacher and student, and student and student through non-reference to family in class, to the management of family difference in Pastoral Care.

By working critically at the micro level in the schools, I hope to unearth how discursive actions through texts, context and practices interact to order the intergenerational relations and professional/intimate relations across schools. Such power plays can be understood as the, “*the interlocking of inequalities*” (Ball, 2003, p.7).

Students in four schools were invited to give their perspectives on their school's discourses involving non-traditional families. As explained in Chapter Three, contact with these post-primary students was initiated through an invitation on a survey given to them in class. Fourteen students volunteered to be interviewed. The following table gives a description of the students who were interviewed, their family type, their school and what year group they were in.

Table 4-Students interviewees

Students	Year	School	Family Type
Gerard	5 th	Hawthorn Heights	Lone parent, Mum and two older brothers, one younger sister
Darcy	5 th	Hawthorn Heights	Nuclear, Mum, Dad and two brothers
Firth	5 th	Hawthorn Heights	Nuclear, two older sisters
Fox	4 th	Hawthorn Heights	Reconstituted, Dad, Step-Mum, one step-sister, one step-brother
Jack	4 th	Hawthorn Heights	Reconstituted, Mum, Step-Dad, two sisters and one brother
Hannah	5 th	St. Brigits School	Reconstituted, Mum, Step-Dad, two sisters
Clare	5 th	St. Brigits School	Single Parent, one sister
Laura	5 th	St. Brigits School	Lone Parent, one brother
Abby	4 th	St. Brigits School	Nuclear, Mum, Dad, one brother, one sister
Steph	4 th	St. Brigits School	Reconstituted/Lone, Mam, two sisters, two half-sisters
Lisa	5 th	Cogito College	Nuclear, one brother, one sister
Sally	4 th	Cogito College	Nuclear, Mum, Dad, two sisters
Zoe	4 th	Cogito College	Nuclear, Mum, Dad, two sisters
Alva	4 th	Cogito College	Lone Parents, Mum, Dad, two sisters. Every second week with each

Eight students were from non-traditional family structures and six students were from traditional families. Students in school 4-Mount Eagle School were not allowed to be interviewed. The conversations with these young people afforded me an opportunity to understand school-home perspectives from their lens, so that I could do as Harwood did in her research on "*Diagnosing of `Disorderly` Children*" (2006); "*to craft accounts of subjugated disqualified knowledge's that can support a genealogical criticism of ...*", in this case, the *diagnosing of `disorderly families` in post-primary schools through family classification and disciplinary practices in post-primary schools*" (p.16). The data gathered from students centre on their reactions to family diversity at two overlapping levels of their everyday school life; a)

the formal discursive practices involving teachers and classmates, and the curricular constructs of family, and b) the informal reactions of their school friends or trusted educators to perceived family differences. These findings should serve to highlight the gaps where texts and school practices fail to correspond to the complexity of student family life, leaving space to subvert the public/private, adult/child order.

2). Families are stratified through power/knowledge generation of `normative families`

Foucault claims that the operating of power over populations is wielded through normalizing techniques and legitimate discourses, not through coercion. The normal is equated with the natural;

“It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences” (Foucault, 1977, p.184).

In schools this principle operates to standardise and mainstream students. Any student/family entity that falls outside of what is valued and defined as moral, normal and legitimate is marginalized and constructed as in need of adjustment, in order to meet the standard of the homogenous group. The pastoral care structures of class-teacher, year head, and principal all serve to streamline students into the intergenerational relations of the schools disciplinary apparatus. Discipline issues, bad influence, or potential troublemakers are all constructed as a threat to the smooth running of the school system and /or a risk to the safety of fellow students, so they are isolated and individualized via the pastoral care route. This begins with enrolment night where families are asked to subject themselves to the authority of the institution for the good of their offspring, and for the good of the school. The knowledge and `expertise` of the PC texts (as explained in Chapter Five) are used in similar and different ways in each school to justify the management of `harm` by `deviant` families to the public space of school life (Ball, 1993). The individualized route of pastor caring for the black sheep image is adopted as a safer means of coping with difference since they are constructed as having pastoral issues (something private, individual-but not academic) due to family difference or resulting discipline problems (SLSS, 2009). The boys in Hawthorn Heights were unquestioning in their understanding of these individualized practices, for example Darcy and Fox who displayed a deep trust in the workings of the school institution by adopting an institutionalized subjectivity, believing that such actions are for the good of everybody;

Ann: If there are difficulties in a family, should they let the school know?

Darcy: *Maybe-probably should-so that they can be sensitive, just to avoid distress for the student, or whatever.*

Ann: *Should schools offer to help?*

Darcy: *As best they can I suppose. Should stay out of it, not their business really, if it affects the student yes.*

Ann: *What ways could schools help?*

Darcy: *I suppose the Guidance counsellor, support systems in the school-they could talk to the child, needs to be done privately.*

Fox; *Yea, If another teacher started talking to me about it, and I'm thinking, it's not your right to talk to me about this.*

Foucault's analysis of such practices question the power intentions behind them. He uses words such as manipulate and confessional for them because the student is encouraged to reveal his /her inner most needs and fears. *"In the case of pastoral power, a deep concern for the individual's welfare is the precondition for the opening up of the individual to the probing of psychiatrists and social workers"* (Foucault/Ransom, 1997, p.76). The main component of pastoral power is its individualizing effect, it is oppression through invisibility. Problem students and students with problems are synonymous in people's minds, so withdrawal and isolation are the favoured solution in its rectification. *"A new dimension is emerging, that concerns about social and educational disadvantage transform political and economic fragility into personal, emotional vulnerability that needs support or intervention"* (Ecclestone, 2011, p.107). Suppression on the part of the school institution leads to the silencing of students and staff around family topics categorizing it as sensitive. These PC discourses of non-recognition and misrecognition due to the status of the traditional family and its idealization (Kiely, 2004), influence many everyday practices in post-primary schools despite the fact that schools are obliged not to discriminate against any student on the grounds of family status, sexual orientation, gender, race, disability, religious beliefs, traveller community or marital status (Equal Status Acts, 2000/2004); *"We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism"* (Foucault, 1977, p.217).

Such constructs of family can be oppressive for some students since their particular family type is not represented by the school discourses, for example students from families whose composition is not in keeping with the Catholic school ethos (Hyland, 2006; Lodge and Lynch, 2004). They are constructed as a challenge to the disciplinary practices of the schools since there is a tension between the school ethos, which is generally Catholic, and equality legislation which affects a sizable number of non-traditional families (and staff) who attend

faith-based schools. When I asked students what schools can do to recognise non-traditional families most students referred to the pastoral care/counselling route. No one mentioned transforming school practices or considered ways in which to challenge the power discourses behind family stratification. The rest of this school establishment functions around the accountability stimulus with the remaining students constituting themselves as 'good' students-conforming to the institutional discourse, even speaking in its defence. Some students mentioned approaching individual teachers in times of trouble rather than the counsellor, displaying a sense of choice and agency and this route would probably be the preferred option of students if given a choice in times of need. It also shows an overwhelming indication of student's inability to recognise the crucial role that teachers play in this seemingly well-meaning, damaging normalization process.

Abby, in St. Brigids said; *"If you like one teacher better you could tell her, but they're all fine, and would help us. They always say come to me if there is a problem or if you want to talk"*.

Alva, in Cogito College said; *"The Counsellor, he knows what to say or what not to say, my class teacher, she's most understanding, she knows as well."*

Through this institutional suppression of family discourses within these schools, teachers, by their silencing discourses, could be understood to contribute to the deficit thinking and negative discourses around non-traditional entities. They are also, consciously or unconsciously, teaching students about family stereotyping. This aspect of teacher care is the antithesis of Pastoral Care in schools as envisaged by Collins (1980);

"The tutor is literally teaching the group to care. They are learning awareness, sensitivity to others, patience, unselfishness and 'otherness'. The personal example of the tutor in relating is a lesson which is unconsciously taught" (p.9).

It could be argued that certain teachers are subjectivized as well, at an interpersonal level by the dominant school ethos, and are unable to be too agentic in terms of addressing injustices and intolerance of certain family types, in case of jeopardising their careers, as evidenced in Chapter Four.

3). Curricular experiences of family and double binds

The boys in Hawthorn Heights spoke about curricular references to sensitive topics and explained that silencing, through omission of difference, such as background and family type was evident in curricular texts covered in class and in certain textbooks. When I asked Darcy;

Ann: *What topics or subjects present difficulties for students from non-traditional families?"*

Darcy: *In Religion-but in Religion class we take it easy. Our French teacher said we can't say about family anymore (orals). We can't be asked about what job a father does.*

Ann: *Any other subject?*

Darcy: *I don't think so.*

Students mentioned the ways in which curricular materials such as those found in; Religion, Home Economics, Language classes, and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) suppress family difference. Their criticisms of this show counter-discourses to the texts, which are depersonalised, while they are more forgiving of the immediate oversights of teachers. I photocopied the section from a SPHE book on families (Potts, 2009) for the cohort meeting with the boys so that we could discuss the topic of family in relation to curricular material. They critiqued the Social, Personal and Health Education book's description of families, because of the following assumptions it made such as; young people have parents, they (children) spend time with both parents, a family unit has to include children, and Ger's reaction was; *"There's nothing about sole custody, there's an assumption that children are biological, that they have to spend time with both parents, and there's no mention of what the child wants"*. These accounts by students suggest that they are constructed as passive participants in the delivery of programmes such as SPHE, Religion, Home Economics and Languages. In general they are understood as the individuals affected by or assisted by the actions of others, and that their voice is rarely heard, yet they challenge and deconstruct such subjectivities by their attitudes and insights. Pervasive silences seem to dominate their classrooms at the times they are asked to describe their family in a second or third language of choice. This unquestioned practice of articulating emotive worlds which are constructed as taboo in the regular vocabulary of the classroom is not challenged, as again is considered 'normal' for language subjects-but not natural.

When Sally in Cogito College was questioned about this same issue;

Ann: *"What topics or subjects present difficulties for students from non-traditional families?"*

Sally: *"Talking about families in class, the penny doesn't always drop; in French class the teacher corrected a girl who wrote about her two mummies, and teacher said, mammy and daddy, and Fifi said, no, I've two mummies"*.

Ann: *What are the advantages of educators knowing a student's set-up?*

Sally: *To make life easier for the student, living between two homes, and avoid the repetition to each teacher about their set-up every time it comes up in class.*

Ann: *What are the disadvantages?*

Sally: *You feel the centre of attention for teachers, and that presents a pressure, because they are tripping over themselves around you.*

Sally's classmate challenged the teacher about her assumptions because such 'truths' about family were not in keeping with her home reality. The teacher's covert assumptions are exposed through her overt correction of this student in French class. The said student openly resisted the teacher's authority because she refused to take on the subjectivity being offered her family by the teacher. This student whose mother was living with a female partner was confident enough of her own-worth, of her family's status and her own identity among her fellow classmates to make this assertion. Many students may not be as confident of correcting a teacher on sensitive matters in an open classroom setting or as conscious of the need to. The practice by the teacher in language class of not inviting students to read out their accounts about their family reinforces the sensitivity of family as a topic for description, with the teacher considered trustworthy to be privy to this information, whereas the class group is not. The irony of this is that the girls had said earlier in this interview, that they talk away about the topic of family among themselves, so the question of who is silencing family talk arises here. Technologies such as teacher assumption, curricular family constructs, fear of upsetting others and silencing practices are all measures used by schools to reinforce traditional family structures while producing a double bind dilemma for the individual student. Sally thinks having too many teachers could be a disadvantage due to having to repeat or correct each one about family 'difference';

"If you're adopted, if you have a step-mother etc., trying to explain bits and pieces, can be difficult, especially when it is brought up again and again. It's worse in secondary school having to explain to each teacher all over again" (Sally, Cogito College).

The move between classes/teachers and from year to year is not a natural thing, it is a construct of the disciplinary architecture of schooling, along with timetabling, subject divisions and year grouping, which means that students have to 'come out' again and again, causing hardships (and opportunities) for students who are 'different'. Post-structural thinkers like Foucault would see this as a form of disciplinary practice- *"A technology of the self that interacts with the effects of truth and power to create disorderly subjectivities"* (Harwood, 2006, p.113). Difference is associated with deficit- students then experience the same non-recognition which marginal socio-cultural students experience, because of an inadequate discourse.

Ann: *What in your opinion is the most difficult aspect for you as a student in post-primary school?*

Alva: *O.k. The most difficult aspect is Home Economics-we talk about these things, and also remembering to do things like having a note if we're going on a trip, I have to get my Mum to sign it because I could be with her that week. Some teachers don't approach it the right way.*

There is no right or wrong family, but wrong is implied in Home Economics. There's the family with Daddy and Mammy and kids, and then there's the other families; the divorced, the separated and the Mum and Mum family. Thanks, we're different. No! We're all different, as if there was something wrong with my family!

Ann: Any other subjects?

Alva: No. Not really.

Ann: So, the content of Home Economics, the gear for PE, the adjustments from primary to post-primary...

Alva: For my Junior Cert I forgot my black (school) shoes. I was concentrating on having all my books. I just remembered my uniform. My Dad brought me a second uniform-but I was there getting everything sorted and I go "I have no shoes, Dad, Dad, go back! (to Mum's house)

Some Home Economic teachers still highlight the `problems` associated with single form families, as it was a part of the older syllabus, in doing so there is an implicit criticism and judgment of a particular family group as opposed to the idealized traditional one.

4). Disciplinary Practices suppress Interpersonal Relations

The students in St. Brigits refer to their Home Economics teacher as progressive because she is accepting of all kinds of family, which I gather is an important factor for them. From their interactions it is clear that students see the teacher as the human face of the school organisation, and how s/he approaches the topic of family is what makes it a positive or negative discourse. Practices involving teachers` normalization discourses, assumptions, silencing and the equating of family difference with deficit were among the key observations reported by the students about teachers. Some students found the subjectivities being offered them by the school as disconcerting for them. Jack in Hawthorn Heights felt that teachers assumed that all students have the same sort of family and he felt that some of them treat students differently if they were not living in a `normal` family.

Ann: Should there is more openness about family structures?

Jack: Am yeah, I think so.

Ann: Do you want to explain that?

Jack: If a teacher is referring to family they say Mum and Dad, as if that's the only type. If they just said; "you're family at home".

So did many more students.

Fox: "Or if a teacher is giving out he'd say; oh, I'll call your father, or I'll call your mother, and they may have split up" (Hawthorn Heights).

Laura: "Bring that home and get your parents to sign it" (St. Brigits)

Abby: "When a teacher would say, what would your Mam and Dad think of what you'd done" (St. Brigits)

Most teachers assume that students come from traditional families so their normalizing discourse and regime of truths around `good` families tends to impose a homogenous standard of family living to which each individual student is directed. These silences entrench and rationalize the ideal family unit-the traditional type, because they allow fellow students and educators to maintain the illusion that family diversity does not matter or does not really exist and to continue schooling in the usual fashion. These students` experience of differences and `otherness` permits me to grasp their subjectivity in relation to how they have internalised the school` attitude to them and their family. It reveals that they come to see themselves and their family as the problem, not the institutional discourses. This links into Foucault`s disciplining techniques of conformity and how societies, through institutions such as schools, construct acceptable subjectivities, including families. It makes them easier to govern and thus, control. Because their family is unconventional it is blamed as the cause of the school difficulties since it seems to be unintelligible within the practices of the school, since for example, notes home to parents assume that there is only one family space that interacts with the school space of the student. Consequently students are prevented from questioning family assumptions as the deficit appears to be within their own domain, thus reinforcing a culture of silence around family difference. Time for critical questioning of the institutional practices is not encouraged as the education system`s priority is constructed as educational rather than personal.

“The problem is that rather than containing within them the prospect of fixing the problem, a number of these measures have become deeply implicated in producing the problem in the first place and continuing to exacerbate it”
(Smyth, 2006, p. 288).

The discursive construction of silence as a benefit is internalized by these students. When Fox in Hawthorn Heights was asked about family difference he replied in a similar fashion; *“It doesn`t really come up that often. Guys might get upset, so don`t bring it up”*. Assumptions and silences around family create a vacuum in classroom discussions and an inadequate discourse for students to describe and value any other family type. This construct of silence is a means of controlling sensitive talk in classrooms, and to render the students docile. The comments by the interviewees suggest that students from non-traditional families experience serious non-recognition and mis-recognition. They felt that family differences were judged as inferior, abnormal or deviant by their teachers. They expressed concern about this labelling by teachers and fellow students and point to it as the reason why most individuals are silent about their home life in school. They also did not want to be treated any differently by teachers who

knew their situation; this reaction is in keeping with findings in other research projects, such as Hall's (2002) work;

"Her (teacher) feelings are important and students are expected to be sensitive to them. Permission to express such personal views lies with her only, not with the students. The ideational aspect is privileged in the discourse while the inter-relational is understated" (p.182).

Factors such as fear of upsetting the individual student concerned at an emotive level, and the disregarding of a teacher at another level have to be considered also by students who spot the fragility of these school discourses. They have to negotiate loyalties to peers, to educators and to their own family unit as they embody their everyday classroom bound conversations. They are caught in a double bind which is confusing (Butler, 1990; Inglis and Mac Keogh, 2012); of needing to be recognised, but then constrained and ignored by how their identity is re-made into a deficit, in the three major areas of their lives; home, school and friends. This involves struggling to maintain a working compromise between the meanings individuals attribute to themselves, and the social (institutional) identities made available to them; *"Many young people are living multiple consciousness's living in one reality at home, in another reality with peers, and then negotiating another reality at school"* (Smyth, 2006, p.290). Students possess a strong desire for normality, routine and impersonality within the comfort of their classrooms and family diversity is not part of the accepted or expected discourse there. The discourse of the respondents is instead a discourse based on the culture of the status quo, one of sensitivity to differences,-constructs which decipher, and serve to obscure their family differences and their inequalities and awkwardness. Alva in Cogito College gave examples of how her victim subjectivity was created by her school relations;

"Yes, if teachers could stop saying, "Go home to your parents to ask..." It's like a little dig. Try not to say this and don't bite someone's head off if they use the excuse it's at my Dad's house, because when I give that excuse it really is at my Dad's house. It's not an excuse, I'm telling the truth" (Alva).

What complicates things in schools is that teachers are uncertain about whether the family setup is being used as an excuse for not having homework done, because it appears to undermine the teacher's authority in the classroom if s/he makes allowances for certain students. Essentially these students are constructed as adding to teachers already overloaded schedules and, as evidenced by the teachers interviewed, most just want to get on with teaching the course, or managing the school. Clare in St. Brigids, had a similar reaction to Alva's. When I asked about how understanding teachers were about family changes Clare

said; *“They are very kind too if they know. Sometimes they might think we`re lying if the homework isn`t done, but when they know there`s a reason for not having it done, they`re fine”*. Lack of communication between schools and homes was constructed as another complication for schools and non-traditional families, with uncertainty surrounding the protocol of whose responsibility it was to make contact. As we see in practices reported by teachers and principals, school personnel regard the divulging of sensitive material to be very much the prerogative of the parent/s. Yet, if families are fearful of repercussions they will not reveal their true family identity. This finding ties in with Lynch and Lodge`s research on equality and power in schools;

“Schools are not genuinely democratic institutions, but are organised on hierarchical terms where the ability to exercise degrees of power is associated both with formal roles (principal, teacher, student) and with particular identities afforded higher or lower status (adult/young person) (2002, p.178).

The vagueness around who initiates contact, and if communication is going to be welcomed by either side, could be understood as a subtle way of distancing the issue and constructing communication as a home problem rather than a school one.

When I asked in St. Brigits School;

Ann: *Do your home and school have much contact?*

Clare: *Ya-if there`s a problem (all nod)*

Laura: *I think my home is separate to school. I love coming to school, meeting my friends. Home is different to school time.*

Ann: *So is school none of the home`s business and the home none of the school`s business?*

Abby: *Ya, Yes and no, well..., they`re different worlds*

Ann: *Yes, but connected by you? Is family discussed much during the school day?*

Susan: *Yah, with my friends, once I chat to them I`m fine again*

Abby: *We talk about it among ourselves a lot but in class no-unless the teacher raises it.*

Ann: *Do the teachers show understanding of various family types?*

Laura: *Yes they are all careful they don`t mention it much in case they say something hurtful.*

Difference is negotiated in `safe spaces`

Students learn that private life is not a subject for discussion in class, but is kept for free time when adults are not privy to their conversations. Terms such as; *“private”* used by Lisa, *“separate worlds”* used by Laura, *“taboo”* and *“secrecy”* by Darcy and *“upset”* by Fox, reveal how they have internalized “truths” about social norms and differentiated spaces. The silence around family identity, as exemplified by these terms, show changing family forms are obscured and distanced by institutional accounts and impact on the subjectivity of all the individuals involved. The public/private distinction between school and home noted by researchers such as Slater (1998), and Hantrais (2004), are quoted here by students to justify

and distance the relationship between home and school, and seems to have been internalised from the vantage point of the school.

Ann: Have you any ideas about how schools could communicate better with parent/s or guardian/s about family issues?

Ger: Am, in general they could have a meeting with my Mam and me about stuff. A place where parents could come and talk if they needed

Ann: What topics or subjects present difficulties for students from alternative families?

Ger: I don't do religion any more, but in 3rd year when we were doing family the teacher said that people can leave if they wanted to.

Ann: Now that's extra sensitive!

Ger: Yah

Ann: What are the advantages of educators knowing a student's set-up?

Ger: They would be more understanding.

Ann: But would they be more judgemental?

Ger: Am they could be; depends on the teacher I suppose. I can't think of anyone who would be though.

Ann: What mistakes are school secretaries likely to make if they are not informed about a student's family identity?

Ger: Am my sister is in primary school now and he (estranged father) could just go down and take her out. So for the secretary to know who he is. My Mam said it to the principal and secretary and they knew who he was when he tried to collect her on a Wednesday.

Ann: And the school were fine about it?

Ger: Ya, they had no problem with it.

His Dad had left at around that time and the teacher in class was being sensitive to him and any other students who might get upset, since his family was constructed as 'lacking'. Ger. was excused from R.E. class for fear of any references to emotions or loss being raised. This segregation practice while being very much noticed by the students, went unquestioned as they considered it normal and in the best interests of the individual student. The boys did not challenge it as a power construct or one of social engineering, probably because the school's formal discourse had reinforced the notion that it is the student who needs to be problematized as opposed to the difficulty being with the school's inability to deal with the affective aspects of the students life within an academic setting. Students in general seemed to lack a vocabulary to articulate concerns about the silencing of family difference or the equating of difference with deficit or taboo. Silencing around family break up was also internalised by Alva (Cogito College). It hindered her from confiding in anyone at her primary school when her parents split initially; she did not know of anyone else in a similar position so she took on a subjectivity of difference.

Ann: What age were you when your parents split?

Alva: Eleven

Ann: What that a good age or not?

Alva: *No, it was kind of an awkward age, eleven years of having my parents and sisters under the one roof, being able to say good night to Mum and Dad.*

Ann: *It was a big change?*

Alva: *Yeah*

Ann: *Did it get easier with time, the adjustment?*

Alva: *Yeah*

Ann: *What was the most difficult aspect for you, from a school point of view?*

Alva: *Having to move schools, and not being able to talk to anyone about it, I didn't tell anyone.*

Ann: *Were there other people in your new school in the same situation?*

Alva: *I didn't think so at the time, not in my class anyway.*

Ann: *Do you think there were, but that they didn't talk about it?*

Alva: *One girl I met after primary school-she had parents who had divorced.*

What I understand from Alva's account here is that her home situation could not be spoken about in the institutional context of her primary school and the silencing prevented her from finding a fellow student in whom she could confide. Alva went on to describe how her teacher was very nice, but she did not understand what Alva was experiencing. She found post-primary school easier to deal with and said that the teachers there; *"They seem to get it"*. The fact could be argued that there are a lot more teachers in post-primary schools and far more diversity there. Also in Alva's case she was sixteen when I interviewed her so it may be that she had time to come to terms with her family's change. However, the fact that she discovered someone else in the same situation as herself seems to have made the most difference to her in my opinion and the researcher feels a loss for her that it took so much time before she did. Had the system been more open to family diversity, it may not have taken as long.

Many students reported that there was a strong relationship between teacher assumptions and the literature prescribed by the DES. The students from non-traditional families seem to be thrust into a school sphere where their family identity is underrepresented or may be missing altogether. They were the ones who noticed the assumptions of teachers most, and also students who were close to a friend or cousin from a contemporary family unit. Some of these students were cognisant that their family entities (or that of their friends) are constructed as taboo families in schools since difference, blame and guilt are linked with them. Their conversations revealed the lack of a discursive space to identify or challenge the limitations imposed by society's narrow framing of family, and the institutional hurt felt by individual students was evident in all schools.

Student agency is expressed in counter-discourses

While students reported being subjected to institutional silence about their family identity in the classroom they also told of compensatory measures such as verbalizing their reality with friends. Throughout their interviews they frequently referred to the importance of the support of these friends. Their experiences exemplify the dichotomy between their private and public persona and the importance of their peers in reinforcing their sense of identity which tends to be undermined by the hegemony of the school discourse. The students in Hawthorn Heights who were from non-traditional families, Ger. and Fox, and Alva, of Cogito College, contested their subjectivity which the schools assigned to them, but displayed very little critique of the intergenerational ordering of knowledge or ways of subverting it. They were not used to considering the benefits of family diversity. They did not seem to be cognisant of the influence of politics on interpersonal relations but had a general awareness of religious ethos influencing procedures. However, they were heartened by the increasing numbers of young people in similar positions to themselves and by the seemingly emancipatory nature of society in respect to family constellations, outside of the school institution.

Ann: Many of you brought out (in your individual interviews) the idea that family are the people you are comfortable with. Ye also said that it's not discussed that much in school, that there seems to be a silence around it. Why do ye think that is so?

Fox: It doesn't come up

Darcy: Probably because before every family was the same with a father and mother, now we're aware that there are different families. But they assume that every family is like their own (teachers) and they do not want to offend anyone by mentioning the differences.

Ann: But why not mention the differences?

Fox: People are uncomfortable with it.

Ann: What would make them uncomfortable?

Ger: Attitudes inherited from friends, family and media. Most people still think of the traditional family.

Darcy: It's reinforced by holidays- two adults and two children packages.

These young men touch on topics such as genealogy and social media as discourses which reinforce the schools assumptions about families. Darcy makes a very insightful comment on teacher assumptions on family compositions; “they assume that *every family is like their own*”, the sameness/difference dichotomy on which Foucault wrote as societies` way of meaning making and excluding individuals who do not conform to the norm. His comment also suggests that he thinks that all teachers come from traditional families as they do not share their life stories and diversification with students. His recognition of his own subjectivity through the package holiday advertisement shows a form of shaping of self. He

understands difference as something which may offend or be misunderstood. Neither the affective dimension nor the individuality of each student's home life is given consideration within the time limits and framing of these school discourses. Fox and Ger. spoke about the support of their friends and that they would talk to them rather than to a parent or teacher;

"I talk to my close friends; all my friends have met my parents, for me it's just normal by now" (Fox, Hawthorn Heights).

"I think that my home is separate to school. I love coming to school and meeting my friends. Home is different to school time" (Laura, St. Brigits)

"Ya, I talk a lot to my close friends about my family. A lot of people are very curious about how I manage. I've got so open about it now and people are so supportive" (Alva, Cogito College)

Lisa (Cogito College) said; *"My friend Rebecca doesn't have a Dad, well she doesn't know him. We told Mary that the IRA shot him, and Mary believed us. It was a great laugh"*.

Lisa and her friend's subversion of the privatising of family through another 'troubling' discourse is a clever and cathartic strategy which shows that they possess a tacit sense of the silencing of family compositions. Their cryptic comments reveal agency amidst the more complex issues of parent/s and homes whose difference is constructed as negative and lacking in comparison to the mainstream families in schools. While these students are aware of changes in family entities and its significance for the individuals involved, any talk about it is done through comic constructions among friends or politically neutralized discourses in classrooms because of it being like the elephant in the room at times. These reactions show that students do not want to be given preferential treatment or treated any differently from their classmates. The insights of these students indicate that they can sense the pressure on educators to be politically careful in their classroom discourses, and that they are aware also that their peers do not want to stand out from the crowd by being treated too leniently or differently by school personnel.

The fear of peer attitudes and rebukes was mentioned by many of the students interviewed. Jack, from Hawthorn Heights felt that being too open about things was not good, as he recounted his best friend's feelings; *"He doesn't want other people to know he's feeling weird, doesn't want anyone to mock him"*. In Cogito College the girls too felt the need to silence family talk when I asked if there should be more openness about family structures. Zoe mentioned that there *"might be others who would be sniggering at them in class"* and so *would prevent her peers from being too open about it. Sally said that some people are very secretive about their family, they don't like talking about family lives"*.

This is in keeping with what researchers found in the ways through which institutional suppression of intimacy works. For example;

“The formal and non-formal ways schools control who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled. There persists a systematic commitment to not name those aspects of social life or of schooling that activate social anxieties. With important exceptions, school-based silencing precludes official conversation about controversy, and critique” (Fine, 1991, p.33).

Zoe explained in her interview that the peers were all very aware of their fellow students` dilemmas, whereas the professionals did not appear to be. This reveals a hidden, collective form of coping; by having alternative ways of being in the intimate life of friendship (*“multiple consciousness’s”*, Smyth, 2006), but one that cannot be expressed in the school setting as it may transgress the student-teacher relationship or public/private divide. Such normative assumptions and practices show how students are incited to recognise their own family in the particular way in which the school/teacher wants them to. The whole question of whether it was better to tell or not to tell prompted me to think of the advantages and disadvantages of both arguments for the students involved, and the political silencing behind family framing. Mistakes involving health and safety, particularly in primary school, were mentioned by students and parents as well as communication faux pas. When I asked Firth in Hawthorn Heights about secretaries and contact with homes, he replied;

“They might call out the student by the wrong name, their father`s instead of their mother`s. All my friends kept their mother`s maiden name after they split up. They`ll always write down their mom`s name. The other name is said afterwards as a separate word” (Firth).

This absence of an adequate discourse around changing family names and the symbolism of these actions is another subtle way of silencing family difference across texts, context and practices. These students exercise agency against it by changing their surname to that of their mothers, even though it means they are known by one surname in school and by another outside of school, thus reflecting multiple consciousness and subjectivities. It is perceived as their way of subverting the system, of asserting their changed family status and of exercising their agency. *“Like my friend in school goes by a different surname, at home we all call him by a different surname. Like I know him as such and such and the school call him something else”* (Fox, Hawthorn Heights).

Freebody, Ludwig and Gunn (1995) refer to the cultural discontinuities between schools and homes as “*interactive trouble*”, leading to student drop-out, negative identity formation and a clash of frames of reference between both, for example; school micro-practices such as student enrolment and registration requires that the name used is the official name on the student’s birth certificate. Much confusion is generated when the official school website data base has a different surname for a particular student than his/her everyday classroom name. This is most noticeable when subject teachers attempt to enter examination results at Christmas, summer and after pre-examinations, or when a parent rings or attends parent-teacher meetings, because confusion is generated around the family/surname. The passport name also remains unchanged and has to be registered and carried on all foreign school trips, resulting in identity issues for these students for whom name is so important. Some mothers revert to their own name after splitting with their spouse; thus constructing another complication-fear of getting the name wrong in verbal and written communication with home which could be avoided if schools showed more acceptance of family diversity. Some students do not seem to realize, while others have a tacit knowledge of the notion that it is the dominant discourse of the school which produces and structures these nuances and negative silences around family compositions.

It is the institutional discourse which expects political correctness around the topic of family not the agents in each school. People involved in the system are not always conscious of how politically aligned schools are with the wider socio-cultural discourses and structures such as the Department of Education (DES), which filters down through circulars, policies and curricular materials to impact on the vernacular of everyday school attitudes and conversations. Fox in Hawthorn Heights was an exception to the rule as a member of a non-traditional family, who was at ease with his family identity and his friends’ reactions as he showed a very strong sense of family pride and was very comfortable about mentioning it in class when necessary. He does make the point though that he spoke most often about his family outside of school time, and he has had the experience of growing up with diversity. He is also of another nationality, which exemplifies the complexity of student’s discursive positioning.

Ann: *Do you chat to your fellow students about your family?*

Fox: *In school?*

Ann: *Yes.*

Fox: *All my friends in school know that I’m not with my real Mum. But I talk to my friends outside of school more about it.*

Ann: *About how many times each day do you or someone else refer to family?*

Fox: *What do you mean like, in school?*

Ann: *Would it come up in some subject?*

Fox: *Am...Not really. Maybe if there was a parent teacher meeting coming up*

Ann: *And would you say it to the teachers beforehand that it's your step-mum or would you need to?*

Fox: *Not really, sometimes.*

Ann: *Sometimes?*

Fox: *Yeah, if a teacher says are your parents coming in? I say yeah my step-mum's coming in.*

These positive aspects of family life are rarely heard in school since the institutional discourse avoids the topic of `other` families. Drama discourses around crisis home situations detract from any highlights of happy non-traditional families, allowing schools to denaturalise such families and mis-recognise them.

Intergenerational ordering of relations suppress family difference

Young men such as Ger. also show great maturity and autonomy in their life outside of school. He spoke as if he was very involved in the running of the household alongside his Mum, as his two older brothers were not living at home as much.

Ann: *If there are difficulties in a family, should they let the school know?*

Ger: *Ya if there are issues then it's better if they know. Now I didn't but it's probably easier if they do. I couldn't get books at one stage, and going into class without books and pretending I had them at home, and getting into trouble because I couldn't say anything.*

Ann: *And can I go back there again, is the maintenance up and running again.*

Ger: *Yes, we got an attachment of earnings from the company he works for, so now it all goes through the solicitor and has nothing to do with him.*

Ann: *Should schools offer to help?*

Ger. *Am like in this school they have a system where you fill out a form, I think it's mostly for unemployed, but it helps with the costs of books.*

Ann: *And besides financial support, could you talk to Mr Hurley or other teachers about emotional stuff?*

Ger. *Yea, you could always talk to them. I know they have meetings for students whose parents have died, but there's nothing for separated parents.*

The sentence “*we got an attachment of earnings from his company*” shows he is consulted and informed about what is happening with regard to the adults in his life. Such exercising of considerable responsibility and freedom in relation to home life helps him to challenge notions of adulthood and childhood, custody and rights of the child, as well as the linear notions of growing up. Also Ger's maturity seems to overshadow that of his father, which challenges notions of intergenerational relations being top-down. His assertion; “*Getting into trouble because I couldn't say anything*” is similar to how unfairly Alva was treated-when

she too could not say anything about her home life in her primary school. Both these students are in a double bind because they could not be true to who they were. Laura in St. Brigids is another youth who appears to have more wisdom than her parent/s;

Ann: But is your Dad living in the same house as you?

Laura: No, I go visit him at times, whenever I choose. I could play them off each other but it's weird, I couldn't do that to them.

Ann: Would you prefer them to be living together?

Laura: No, they have explained it to me, why, and it's better this way. If they'd stayed (together) there're only be fighting, I'd throw him out myself.

Ann: But one does not hate the other?

Laura: No, not really, I make them talk to each other about me.

These students who have the ability to run households and manage parental issues cannot be expected to leave their autonomy and control over their lives at the school gates and revert to the mind set of their relatively carefree classmates; yet teachers ascribe them immature subjectivities since they are unaware of the extent of the authority which some students have at home. Sally, in Cogito College also showed this type of maturity;

“My three young cousins mum died in January last year, and in March the teacher (in primary school) made mother's day cards with them (class). My cousins just sat in the corner while the other children worked away. There is no way the teacher should have done that to them! The eldest girl was very upset about it. The other two said nothing” (Sally).

It was encouraging to hear their resistances to the dominant discourses of assumptions around certain family entities. Such resistances and insightful discourses could inform educational initiatives to promote consciousness raising amongst school personnel in relation to the reality of family living for a large proportion of the Irish population. It would also be very beneficial for all students and their identity formation so that there is a realization that the ideal family has never existed beyond the realm of myth.

In Chapter Eight, research on school staff subjectivities and their impacts will be looked at in more detail, but from student accounts (Chapter Six), there are obvious challenges which school staff need to be cognisant of in relation to student's increased responsibility and agency as it also has cultural and social implications. Also the analysis of how schools manage family form diversity is very complex because each school is comprised of individual staff members whose assumptions and practices are very subjective, not to mention the subjective experience of each individual student in each particular context. So the ideology of the traditional family operates in different ways in different schools, in different interactions

between different students and different teachers. For example Lisa in Cogito College, recalled what happened to her cousin once a teacher found out about her parents` split;

Ann: What topics or subjects present difficulties for students from alternative families?

Lisa: If it`s mentioned in English class, and the student has to say mother, instead of parents. Letters home should have parent/guardian on them.

Ann: What are the advantages of educators knowing a student`s set-up?

Lisa: In case a mother or father is dead, or divorced, for sensitive reasons. My generation are not sensitive about it at all. My aunt got divorced and remarried and keeps it very quiet.

Ann: What are the disadvantages?

Lisa: The fact that it`s private. Some are afraid that one teacher will tell another teacher. They think that they`ll treat them differently if they know. My cousin`s teacher, when she found out, she said that was why she was playing up so much in school.

Lisa`s account shows that teachers` ingrained negative attitudes about deficit educational and social aspects of non-traditional family entities are still prevalent in the discourses experienced by students. Lisa`s cousin`s teacher had a ready reason for her misbehaviour and it took the responsibility from herself and the school. Ger`s (Hawthorn Heights) account reveals that his academic work has not been affected by his parents break-up. He sat his Junior Cert two weeks after the marriage break-up, but was still happy with his results, and now that maintenance has been solved, he is able to focus on his Leaving Certificate. Situations such as Ger`s suggest that the deficit theories put forward by developmental psychologists about `unstable` families are not reflective of the reality of many. Foucault believes such "truths" do not exist, that they are fictions created by the politics of knowledge, and which need to be challenged in our quest for equity.

Lisa also touches on the intergenerational construction of silence surrounding marriage break-up and re-marriage. She says that her generation is not sensitive about it at all, but the generation before her are. The connection she fails to make in the midst of these discourses is that the culture in which the former generation lived sensitised these issues. Many more students raised the issue of teacher attitudes and fears of being judged or treated differently if educators are cognisant of their parents` marital status. Darcy also gave an example; "*A guy in my class, who was living with his mother, did his Leaving cert last year, and got a scholarship to university, the teachers were saying it was a great achievement for him*". These teachers were conscious of his socio-economic and family status and displayed perceived assumptions that a student such as this could get to third level. These teachers felt they were complimenting this student`s achievement, yet deployed subjugating discourses around someone such as a one-parented child achieving so highly. This example shows that

hegemonic ideology is most successful when the majority of its adherents are least aware of it, and its power. There is a sense that even when educators avoid family talk, out of good intentions towards their students, they are engaging in practices that perpetuate the traditional family type, to the detriment of other family identities in schools. The students resist the knowledge of families which their schools try to impose on them, and are actively questioning them, particularly those whose lens on family living is different to the norm. Firth in Hawthorn Heights maintained that there was no need for more openness as; *“We have no problem talking about it. But sometimes it can go too far if someone mocks someone else’s mom or something”*.

5). Family Discourses are configured differently in each school

From the data gathered in each of the post-primary schools it was possible to analyse significant similarities in the responses made by the boys and girls, such as assumptions about traditional families, silences and Pastoral Care practices. However, each school group mentioned or stressed aspects of the school-family relationship which other school groups had not, thereby de-naturalising the apparently ‘given’ way schools construct families as universal. It also giving credence to the body of research around context (as mentioned in Chapter Four), and shows that there is always a context within which family discourses create the appearance of a particular family type, normal and ‘other’. Weedon (1997) claims that *“ it is only by looking at a discourse in operation in a specific historical context, that it is possible to see whose interests it serves at a particular moment”*(p.108).

Socio-economic and gender issues contribute to the rendering invisible of certain family types for fear of losing students, for fear of impacting on academic success, and for fear of threatening the status quo family type. All schools tended to distance the school-home relationship and seemed to equate communication between these institutions as trouble. When I asked the girls in St. Brigits if there was much contact between their school and homes, they all agreed *“Ya, if there’s a problem”*. They seemed to be very accepting of this school-home contact and did not have an issue with privacy issues. They felt that openness about family structures was the better option; while the students in the other two schools did not. The other boys and girls were also most complimentary of all their teachers in their support for students in difficulty but accepted it in a confidential manner only, not in a public class room. The openness in St. Brigits may be due to the socio-economic context of their school and the DEIS programme which operates on an early intervention philosophy, conditioning the girls

and their families to expect school help from an early age, not just pertaining specifically to family structure. An inevitability around procedures was evidenced by the muted responses of the girls from single parent families in St. Brigids, these were the most silent of all those interviewed and further discussions with adults in that school revealed that some families cover up aspects of their home lives, not necessarily for schooling purposes, but for reasons which are related to financial support from the State. In the focus group interviews these relatively silent girls left their colleagues do most of the talking. By contrast their fellow students were the most open and accepting of family changes and totally resigned to the operating of the school-home system.

It would appear that the normalizing of the home/school discourses has become so familiar to these students that there is no place or apparently no cause to question or reflect on them as they seemed to be taken so much for granted. Because of socio-economic background, being in a poorer region, families were constructed as in need of earlier intervention programmes, and having less social capital than families in the other schools. The personnel in the DEIS school all trusted the system more and thus questioned it less. Ironically the students there had learned how to play the system to their advantage, by appearing to conform to the requirements of the school, but displaying agency and independent thought in how they understood things; they think that it is the system which does not `get it`.

Other factors such as an all-boys or all-girl's school also impacted on the different configurations of family. The boys in Hawthorn Heights highlighted how institutional discourses silenced them through curricular and teacher dialogue by reinforcing the ideological aspects of family life. They were being schooled, along with their families, into how to deal with personal difficulties, through the privatization and silencing route. The principal and counsellor in Hawthorn Heights both referred to social class in relation to openness about family difference among the working class, and more silences around it among middle-class society.

Students in general expressed high levels of acceptance for teacher errors in assumptions about families since it was taken as a generational factor or as an ignorance issue, but the girls in Cogito College were more critical of these blunders; Sally criticised the teacher who proceeded with mother`s day cards when the mother of three younger cousins had passed away two months earlier. Alva criticised the assumptions of teachers about mum and dad, as

well as the Home Economics teacher's `othering` of certain families. Zoe criticised the language teacher who was insensitive to a student whose parents were deceased, and Lisa criticised the teacher who blamed her cousin's lack of behaviour on her parents break up. These examples imply that these girls were questioning the subjectivity being assigned to certain students and their families and suggest that students feel that teachers should be more aware of and informed about changes in family forms.

Students who resisted the subjectivity being offered them by the school were often quietened by teachers and fellow students who had become "*cogs in the wheel*". The boys were very trusting of their school's pastoral care system but more concerned that information about their family structure (and private issues in general) was not routinely passed on to every member of staff. Firth said; "*They might tell someone you don't like. You do not want someone you don't like knowing*", revealing very paternalistic constructs around feelings and privacy. Students in all schools seemed unaware that their private information is disseminated to all relative teachers when necessary. Their accounts demonstrate that the ideology of family is operating in different ways in individual school contexts, depending on teacher attitude and their understandings on how to manage family diversity within their school context. The denominational nature and ethos of all the schools that I worked in was reflected in the measures taken to safeguard the only family which the religious ethos recognizes-the traditional one, and explains the similar general responses in schools such as pastoral practices, directed by DES, around family difference. However each school context mediated their own particular practices to meet what they constructed as family difference, such as the Home-School Liaison in St.Brigits, standardization procedures in Hawthorn Heights, and distancing practices in Cogito College.

6). Conclusion

This data suggests that family stratification operates in two distinct ways across schools; at an institutional level through pastoral care knowledge and practices, and secondly, at an interpersonal level within trust/distrust relations. Even when teachers were being sensitive to students from non-traditional family entities, the system and its current practices reinforced highly inequitable and exclusionary regimes of `truth` about certain families. Pastoral Care concerns around harm and family difference tended to generate inadequate practices of silencing and withdrawing of certain students. The subjectivity of mainstream students was constructed as `normal` while that of others is produced as different or troublesome. Student

accounts reveal that they are being educated in both the institutional and ideological aspects of what is constructed as the `ideal family` even when educators say nothing about family compositions, they do not need to, because their assumptions and deafness to family diversity says it all; see no other family, speak no other family and hear no other family. This blindness to family difference ensures that it is individualized within school structures-the deficit family is the `problem`, rather than seeing/hearing/and speaking out about how it is actually socially constructed.

All of the assembled data on family difference illustrates how the institutional discourses frame it as a negative. This deficit is institutionally constructed via text, context and practices, despite the philosophy of inclusive education which is all about respecting and learning from each other's differences. Interestingly and importantly, the silences around family entities are embedded in the school discourses and practices, but it is not a silence among most students in their own life worlds. While in school their identity is subsumed in the dominant institution's description of normality, but they speak freely about family outside the classroom/school space.

Foucault always recognised where there is power there is room for resistance, so the hope for students from non-traditional families would be the "*reversibility of power relations and the discourses that accompany them*" (Ransom, 1997, p.121). However students' agency appears to be restricted by the dominant discourses of idealism versus the reality of everyday home and school life, in teacher assumptions, in curricular materials and in the suppression of difference through silence. There were very few spaces which allowed for student agency to contest such constructs throughout the school day. The strength of the Pastoral Care approach seems to be its individualizing techniques, making the problem a personal deficit as opposed to the school's inability to manage family change. Students with difficulties, or in this instance, students whose family unit are perceived as problematic, are withdrawn from their regular subject class so that the counsellor or class tutor can speak to him/her on a one to one basis. The `expert` is regarded as the advisor or pastor while the student is constructed as the stray sheep that needs readjusting, through the confessional mode. The family identity of a student can impact on him/her differently at various times depending on the interactive environment, but especially on a one-to-one focus with the counsellor, where allegiances to family may involve emotions of love and betrayal. There is also the dichotomy between what family means to him/her at home, as opposed to the normative family which is portrayed

through mandatory school texts/discourses. Thus Foucault claims that disciplinary power “manufactures” individuals; “*The individual is put in an environment that evaluates, corrects, and encourages responses according to a norm*” (Foucault/Ransom, 1997, p.18).

The next Chapter reveals the essence of my conversations with parent/s and how they too articulate the formal practices involving family in their school.

Chapter Seven: The Double Bind of Family Discourses for Parents;

“Some parents put issues onto the School, but the parents at home have to take responsibility”

1). Introduction: reframing school-family relations

This chapter focuses on data gathered from parents in three post-primary schools to examine how they position themselves in relation to other families. Empirical research on families in relation to post-primary schools is very scant and is mainly deficit and/or needs based, so it is hoped to offer a balancing view by showing how parenthood and family are constructed through dominant discourses of schooling. By using Foucault’s lens on power and a post-structural analysis of institutions as disciplinary spaces, saturated with relations of power, I can examine how parents are disciplined by technologies of power in schools, and also by *‘technologies of the self’* (Foucault, 1988). This involves analysing how they are constituted according to the needs of hierarchical forms of power. This view of post-primary schools as a disciplinary site which produces “*docile*” bodies (Foucault, 1977, p.135) is offered here so as to help readers to rethink how parents are positioned within the education system. The ‘good’ parent subjectivity is more readily available to parents, depending on their social status, their family status and gender status within a particular school context. Technologies of family-accounting; that is families being answerable to the school in relation to their home life, will be critiqued in light of Foucault’s philosophy to find out if parents align themselves with or resist the moral judgements of school authorities and society. The following table gives a description of the parents who were interviewed, the school that they are affiliated with and the age group of their daughter/son.

Table 5- Parent interviewees

<i>Parent</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Family Connection</i>	<i>School Connection</i>
Mr Crowley	Hawthorn Heights	Son in 3 rd Year	Board of Management
Ms Coakley	Hawthorn Heights	Son in 5 th Year	Board of Management
Mrs Barry	St. Brigits School	Daughter past pupil	Parents Association
Mrs O’Brien	St. Brigits School	Daughter in 3 rd Year	Parents Association
Mr Ryan	Cogito College	Daughter in 5 th Year	Board of Management
Mrs Regan	Cogito College	Daughter in 1 st Year	Board of Management
Mr Rice	Cogito College	Daughter in 4 th Year	Separated Father

Non-traditional families seem to be marginalised by the disciplining discourses which they are subjected to, while traditional families are valued. Foucault did not view power as simply repressive and prohibitory but also as productive (Foucault, 1981, p.101). It produces subjected positions from which parents, such as members of school boards can speak and act in a nexus of power. Their interpersonal relations with other parents and with myself will be examined so as to allow for the possibility of resistance, or counter-discourses, to the dominant subject positions in which they find themselves.

The resistance by these parents to the institutional identity assigned to them will be a step towards increasing their social power and show how contingent family construction actually is by showing that uniformity across schools is non-existent. The starting position of this chapter is that the views of parents are important in developing knowledge and resistances about this social phenomenon. While this sample of parents is limited, it can be insightful especially given that most of the interviewees are in a position of parental power in their respective schools.

2). Technologies of domination work through knowledge generation of `good families`

Foucault's view is that individuals are created in and by the socially constructed discourses which they inhabit. Their subjectivity is contingent to their experiences with others, such as fellow parents, children and so on. The official discourses of the school institution seem to constitute parents as subject to, and at times objectified by, prescribed school policies, as outlined in Chapter Four; disciplinary guidelines, attendance records, admission, pastoral care and so on. On admission night they are informed of the school's expectation of them and they have to sign up to and agree to the terms of the school's protocol. Officially sanctioned `truths` about education and family living are given in the opening addresses by the school Principals and school counsellors, woven together into a discursive regime which amplifies what is held to be normal, natural and desirable ways to think, feel and act in their school. These truth claims by school `experts` (usually quoting research experts) serve to produce relations of domination and docile subjects, in this case, trusting parents, whose subjectivity is formed in relation to their interaction with the school context.

The related agenda of new managerialism, that is the impact of the market model on senior appointments in Irish Education, attempts to totally govern schools in a technicist way in order to prevent disciplinary issues. Lynch, Grummell and Devine write that "*Defining*

education as a market commodity has become increasingly normalised” (2009, p.191). Mooney-Simmie (2013) claims that this technical approach positions teachers as; “*de-professionalised functionary technicians*” (p. 492) whose focus should be on the primacy of the relationships they share with their students. The ‘experts’ in education and in child psychology tend to share the managing discourse in categorising families. They devise structures (such as PC) and procedures for dealing with students from families who are perceived as problematic, together with texts and curricular materials to establish an applicable truth about social phenomena such as changing family structures. These technologies of domination emphasise difference as a means of constructing negativity about non-traditional families and a means of controlling it. They generate knowledge of good families at the induction meeting as a means of standardizing relations between school and home, and as a way of pre-empting difficult families. In an apparently apolitical way they exhort families to self-diagnose or seek ‘treatment’ in times of difficulties, and as early on as is possible. Mrs O’Brien (St. Brigits) takes up this position of the ‘good’ self and suggests that parent/s work with the school to fit in and if necessary to accept specialist intervention offered by the school’s pastoral care team;

“I think it depends on how you are first introduced to the school, with the parent and student letting the school know about their family set-up. If there is a change three years down the line, it’s up to the family to give the right vibes and let the school know the changes, and to be straight with the school” (Mrs O’Brien, St. Brigits School).

“Being straight with the school” suggests that this mother is a subject of the liberal governance discourse of her school. Parents are asked to position themselves in relation to the expert discourse and adjustment techniques being offered in this school, so that they can become acceptable as ‘normal’ families. Foucault’s post structural view is such ‘truth’ is created through “*truth games*” about ideals and what is best for society in general. These truths when inherited and reworked into the fabric of each successive generation are joined together to produce ‘regimes of truth’. “*Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth, the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true*” (Foucault/Rabinow 1984, p.73). This allows for differences such as non-traditional family to be isolated and quantified, while the traditional family is valued as working with the system; “*There are over 600 lads here, they (school) can’t be everything to every kid. Some parents put issues onto the school, but the parents at home have to take responsibility. Some people think that the school can sort out everything but it can’t keep doing that*” (Mr Crowley, Hawthorn Heights School).

The forms of subjectivity available to parents are multiple, since they are socially-produced and constantly changing, but many find the disciplinary technologies incite discourses of accommodation and assimilation when it involves family, since the traditional one is the only one allowed to exist in the school setting in so far as it fits into the agenda of the academia, that is, as long as it is a `good`/traditional family. Non-traditional families who are constructed as `different` or `peculiar` are incited to confess their `deficiencies` by being open with the designated school personnel, and are assured that help is available for them (to adjust) in times of crisis. Thus family stratification through practices of knowledge and discipline become part of the mind-set of the school community very early on as a means of justifying interventions. The school`s framing grid stratifies new families into good and not-so-good categories through the formal Pastoral Care structures. The theory behind the programme (Chapter Five) is that of `experts` who are constructed as having all the possible solutions to deal with potentially troublesome students or families. The focus of the school as a disciplinary apparatus is on how to manage the threat of students whose family are not mainstream, and thus constructed as a risk/contagion (Foucault, 1977, p.172) to the school community. The official discourses gently incite parents to recognise themselves as different and irresponsible due to their marginal status.

Each school manages this diversity in different ways. The home school liaison officer in St. Brigits, the counsellor in Hawthorn Heights, and the Pastoral Care team in Cogito College tend to befriend the problem parent/student and give them to understand that the school is on their side. A parent at Hawthorn Heights who sits on the school board said; *“The school here is very sensitive, my son is a product of that background. There is an ethos of care for each pupil.”* The parents in the parents` association in St. Brigits were assigned the responsibility for uniform provision and standards, and not really consulted about any other school business. They seemed to have less agency than other parents and had more implicit trust in the home-school scheme which their school offered. None of the parents I interviewed expressed complaints about the lack of democracy, but instead felt very privileged to be involved;

“There`s also a board of management, but not many volunteer for that. No fathers in the association, but a few on the board. It`s a great voice for the parents, and it helps them a lot when their child goes into secondary school. The only time we discuss family is in relation to uniform, trying to keep the costs down. They always thank the parents for keeping the uniforms fantastic. Parents definitely make a difference. The odd time a parent might bring something to our attention outside the school gate, e.g., UCC cert., and 3rd years not going” (Mrs Barry, St. Brigits School).

Wider socio-economic concerns are discussed at the parent association meetings and it is interesting that no fathers attend these meetings, indicating that the gendering of school boards and specific roles assigned to them is not natural. Mrs Barry's comment reveals that school power is organised along the lines of patriarchy, that school is an organisation which, from a post-structuralist view, is socially produced-this is an incident which Foucault would term as a rupture in school-home relations. The language used by the parents on the associations and boards is proprietorial and defensive of the work being done for families in schools, for example, possessive pronouns such as "*our school*", "*we*", "*with the school*", "*The onus big time is on the parent*" (Mr Ryan, Cogito College). "*We can't know*" (Mrs Regan, Cogito College). This sentiment is reinforced by the parents in the other schools, who are all very much in favour of working with the system. As a professional working in the post-primary sector I had always assumed that the parents elected to these committees were to work with the parents first in negotiating school life and business for their fellow parents. The discourse here shows that the general understanding for these elected parents is to work with the school management in transmitting the school's discourse. They are accommodating to the school's official discourse of compensatory pastoral care practices. It would seem that these parents who sit on the Parent Association or Boards of Management are constructed as actors in the implementation of the institutional discourses of student care; their consent is assured through their allegiance to the school and the equation of the knowledge with experts, (teachers and counsellors) as opposed to themselves, who are regarded as lay participants. They view themselves as 'pure' selves, and draw attention to themselves as 'normal', 'responsible' and in most cases, married family members.

Their paternalistic, care-giving ideology is informed by the discourse which constructs childhood innocence and vulnerability, rather than a natural construct. Some of these parents engage in a process of constructing parents who do not share their value system, as 'other'; negligent and unfit for the vocation of parenthood. "*Some see the school as a cheap babysitter. We are interested in our children that's why we're involved with the school*" (Mrs O'Brien, St. Brigids). Communications with the ordinary parents who are not elected to boards of management are distanced by the school via text or letters home, except for contact in times of crisis. They claim that it is for the school's good since a different standard is constructed as a threat to the education and well-being of the whole school-body, and society in general, "*Thus the Christian school must not simply train docile children; it must also*

make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals” (Foucault, 1977, p. 211). The educated `experts` are given a privileged position to make the programme of pastoral power or governance operable so their credentials and intentions are constituted as limitless. Procedures of therapeutic and regulatory sanctions are in compliance with neo-liberal forms of governance (for example, *Child Protection Guidelines*, 2011) and tend to be more actively employed for working class parents who are judged to be lacking the vital parenting skills necessary for the socialisation of their children in line with the values and norms of middle class families (Reay and Lucey, 2000).

“Not having the knowledge about a situation. If a child is sick, who do they contact? The onus big time is on the parent, to tell the school what’s happening. It is not the problem of the secretary. Good communication is very important. It might be difficult for a young person to say to the secretary that Mum is at work and there is no one else to collect me” (Mrs Coakley, Hawthorn Heights School).

These technologies are not all that different to those on parents in the past except the disciplinary aspects are less obvious. What makes the subjectivity of parents unusual in the instance of modern schooling is that they are willing participants in the pastoral care processes, whereas in the past the control exercised by school authorities was understood as a repressive mechanism which constrained the agency of parents and kept them outside the school gates. Such seemingly liberal practices make it possible to question the pastoral power which positions parents in this new framework, and to question what discourses are enacted to position parents as subjects around whom a series of observations, decisions, judgements and prohibitions are possible; how certain forms of regulation become appropriate for them or their young, and their energies and behaviours directed and acted upon in line with the particular ideals of therapeutic bio-politics.

3). Disciplinary practices

Disciplinary practices such as family assessments to produce knowledge and stratification, and the induction of students and parents into the ways of the school structures and discipline, combine to form normalizing discourses that set standards, limits of relations, intergenerational ordering of `wisdom`, and subject positions in relation to the school ethos. The Pastoral Care structure in each school orchestrates the disciplinary apparatus of the school. This pastoral care/power also structures relations between different subjects across discourses-such as teacher and student, parent and principal. In doing so it assigns an identity

for each person within the system and constructs a “*target population*” (Foucault, 1988, p.161) so that risks to the mainstream organisation are marginalised. These constructs of disciplinary power vary in their provision in each school, such as a sacred space in the counsellor’s office, or through the Home-School officer’s visits to homes. Mrs Coakley (Hawthorn Heights) depicted her school as very open to diversity and like Mrs O’Brien has great confidence in the service of expertise which her school offers;

“I know that there is very much an open door policy here, we’re told that if anything presents as a problem, don’t hesitate to get in touch with us. There’s a very human aspect here, very approachable in every way. The older staff are very Catholic but gentlemanly, whatever is best for the boys. There’s an atmosphere of openness and caring; how can we help if someone needs us? The career guidance teacher always says that, so they do mean it” (Mrs Coakley).

Mrs Coakley displays a paternalistic attitude to the boys in her school; “*Whatever is best for the boys*”, and “*gentlemanly*”, which again suggest a social construct rather than a natural phenomenon. Her reference to the Catholic ethos implies a moral judgement in suggesting that the school will tolerate diversity with a view to rectifying it, which again is an unnatural way in which their ethos has constructed the client/school relationship. Her references to family difference here are suppressed by the essence of pre-given ‘truths’ around it, thus producing a very limited and subjected position from which she/parents can speak and act, which again is not natural;

“Come to the school, talk to the parents council and there’s an annual general meeting. Start at the prospective parent’s night. We welcome diversity and the more we’re in the picture, the more we can help your child. Just to keep reinforcing that they need to work with us, that’s the main thing” (Mrs Coakley).

This official discourse of standard differentials plays a large part in institutionalising parents and involving them in the policing of other families. Mrs Coakley stresses that parents have to be open with the school about diversity and so on, somewhat similar to the confessional which Foucault writes about in reforming the criminal. “*The confessional took priority over all other kind of evidence; it was the truth by which the accused accepted the charge and recognized its truth; it transformed an investigation carried out without him into a voluntary affirmation*” (Foucault, 1977, p.38). The school counsellor/expert is the questioner who prompts parents/student to reveal all and then passes judgement on the confession. This information is used to define and constitute them in relation to other areas such as education and health, endowing them with perceptions of their identity, their strengths, weaknesses and potential for change.

Such constructs appear natural and neutral to the new parent or student who does not recognise such actions as the product of institutional power. The competing discourses of normative and deviant family, frighten parent/s and intensify their desire for normality, so their participation and willingness to avail of institutional responses to `disorder` become wholehearted even to the point of making themselves, and encouraging other parents to be vulnerable to the therapeutics of the school counsellor so that they can be reformed and improved upon. Yet, as our conversation continues Mrs Coakley shows a very liberal self which is suppressed within the confines of school management. I went on to ask her about conversations with fellow board members around changing family forms;

Ann: Do you talk to fellow parents/guardians on the board about changing family forms and their impact on education?

Mrs Coakley: Yes, not so much at the meetings, but among ourselves. Several parents on the board have second families, there is openness about such diversity, we`d talk among ourselves, there are some excellent women, it`s not always a negative. One woman said her son calls his new dad by his first name, this husband is not his dad so it`s all very civilised.

Ann: Words are so important aren`t they?

Mrs Coakley: A friend of mine had a step-dad while her own dad was still alive, so she always referred to him as her step father when distinguishing between the two.

Mrs Coakley thinks that openness around non-traditional family practices is very important so that early intervention can begin in rectifying issues. Yet she is only prepared to discuss family in private spaces, “*among ourselves*”, which seems to contradict what she claims about openness. Her confidantes who are on the parents association with her, in non-traditional family structures, do not appear to be open with the school about their family set-ups either. Her comments show that intimacy is suppressed in the relationships in which she finds herself at board meetings but not suppressed in interpersonal conversations. This shows the constituted nature of her position, and her loss of personal agency in her exchanges with the institution, revealing as Youdell (2011, p.27) and Weedon (1987, p.108) claim, that the take up of identity politics is always situated in processes of subjectivations, as to who she can be in any given context-in relations of productive power.

Family-subjects in relations of power; disciplining the parents via normalization

The disciplinary technologies of schools make particular ways of being a parent more valued than others: Parents who abide by the school rules and regulations, support their child`s academic life, do not hassle or make demands on teachers and so on. Parents take up this positioning through technologies of self which produce many of them as the good parent in

various ways in the different schools. They have to sign up to the rules of governance and classifications being offered under the symbolic power of the school institution so as to become subjects of the school in disciplining themselves, to be recognised as responsible parents, fit parents and good parents; by attending enrolment nights, signing homework, working with the school and being open about any difficulties which may impact on the school community. By virtue of the fact that his/her child enrolls in a post-primary school, this renders the parent/s in a relation of power within the domination of the school. So most parent/s become willing participants in internalising these non-coercive disciplines and their subject position is tied to an identity or truth about themselves, and from which they relate to themselves and others in particular ways. When I asked the parents in St. Brigits if some families were afraid of stigma or of being treated differently by teachers, Mrs Barry replied;

“Most people would lay it on the line (their family situation to school). At the end of the day you don’t want your child embarrassed. An awful lot of kids have doubled barrelled names now. Katie Smith-O’Mara is one kid in pre-school now, it’s the name on her birth cert, but the name is very important”.

Parents such as Mrs Barry position themselves on the side of transparency with the school for the child’s sake, in avoiding embarrassment. Family ‘truths’ encourage parents to be honest with the school so that rules and regulations can compensate for inadequacies. Many parents are encouraged to recognise their differences when compared to the stable pro-type family and find their family become positioned in a hierarchy of family types. The discourses they encounter are ones of inadequacy, dysfunction and failure. Consequently not all family lifestyles command equal respect in post-primary schools, especially those family types that are not society’s ideal patriarchal family, based on marriage. The dominant discourses on the parent/s of these families seem to be chastising them and deeming them to be neglectful of their duties, even though the school system is part of the problem because it refuses to recognise family diversity in its power relations.

“I’ve heard of individual cases like one where there was a very hostile home situation, no lunches, sees no respect, with one parent off the rails. I’ve seen it in my own family, my sister is gone by the wayside since she split from her husband, she has very young kids, and she doesn’t talk to them about what’s happening ‘cause there’s so much to take on board. If there’s a child in the school with separated parents, they should talk to the school. Getting the knowledge of who is in charge, the child has to be told too. To phone or text the parents so that the two do not arrive together, stressing the student” (Mr Crowley, Hawthorn Heights School).

Different parents displayed different subjectivities depending on their own positional lens (Glazier, 2005), but the connecting link between all parents on the boards were that of

responsible parenthood; reiterating the therapeutic discourses of counsellors who create the ideology and descriptions for what is a desirable post-primary parent. Some of them constructed `other` parents as inadequate and in need of school support. Mr Crowley`s conversation reveals institutionalised binary oppositional discourses of them and us, of good families and not so good families, so that alternative parent subjectivity is constructed as bad. He is basing his observations on personal experience and seems to think that institutional order will redeem much of the problems of home. Parents such as Mr Crowley fit well with the subject position being offered them in school because the school reflects their home situation and vice-versa, whereas for others, such positions are more difficult. Because of negative constructions, parents on the parent associations, school counsellors and teachers (Chapters Seven/ Eight), argue that the better option for such drama is in a privatised space such as the counsellor`s office. These practices performed on mothers and fathers serve to constitute them as subjects of the system, some are considered insiders, and `others` who are considered outsiders. It follows then that the responsible parent learns to visit the school at appointed times, whereas those who arrive unannounced or in times of crisis are constructed as troublesome, this construct produces subjectivities such as irresponsible parents. For example, Mr Rice from Cogito College, a separated father explained how he and his peers fail to get school reports and how they perceive the schools` power as affecting them negatively;

“For example, texting home in these schools, other fathers who are not on the communication list, they don`t realise they are entitled to. I suppose it`s a combination of things, not realising their power and fears of attitudes in the school towards them. The last parent/teacher meeting for Anna (youngest daughter) I wasn`t at it, it was the first one I haven`t been to since coming to this area. I`d have been to all p/t meetings and taken notes and handed them over to their mother, however I wasn`t confident that I`d get the correct information back after this last meeting” (Mr Rice).

These separated parents could be understood as rejecting the positioning which the school offers them but are often afraid “*of attitudes in the school towards them*”, if their contact creates difficulties for their children who want/need to belong. Some of these vulnerable parents are in a double bind in relation to asserting their power in the education of their children and in not wanting to alienate their teenagers from themselves, so they are unsure whether to approach the school or not. They are positioned by schools practices in a no win situation; `wrong` if they do and `wrong` if they do not. This vagueness around such protocols is another way in which power works best-through vagueness and uncertainties to produce double binds for parent/s.

The children of these parents also take part in the self-governing of their families so that they comply with the schools' criteria. They constitute themselves as part of the institutional discourse of normalisation and in turn impress a 'docile parent' mentality onto their parent/s. They do not want to stand out as being different or be treated any differently by teachers because those who stand out are stigmatised and often picked on by others who quickly determine their vulnerabilities. Students' family difference can be one of the most hurtful areas of ridicule for young people (Chapter Six, Darcy's comment on teachers' overcompensating). Therefore parents are encouraged by their children to not embarrass them, not to be different, not to draw attention to themselves. The technologies of subjectivity which youth impress on their parents are very powerful and further compound the construction of the desirable proto-type parent; similar to the "normalizing gaze" (Foucault 1977, p.184). *"If two gay parents have a son in an all boy's school-that's a huge stigma for the boy. My son doesn't want me in talking to Mr Hurley (principal) and my friends sons are the same, they do not want to be treated differently"* (Mrs Coakley, Hawthorn Heights). Mrs Coakley's subjectivity is also impacted on by her son who wishes to distance her from his school for fear of stigma. Other students position their parents in parallel positions to school also, adding to the complexities of how the school-home dialogical process work; of oppositions working together and in tension with each other.

Institutions govern family difference through suppression of intimacy

Family stratification happens across two overlapping levels in schools-through institutional and interpersonal discourses which suppress intimate relations (which again are unnatural) while distancing school and home relations. Traditionally the work of both was kept at a very safe distance from each other. The liberal welfare interpretation of family was understood as a private sphere while the school involved the public sphere (Slater, 1998, p.138). Official institutional discourses still draw on this distancing of school-home relations at times so as to suppress intimate relations between teacher and students and teacher with parent, so that the school system can get on with its work of educating children's minds, without having the hassle of dealing with the affective (Deleuze, 1990; Mulcahy, 2012). The 'good' parent is one who is constituted as concerned for the moral welfare of the students, and one who sees their duty in supporting the school as an academic space, but not an affective space;

Mr Ryan: Some children come with a different set of standards; some have chips on their shoulders. If the family is in turmoil it has a spin off on the children. This enters into their relations in the classroom itself. The student that is often excluded due to their personality,

needs most to be included, that's something I see. Children with more freedom, less control, less structure, have most problems.

Ann: Would that be families together with problems or single families?

Mr Ryan: I can think of individual cases, separated families where there are issues with the children.

Ann: Can you think of separated families without issues, ones that split harmoniously?

Mr Ryan: No, I can't think.

Ann: What positive actions do your daughter/son's school take to help families?

Mr Ryan: I can't think of any. Most families leave schools to do their work

Ann: So family contact is usually trouble?

Mr Ryan: Yes, but the quiz night recently was an example of a fun night, you'd feel welcome here, the structure is welcoming. The school here is designed to be open, once you're in, you're in. At the parent/teacher meetings you'd get to know the teachers better and they recognise me next time then.

His gendered subject position associates uninvited family contact with school as trouble; “*Most families leave schools do their work*” and families burdening schools with their private problems as irresponsible and time wasting, as he thinks that the affective belongs outside of the school. He positions himself as a ‘community self’, ‘a pure self’ who would not let his emotions interfere with business. He goes further to add that family diversity is major trouble for classrooms and society, and cannot give an example of any happy non-traditional families. His idea of an open and approachable school is where everyone is happy and light hearted at fun nights such as a quiz night. Foucault’s lens on governmentality helps to critique discourses such as Mr Ryan’s so as to unearth the connections between truth, knowledge, power and discipline in schools which suppress intimacy and personal feelings. From the discourses I was involved in the school I heard parents liken the school to a substitute family, as a mediator between students and home, between father and mother, as the put upon system/referee which has the best interest of society at the centre of its educational aims, yet none of the parents challenged the school to foster the emotional or affective aspect of student life, because they were reiterating the power relations which had produced their ‘truths’.

When I asked two parents in St. Brigids School if families are invited in for many events, they answered;

Mrs Barry: Well we have fashion shows, singing concerts, award night, first year mass and information nights.

Ann: Would all parent/s be asked in for all events?

Mrs O'Brien: Oh no, just the parents of the group involved as space would be limited, but they can always come in if there's any problem.

Ann: What practical hints would you offer teachers to try and overcome difficulties in relation to family changes?

Mrs O'Brien: Well in this school the family unit could be anyone, it can be grandparents too.

Mrs Barry: *And in primary school they're learning about everything, so they grow up with it.*

Ann: *What can parent/s or guardians do to help schools to better understand family diversity?*

Mrs O'Brien: *I suppose if they just want to ring the school now and again to see how she's getting on. Whether there's a pregnancy or gay marriage they are fine about it here.*

Mrs Barry: *I think that parents mainly want to see their child grows up happy. Some parents are more open than others. When I was about twelve I remember a girl getting pregnant and someone saying it to my Mam. She turned around and said, if she is, it's none of your business.*

Ann: *Has your daughter or any other individuals in your circle, raised issues around family diversity to you?*

Mrs Barry: *No. Nobody in this school would make anyone feel less, because the way I see it they went to college to educate people, not to judge them.*

Mrs O'Brien: *Years ago the teachers would pin point girls and embarrass them over something their family did.*

Mrs Barry: *Yah, or if the father was on the dole, they would have been treated differently.*

Ann: *Do you think that family and school life should be kept separate?*

Mrs Barry: *No, the school and the home have to work together, that's why they get the parents involved. They always thank the parents for keeping the uniforms fantastic. Parents definitely make a difference.*

Mrs O'Brien: *It's my 2nd year on the association (parent's). And I never got vibes that I wasn't wanted. Things have changed a lot. My mother would never have set foot in the school, only if she had been sent for; if I were in trouble.*

Mrs Barry: *Things have changed a lot; even being able to say to a teacher, I don't understand. We have night courses here too, sewing and computer classes for the parents, and English, History and Maths too, to help parents to keep up with their daughter in school.*

This perceived open approach is very much an assimilation discourse so that the supportive discourses of school personnel help parent/s and their families integrate whole-heartedly in the operation of the school. Like Mrs O'Regan and Mr Ryan, these mothers believe that the school is on their side, wanting what is best for each individual student. School governance or the intentions behind it, are above critique as far as these parents are concerned. Their private and public spaces are kept apart by institutional practicalities such as limited space and time, as well as distancing practices such as invitations in for special events. Yet, the voluntary social role that all these parents have seems to be devalued by the school institutions since they are constructed as assisting, as an add-on as opposed to being active partners in the education process.

Mrs O'Brien negotiates her position as important in relation to reaffirming the school's work. She has become a subject of her school's discourses constructing the present openness of her school as a major step forward. She believes the 'truth' that she is able to go up to the school at any time, yet in reality the only time she can is in times of trouble. Mrs O'Brien's

juxtapositioning of the relationship between home and school in the past to the present is a visible presentation of the fact that very little has really changed; *“If I were in trouble”* and *“If there’s a problem”*. It just seems as if things are more liberal and that parents, as partners in education, are included in the running of the school organisation. Mrs Barry’s comment about students growing up with it suggests that family difference is something new, something for the next generation, whereas a Foucauldian perspective would argue that family difference has always been there, but constructed differently by society. Her mother’s reaction to the gossip about a pregnant girl demonstrates that there is no set social context where these things are inscribed with meaning and value and reflects that gendered subject positions have not changed very much. The statement that *“nobody in this school would make anyone feel less”* is interesting; it is a negative internal reaction to difference. Also she exhibits a subordinated subjectivity for parents such as herself when she refers to the night classes available for parent/s, to keep up with their children. It is part of the *“taken for grantedness”* in the school’s distancing of parental power, even though these mothers perceive themselves as having a degree of power through their efforts in keeping the uniforms *“fantastic”*. Parent associations/boards/councils are the only forum where parents, as a body, are given any voice in the management of their school, and unfortunately in most of these monthly meetings the discourse of managing is the dominant one, so their *‘responsible’* subject position is only a facade which helps to mirror the more insidious ways in which power works at post-primary level.

Linear ordering of intergenerational relations suppress family difference

Dominant discourses construct childhood as developmental and in need of safe-guarding, so the linear intergenerational ordering is used in rhetoric to justify pastoral care practices of intervention and care at times with non-traditional families which are deemed in need of responsabilization or adjustment. Young people are constructed as dependent on their parents, first and foremost, to provide for them physically, morally, educationally and emotionally, so that they can *‘grow into’* adult society. Because children and teenagers are assigned vulnerable and passive subjectivities which need protection from social ills, a sense of responsibility is reinforced onto their parent/s. If parents are seen to renege on this, those in authority are expected to compensate;

“Traditional accounts of children and childhood inspired specifically by developmental psychology have tended to emphasise childhood as a period of ‘becoming’; the ‘irrational’ and ‘immature’ child moves gradually to a rational adult end state. From this viewpoint, childhood is defined as a period of growth

and transition through a series of pre-defined stages, each marked by its own essential features and characteristics” (Devine, 2003, p. 11).

Numerous parents spoke about the dichotomy between the subjectivity they had as children compared to the way childhood constructs operate today. This thinking reiterates the childhood construct which I dealt with in the chapter on students (Chapter Six), where the understanding of the family and that of the school are both seen as sites where the anxieties of the nation are played out in schools, due to their position of influence. Discipline is exerted on what is believed to be a passive child being moulded and shaped into what society desires for it- a responsible adult, rather than the youth making meaning themselves within families and schools. Responsible mothers and fathers are constructed as supporters of this regime, as selfless, subordinating their own needs and dreams to meet the needs of their children in the interest of their educational well-being. The assumptions of care and exclusions of ‘unfit’ parent privileges the family based on heterosexual marriage (and economic stability) as the legitimate, site for sexual expression and procreation. Condemnatory discourses on the effects of non-traditional living arrangements on young people reinforces the public’s negative discourses on the damage done to teenagers in the home, and the spill over consequences for their schooling. Their negotiation and maintenance of orderly intergenerational relations was evident in the ways in which they re-adjusted their attitudes in order to conform to their school’s expectations of them. When I asked Mrs Coakley in Hawthorn Heights;

Ann: What is family diversity?

Mrs Coakley: No prototype family any more, nowadays there’s single parents, dads or moms, gay parents. There are grandparents rearing children, the nuclear is not the only one anymore.

Ann: Are schools sensitive?

Mrs Coakley: The school here is very sensitive; my son is a product of that background. There is an ethos of care for each pupil.

Ann: Do you think students are treated differently if their family is a different composition?

Mrs Coakley: I doubt it. It’s not new anymore. I’ve been on the board here for 6 years and there is no discrimination here. I remember when my eldest was in 4th class (24 now), her friend Susan O`Sullivan’s parents got married, my mother was appalled, it was so exceptional 10-12 years ago. Its deemed o.k. if it comes from home (attitudes). I thought it was a lovely thing and she (my daughter) viewed it as a nice thing too.

Mrs Coakley tells about her mother’s shock at some student in 4th class whose parents were getting married, unlike her generation who married before having children for respectability sake. Mrs Regan in Cogito College spoke about how difficult family changes are for older people who were used to the apparent stability of one type of family, unlike her daughter’s generation who seem to have no problem with accepting change; also

Mrs Regan: *The others are not surprised if someone doesn't have a dad or a Mam, unlike my generation who would have. I remember a girl in our park whose parents weren't married, my daughter was surprised the first time she found out, but after that she had no problem with it, it's not an issue for them now, they don't care. Teachers, parents –they think we're all old.*

Mrs Coakley tells of her interpretations of how society has changed since she was young and how unaffected her young daughter is about such change. She is a liberal self but has internalised the discourses of the generation before her. She raises the issue of intergenerational exchanges and the judgement and stigma of differences around family units in times past but does not question such changes, as human constructs; of control of children. Her assertion that “*We are far more aware*” suggests that our generation has been inducted by the dominant discourses on families. She spoke of her own mother's intolerance and her belief in the need for conformity, in order to be socially respected, to take up responsible and community subjectivities. She does not consider this as society's way of governing difference. The deficit orientated explanations that this parent's mother uses allude to an idyllic past, where families supposedly lived happily ever after before the introduction of divorce, legal same-sex unions and liberal single mothers. Her comment that older people construct difference as negative and wrong could be understood as a resistance to what is considered to be problematic in present day family living. But her comments are insightful as they are a throwback to fear and conformity. Mrs Regan added that it's adults who make issues in relation to differences, and young people pick up on parents discourses of acceptance or non-acceptance. She says; “*I think they don't think about it at all, it's the rest of us who make issues about it*”, proving that it is society which tries to fix meaning around issues such as Childhood, Education, Women and Family. Her insights reiterate what students said in Chapter Five; Zoe about her aunt who was reticent about her remarried status, and Jack's comment; “*it's just passed on from generation to generation-comes naturally*”, it is the taken-for-grantedness that makes these un-natural phenomenon appear natural. Because the parents I interviewed were members of the parents association in their schools they had to exhibit a responsible subjectivity.

“I come from what's classed as a normal family. I would only be dealing with the normal stuff really. Ours would be a very structured family, and we're Catholics. I think with all the changes there is no focal point for the children. If we go into a school where everyone is different, they could lose their own identity, whereas if you are in a school where there is only one line, that's the line they are all on and it's easier for the children to focus on that. I'm not a firm believer in having huge choices, you can't have a group of people doing all sorts of things, nothing would get done” (Mrs Regan, Cogito College).

Some parents drew attention to their credentials as responsible married members of traditional family structures, which suggests that they internalise the linear ordering of intergenerational relations of parents being responsabilized, while children are rendered passive and voiceless in relation to institutions. This is pervasive in the Pastoral Care resource material and in the discourses of parents such as Mrs Regan (Cogito College), who come from `normal` families. These discourses fail to acknowledge any positive aspects of change or challenges because they have never had to think otherwise. I asked Mrs Regan the following question to gauge her feeling about family changes;

Ann: Do you think family diversity is a positive or negative thing?

Mrs Regan: In general I think it's a positive thing. I'd tell my daughter to include everybody, I think most people would take it as a positive thing. Of course there's a certain amount of society who do not want to change, but once there's a focus on the children. I think they can't move on if they don't learn different things, like putting on a show, it's good to expose them to different things. Mooney's programme had gay people talking about marriage recently, most are for it but some are against it. It is hard on older people, change isn't easy for them. Myself even, I don't like dealing with things that are different. A lot of the older people think that there is something wrong with you or your situation if it's different. I don't think it's personal.

Ann: What difficulties do you think arise most around family diversity in a post-primary context?

Mrs Regan: Trying to make sure that everyone is included. If a family is not Catholic, it means there's a challenge to include the child. Mother's day is another example, it's always been the case that situations are different. Teachers can't not make the cards, it wouldn't be fair on the other children, that's where the teacher comes in and s/he makes the call. But what to do with the children who don't have a Mum?

Ann: And what do you do if they have no parents?

Mrs Regan: It will probably just come down to reading and writing again.

Ann: What practical hints would you offer educators to try and overcome difficulties in relation to family changes?

Mrs Regan: I don't know. I have no idea how we treat everyone the same when we are all different. When students in my son's school who were getting `special treatment` (learning support), other children thought that they were being excluded by not getting the learning support. Children don't have any hang-ups about these things, I think they don't think about it at all, it's the rest of us who make issues about it. I'd say don't be saying that now, and he'd say, sure they are all saying it to him in class. Because of our reaction, the children are afraid they'd say the wrong thing, so they avoid him. We'd be far more aware.

Mrs Regan as a community self, raises issues of differences such as religious difference, different nationalities and so on. She thinks equality means treating all students the same, but questions how to do that if they are not all the same—the blindness to difference which schools would like to brush over is raised here as a small rupture to school governance. She makes the point that “*because of our reaction, the children are afraid they'd say the wrong thing!*” which shows how intergenerational discourses work to induct the next generation into

constructs such as what a family should entail. Her comment that her mother's generation thought there was something wrong with a person if they were different is very telling-similar to how Weedon (1997) critiques discourse and subjectivity; *"To be inconsistent in our society is to be unstable"* (p.109). Mrs Regan goes on to say that children *"don't have hang ups, but adults create them"*; showing that hang-ups are man-made, not natural. The older generation have been responsabilized by social institutions to construct difference with deficit. However, schools make no effort to dispel the web of truths which generalise and divide these particular students, because of the status quo and lack of flexibility in administration.

"We can't hide the fact that there are normal families, my children now have no living grandparents, it's normal to them. I think maybe there is too much issue made of other stuff-to call a spade a spade, if Mary Jane is comfortable enough to say about her family situation now, she's happy and has come to terms with it. A child can make an issue or a teacher may think it's an issue. Children don't have hang ups about these things, I think they don't think about it at all, it's the rest of us who make issues about it" (Mrs Coakley, Hawthorn Heights School).

Another mother in St. Brigits had a similar experience of intergenerational constructs; *"Some parents are more open than others. When I was about 12, I remember some girl getting pregnant and someone saying it to my Mam. She turned around and said, if she is, it's none of your business"* (Mrs Barry). This parent shows a tolerance and acceptance of single motherhood, as the discourses before her allowed for. Her school has a high percentage of single families and works well with them, in a very open and tolerant fashion. The socio-economic context may also be a factor in their openness and honesty as they are not so afraid of judgement or class distinction. *"It's (family change) not new anymore. I've been on the board here for 6 years and there is no discrimination here."*

The discourses of these more mature individuals show how their family construction is constantly repositioning and competing for real and symbolic discourses to benefit their young people in school with the hope of securing and safeguarding their futures. Such dominant social discourse on family entails the advancement of certain familial signs and symbols at the expense of others. Within these schools and in society generally the inherited discourse is an essential concept that imbibes cultural capital with social meaning. The socio-economic context of St. Brigits may be a factor in their more tolerant attitude to family change and being less influenced by stigmatisation. The support of intervention agencies is accepted more in St. Brigits and was introduced at an earlier stage into the lives of students and their families than in the other two schools, showing that their school had developed

appropriate modes of constituting these parents as subjects, with particular assumptions about gender, class and family structure. There was an obvious continuum from primary to post-primary school in St. Brigids, whereas there was no evidence of any follow through for the students in the other two schools. The home-school liaison officer in this DEIS school was relied heavily upon, whereas the other two schools relied more on the school counsellor, particularly Hawthorn Heights. The pastoral care and SPHE programmes were welcomed by parents as an advancement of protection against perceived social problems. As lay people, theirs was a trusting assumption that social and personal aspects of life were being dealt with in those classes as none of them really knew what was covered by this curriculum. *“I think SPHE is a good class; it allows them to say things if they want to discuss things, to realise there is more outside their own world.”* (Mrs Regan, Cogito College) and *“Subjects such as SPHE, I assume those are the kind of subjects that deal with those issues”* (Mr Ryan, Cogito College). Some parents were most cognisant of the truth games around social engineering but were not prepared to question them. *“There`s the ideal family, and then there are real life situations”* (Mr Rice, Cogito College) and *“Sometimes we`re stuck on the ideal, sometimes we live with our own fantasies, if life were perfect!”* (Mrs Regan, Cogito College).

4). Differences are negated in hidden interpersonal spaces

Most parents were very positive and supportive of their school during their interpersonal dialogue with me. They were of the opinion that their voice is heard largely due to the inclusion discourses on parental voice and educational partnership. However, through the lens of post-structural analysis, the parents whom I interviewed revealed very constrained agency in relation to major policy decisions other than in consolatory or celebratory events. The technologies of self, impact on players in the parent association who are of one accord with and reaffirm the central school discourses. Intimate types of interpersonal relations are generally suppressed in the dominant discourses of post-primary schools since the categorisation of certain family types are important to their production of social order. However, their subjectivities were formed through multiple relations within and across the school so the idea that all their attitudes to family constructs being the same did not sit well, so I decided to problematize this. Their interpersonal exchanges referred to family and friends who are in different family situations. Mrs O`Brien questioned the happy ever after notion of staying together against the issue of personal unhappiness or safety, in light of a recent family tragedy where a father had killed his two young children before killing himself, because of difficulties in his marital relationship; *“Yeah, I tend to go with what people say first (that*

marriage breakdown is shocking) *but then I weigh it up and try to be positive and say maybe it's for the better in some situations. Like my nephew is in the Green school, where the sister of the man who killed his two kids is a teacher*" (Mrs O'Brien, St. Brigids School). Resistance such as this are critical of homogeneous `truths` and gives rise to counter constructions in parents who challenge the `expert` discourses and the context of its deployment.

Ann: *What practical actions do your daughter`/son`s school take to help families?*

Mr Crowley: *I think the education system tip toes around certain issues, we've gone too politically correct. Since I've got involved on this board I'm more hungry for it, we need to encourage more parents to come on board and share their life experiences. I was treated very badly in school. I was called stupid and slow because I wrote with my left hand; they tied my hand to the chair. I vowed I'd join the army, in order to survive, if you have a weakness in the army they'll play on it.*

Ann: *What mistakes are secretaries or school authorities likely to make in light of the changing nature of families?*

Mr Crowley: *If they are not made aware, if there`s a child in the school with separated parents they should talk to the school. Getting the knowledge of who is in charge, the child has to be told too. To phone or text the parents so that the two do not arrive together, stressing the student. Secretaries should be aware of what they can or can't tell. I find that the school is changing and society is changing. There should be an information stand about various support organisations in the school. There`s not enough awareness. I think the lack of parenting in general is frightening. Half the battle is getting parents interested.*

This parent from Hawthorn Heights, suggests more openness and dialogue as a means of meeting current challenges which undermines the idea that institutions are fixed or above critique. If parents, together with the help of post-structural analysis came together to interrogate the means by which certain families are brought to the attention of the pastoral care team, and the consequences for them, it could be beneficial to a better understanding of family diversity. Positive aspects of non-traditional family set-ups, such as more openness and information about it, or comments such as "*maybe it's for the better*", would help people to see the benefits of family change for many people, and provide other ways of thinking about how families are constituted.

Mrs O'Brien (St. Brigids) also had a positive spin on things;

"I remember one kid told a teacher in primary school about how her mum told her about her new boyfriend, and the mother being so positive and saying how lucky she was to have so much love from all sides. It was the lovely way she put it, I thought it was wonderful, and the nice way it was put to her. She'll have double the love in the home if it works out".

Mrs Coakley (Hawthorn Heights) relating about intergenerational suppression of family difference (p.165) explained that when the parents of a girl in her daughter's 4th class got married, her mother was most surprised, whereas Mrs Coakley herself, and her daughter thought it was a lovely situation. Both Mrs O'Brien (St. Brigits) and Mrs Coakley seem to think that the attitude in the home constructs positive attitudes to social change, which can engender a more accepting and less fearful sense in younger people about such matters, as changing family constructs.

Some parents who do not see or hear their family composition reflected in school discourse show resistance to the school-home relations structures by rejecting the pastoral care advice offered and so, cut off all contact with their son/daughter's school, unless necessary. Other parents give the appearance of compliance with the subjectivity being offered them, but are quite angry about the way in which the school positions them. Mr Rice's counter-discourse (below) is an example of such. His story does not get amplified because he is outside the 'politics of knowledge', the 'truths' created around the school-home partnership. His mobile phone number kept falling off the system, whereas his former wife's, never did. (When I asked the school secretary afterwards about complaints from parents, she made no reference to his dilemma with the texting list). He was also the only parent I interviewed who was looking at the issue from a different lens. He depicts a very unfair and restricting aspect of the educational system and explained that friends of his, in similar family situations, were treated in a similar manner;

"Here there's a great service-the text messaging, even though my number falls off the list from time to time. I know it's not something against me personally, but it's good for the institution to know that errors occur. Teachers are the humane face of the institution, generally struggling to overcome the inadequacies of the system. I don't know if it would be feasible for the school to inquire what is the situation, if people are willing to tell, fine, if not-maybe an invitation to know or make a specific request-I'm more acutely aware of it in this country, being male there is the presumption that the mother has charge of the children. Now my x-wife's number has never dropped off the system! If a father wants to come along to the parent/teacher meetings and he wants to get feedback about how his child is doing, then that should be given. In most cases it's quite likely that both parents get joint custody, so if some message is being sent out from the school, then both parents should get it" (Mr Rice, Cogito College).

His narrative generated nuanced insights into school discourses which discriminate against estranged fathers in their attempts to be involved in their sons/daughter's education. His alternative take critiqued the system for not encompassing family change; this differed from all the other constructions which had understood events from the insider's positional lens

(Glazier, 2005). His experience also showed that there are different rules for `legitimate` and `illegitimate` parent/s, suggesting as the post-structuralists do, that knowledge is not free of or distinct from politics. “*Post-structuralists have challenged the idea that individuals can think and act freely outside the politics of knowledge*” (Mac Naughton, 2005, p.4). Mr Rice`s experience of his number falling off the system is a perfect example of the schools subtle way of distancing him so that they need only deal with his former wife. It is interesting that her number has never fallen off. The anger and fears of many non-traditional type parent/s distance and silence them from the dominant discourses and the mutually beneficial construct between home and school is non-existent.

5). Conclusion

The majority of parents I interviewed were from the traditional type family and they felt this type to be the most stable in which to raise teenagers. Most of these parents had not given a lot of thought to any other way of family living as it was outside of their immediate experiences. Their comments, as social voices, reflect various differing perspectives on changing families, but their institutional voices were all responsabilized into the formal ways with which to deal with difference. Their `real` voices in the interview were in tension with the contingency of how they are deployed because of their role on the parent associations. Therefore their `truths` can at best be described as contingent truths; what is real to the parents at that particular time is what matters. Komulainen`s (2007) description of children as research agents as both vulnerable and competent comes to mind (p.26). Gaps between what they said as responsible selves and as lay selves, reveal that there is no fixed or definite way of constituting family, that there never has been, only institutional suppression of intimacy combined with the linear ordering of intergenerational relations which gives the illusion that there can be if its constituted enough. These parents, due to their positioning on the school boards ensured that their conversation about family would be cautious, maybe even a little careful, when I revealed that my family was not of the normative type. They resisted thoughts about difference and felt set school standards benefited most students, irrespective of family type. They did not reflect critically on educational issues in relation to diversity or inclusion. Neither did they express concern for the ways in which the normative family was assumed in the power processes of the school. Helping to manage the running of the school is how they perceived their role, one of co-operation not confrontation. Maybe these parents as `outsiders` in the sense of not being directly involved in everyday school events were not as confident about critiquing the system. Only one father complained because of his number “*falling off of*

the system". He did seem suspicious that it happened a few times, unlike his Ex-wife whose number never fell off.

In Chapter Eight I will reveal insights and conversations with school staff. They were far more open in general than the parents. Of all the three groups, they exposed most contradictions between the formal institutional discourses and the throw-away, informal comments of colleagues; showing that family silencing is a very unnatural and unhealthy construct. Students, parents and staff who are rendered not just silent, but immobilized around family talk, just does not add up to a positive school experience.

Chapter Eight: The Double Bind of Family Discourses for School Staff;

“What do you expect, her parents are separated”; shur they`ve been separated for years and she`s been fine!

1). Introduction: reframing school-family relations

Inspired by Foucault and poststructuralist critical analysis of discourses, this chapter seeks to deconstruct the institutional and interpersonal discourses on families noted in a small number of post-primary schools. It seeks critically to uncover how teachers and principals and school secretaries (school staff when collectively referring to all together) are positioned to act around family, and what disciplinary practices they employ. By analysing our interview conversations it is hoped to explore the system of classification and legitimation which positions members of non-traditional family entities in schools as non-normative. Institutional practices involving teachers, and counsellors such as interventions which employ the paramountcy of the *“best interests of the child”* (Van Krieken, 2005, p.45), in Pastoral Care theories and structures will be explored from a family governance lens in order to question its suppression of non-traditional family recognition. It is hoped to explore the linear ordering of intergenerational relations which overlap with the suppression of intimate relations between teacher-student. What seems to be a missing family discourse may be an institutional construct to avoid sensitive issues while perpetuating and idealizing the traditional family of former generations. Teachers` interpersonal relations with students and with parents will also be explored in order to make visible the extent to which they are complicit in communicating a particular vision of how families ought to be in the social world and if they themselves are essentialised by these discourses.

School-staff were interviewed in three schools with the principal in the fourth school refusing interviews with all but one teacher. The principals in the three key schools spoke with me, as did the Pastoral Care personnel, and the school secretaries. Chapter Six on student interviews showed that the school as a system, together with the curricular material (DES) worked to acculturate them into the values and beliefs of the normative family. Chapter Seven, on parent/s insights, found similar experiences. This chapter, from the perspective of school staff, examines interpersonal and institutional discourses on how non-traditional families are represented and ill/legitimized by them and/or their school. The following table gives a description of the staff interviewed, the name of their school and the position they hold there.

Table 6-School Staff interviewees

<i>School-Staff</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Position</i>
Mr Hurley	Hawthorn Heights	Principal
Mr Hunt	Hawthorn Heights	Counsellor
Ms Hannon	Hawthorn Heights	Religion teacher
Ms Hogan	Hawthorn Heights	Secretary
Mr Green	St. Brigits School	Principal
Ms Good	St. Brigits School	Home-School Liaison
Ms. Grey	St. Brigits School	Secretary
Ms. Kearney	Cogito College	Principal
Ms. Keane	Cogito College	Year Head
Mr Kenny	Cogito College	Class Teacher
Mr King	Cogito College	Counsellor
Ms Knowles	Cogito College	Secretary
Ms. Redmond	Mount Eagle College	Religion Teacher

2). Power works through knowledge generation to govern difference/stratify family

The use of negative discourses and crisis samples define school approaches to family change. Dominant discourses seem to frame family unit difference as deficit through ideological and intergenerational discourses which construct selfless and committed parents as the 'good' parent in the eyes of teachers. The expectation that school-staff have of parents obscures familial change because teachers embody the sensibilities of academic success and enterprise as opposed to the affective dimension of family-school life (Hunt Report, 2010). Non-traditional parental forms are constructed as an added burden on the school whose focus needs to be that of a provider of academic chance. This deficit tends to be suppressed by the school institution as it disrupts the status quo by presenting challenges for management and teachers.

I asked Mr Hurley, principal of Hawthorn Heights;

Ann: What changes in family composition have you encountered since you began your teaching career?

Mr Hurley: The family unit has changed from the old nuclear family. 'Tis almost odd now to be a nuclear family and that very point was captured in an episode of the Simpsons which I watched recently. It was a case of the bully in the yard saying to the young fellow, you've a long nose, you've something else, and you're parents are married! It captured the western society mentality and it's almost like that now in schools. Certainly any embarrassment about parents not being married or split up is long gone. Once upon a time parents would have hid that from the world but now they actually display it almost, well they certainly don't hide it.

Ann: And is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Mr Hurley: It might be good for the parents but I'm not so sure it's good for the children. If you go through the students, especially the troublesome ones, I'd say of 90% of the cases it's

a broken marriage. In any of the one parent situations, even the lone parents, the work load is too much. No human being can do it all alone. You must remember with modern families there's no wider support either if they are not living in the locality they were brought up in. With crisis in the past, through tragedy or drink or whatever, there were aunts or uncles around, an invisible resource, whereas with the modern family, especially in the city, that's gone.

He is a very approachable and welcoming man who has taught in this school for thirty seven years. It is clear that he has a deep interest in the lives of his students and staff. Mr Hurley's conversation reveals that he is not a fan of non-traditional family types due to the perceived workload involved. He draws on the ideology of the ideal family unit depicted by his reference to "odd" and "embarrassment" which suggest that there is an anomaly here, and serves to indicate the primacy of one form of family over the rest. 'Other' family types are accorded lower status and he is perplexed as to why individuals are not hiding their family status today whereas in the past they would have. He claims 90% of his troublesome students are from broken homes and refers to the workload that one parent has to bear in the absence of the second parent. He explained that his wife is deceased so he knows the difficulties of being a sole parent. However, his biologist assumptions about families seem to equate all others as crisis situations and he essentialised the student affected by family change as disadvantaged. He refers also to the possibility of financial difficulties and the impact of parental animosity on the young person. He speaks of a lack of communication at home and the hostility between parents as the cause of problematic students but fails to consider the lack of communication between school and home and is quick to blame the home for most of society's ills. He went on to explain the way he manages family diversity in Hawthorn Heights; "*We advise them to tell us about themselves on the open night for first years*". Once his staff have the knowledge of each student's background they can then catalogue them into the binaries of normative or deviant family and can set about responsabilizing the families which are deemed to fall short of the ideal family structure.

Mr Hurley seems to be reiterating psychological 'truths' about children and non-traditional families and does not seem to consider multiple truths in these areas, as suggested by post-structuralists. When his Staff is interviewed they also reveal fears around family change, quoting crisis samples and how that has impacted on their school. These discursively constructed 'truths' result in staff making evaluative judgements such as: non-traditional families are an added pressure on their workload; that students from these families are not able to concentrate; labels such as 'troublesome' are applied to them. The counsellor in this

school also gave scenarios of `at risk` students, resulting from parental problems and did not question his `productive` role in exercising bio-power;

Mr Hunt: *We are the fire brigade here, putting out the smoke, a lot of my clients presenting with this common thread. Some couples are not inclined to tell us when they are in trouble, if they think they are splitting up, they should do something for the kid to get him through school. If the issue is in the family, the couple should explore all avenues before it gets out. They should try mediation or counselling and mutually agree on how to deal with it. I wouldn't be in favour of situations where there is agro continuing. I wish parents would come and say we are thinking of splitting up, not usually another person involved, they can't even think. If they had, we'd be more prepared, we could give them a few steps as to what to do.*

Ann: *If there was more openness?*

Mr Hunt: *Certainly, `cause when people split they must have been aware of the cracks, but they are slow to adjust to it, or too conscious of the public image. Often it's going on for a while, and we should be made aware. If a parent can trust us with putting out the fire how come they can't say things aren't going great at home, can you help us out? We find out a lot from parents, good parents, they do let us know.*

Ann: *About their own situations or others?*

Mr Hunt: *They let us know if there's an alcohol problem, or if a grandfather died; with relationship breakdown I'd like to know beforehand. My experience is that women are more prepared to tell us that there's an issue.*

Ann: *I've met some men who feel hard done by because they can't see their children.*

Mr Hunt: *That's right, but I mean as in talking about a problem and not covering it up, women seem to be better at communicating with us. We spoke to our 5th and 6th years about letting their feelings known.*

Mr Hunt sees himself as a `responsible self`, as a fireman who rescues young people in `heated` situations. He uses the analogy of a fire to underpin family crisis`; his discourse of fire management constitutes the school as a political saviour. He constructs the school personnel as the fire brigade who rescue the young person in distress. This risk and danger articulated through a child's needs discourse reinforces family changes as essentially problematic and gives greater credence to the stability associated with the traditional family. It is interesting here that Mr Hunt sees communication with the school as the obvious solution to family deficit, he passes all the responsibility back on the home and does not reflect on the normalizing practices of his institution as a possible reason for parents not being more open with him, particularly those who do not measure up to what the `experts` in this school consider to be a normal or good family. He mentions "covering it up" but seems unaware of school discourses which cover over family diversity and render it invisible. "Good parents" who are self-governing report the not so good parents to the school authorities with the hope of redeeming them and getting them to toe the party line. Women are constructed as being more open in relation to informing the school of family difficulties, they are the gendered

`docile bodies` who subject themselves to the disciplinary power of the school's pastoral care team, since the school constructs them in more of a maternal/emotional role.

Family difference is suppressed through intergenerational discourses

Mr Green, principal of St. Brigits, problematizes the lack of a role model in some families, for example if a father is `missing` from a union, he assigns himself the subjectivity of substitute father/husband model and portrays himself as a `good self` in compensating for families which are judged as `lacking`.

Ann: Have things changed much since you've been here?

Mr Green: Not much, things are much the same. Only a small percentage of fathers are involved in these families, there's no change there. I suppose we do see a few fathers involved now at P/T meetings, where we wouldn't have before. We even have a traveller father, who used to stay very much in the background, getting involved now, so that's great.

Ann: Do you think family diversity is a good thing or not so good?

Mr Green: I don't think it's good or bad, it just is there, and we need to be more conscious of it. If you're making assumptions that everything is stable, it may not be, and that impacts on the school. The mothers are the ones left to deal with a lot of the agro. The children have no male role model; they look to the school to provide one. We have 2/3 teachers who are male, and 25/26 female. I'd pick up on the way kids see me as a role model or the mothers, they see me as a stable figure they can depend on. If that role model was in the home it would be better and it would be better for the school life too. When the dad is brought on board he often does not have a great understanding, or limited knowledge of school life. He's not there on a constant basis with homework etc., then when something becomes an issue, he might have a completely wrong understanding of things and would possibly have had his own issues with school when he was growing up. It's easier to deal with the mothers as they are more of a constant in the students life.

Mr Green frames the non-traditional families as burdens on the education system, and like Mr Hunt from Hawthorn Heights, portrays the school as picking up the pieces, in this case where fathers are judged to be negligent due to absence from their families. His construction of gendered subjectivities is interesting in relation to staff and male role models for his female students. While he considers more male involvement a positive feature in homes, his typology of fathers for schooling is transient and problematic. The system's disciplinary power does not reach many of these fathers and so they are constructed as another burden to bear while at the same time privileging certain categories of family such as traditional and heterosexual. Like Mr Hunt, he constructs the mothers as subjects of a liberal discourse since they are the ones who subject themselves to the disciplinary technologies in the system. When I asked Mr Kenny, in Cogito College about changes in family composition since he first began teaching twenty-five years ago, his discussion was far more accepting of family change. He assesses changes liberally since he is in a reconstituted relationship and can see things from the

`outsiders` lens. He expressed caution regarding open discourses on private lives of students or colleagues since he fears that, by putting too much emphasis on family difference, we could alienate students or staff even further.

Ann: What changes in family composition have you encountered since you first began teaching?

Mr Kenny: Separations are on the increase, the younger students here tend to be much more open about it than the older girls. It's becoming more the norm now. For some it's just natural and they get on better in school when they are adjusted to it. I met a student last week whose two sisters are here, they have different surnames. She spoke quite naturally and openly about it. Sometimes people in the past wouldn't have been so open about it-I wouldn't have been.

All of these educators` pedagogical practices were influenced by their biographical experiences, proving that their previous discourses all impact on the way in which they are positioned from moment to moment; Mr Kenny`s insights differ due to his own marriage break-up and being an estranged father, to Mr Hurley`s lone parent`s perspective due to bereavement and Mr Hunt`s attempts at responsabilizing parents to lighten his workload. Mr Kenny mentions complexities associated with family changes from a different lens to Mr Hurley and Mr Hunt as he alludes to fundamental changes in school structures as opposed to the deficit being on the family`s side; *“How to marry the two, the school and the home?”*. These dilemmas point to double binds for school-staff due to the differentiation of spaces, private and public.

Curricular materials suppress family differences through non-recognition

Mr Kenny (Cogito College) in the following extract attempts to direct the blame of family suppression on the issue of communication which tends to depoliticise the issue as opposed to questioning the ways in which power works in schools through knowledge generation to constitute good and not-so-good families.

Ann: Would you consider your teaching colleagues to be sensitive to students from alternative families?

Mr Kenny: Yes sensitive, but I wouldn't tell another teacher what to do.

Ann: Have any student or family, to your knowledge, complained about lack of understanding of their family structure in your school?

Mr Kenny: Complained no, maybe someone would make a throw away comment.

Ann: What steps could your school take to improve tolerance of such diversity?

Mr Kenny: Everyone is so sensitive; the talks at assembly are quite safe. There`s a balance between what the school should know and not. It would be worthwhile putting the question

out there- it's worth asking, but I couldn't put my career in jeopardy. Everything is so politically correct that it's hard to bring about change.

Ann: Is there an adequate discourse surrounding family change in your school or do most people avoid it?

Mr Kenny: I think it's an area where people don't go. It could antagonise a situation once you start personalising it.

Mr Kenny alludes to the personal being political within his school structures and this in turn influences the available discourses on family and personal status for students and staff. He mentions that he cannot put his career in jeopardy by engaging in what are considered restricted topics. He mentions the suppression of intimacy in school assemblies and in classroom conversations. However he goes on to explain that there are opportunities for ruptures within certain topics, such as English, where family difference can be discussed in a generalized way so that no student feels that it is personalised;

Ann: Does the topic of family come up often in your subject?

Mr Kenny: In English very much so. In dancing at Lunasa the young boy lives with his maiden aunts, and his father calls occasionally. At the end of the play it transpires that his father is leading a second life and is actually married.

Ann: So the boy should have been told sooner?

Mr Kenny: If society was more open he could have been, but his mother never knew about it, so the boy ends up telling his mother about it.

Ann: So it's powerful about communication, or the lack of it?

Mr Kenny: Hugely. Most texts are about the lack of communication and the people who are hurt because of this lack of communication. People shouldn't be hurt by things which are not meant to be hurtful.

Ann: Is there an awareness of other family types in the texts?

Mr Kenny: Yes, I think there is in most modern textbooks but they don't make an issue of it, it's said in such a way that it's part of everyday life. In the past when different family types were introduced into a text it was a bit artificial as the people who wrote them were not familiar with such lifestyles, whereas now they certainly are. Texts sell the message that this is a pluralistic society. If you look at London now with the greater anonymity, people can publish openly without agenda or French textbooks too. Philip Larkin's Whitsun weddings shows the idealism of weddings, life has to be ideological, but that doesn't mean that life is. The poet's biography tells a lot, he was very shy with women, so had difficulty in forming relationships with them. He was also a libertarian and hugely intellectual. Based on his parents' marriage he was distrustful of marriage.

Topics such as domestic violence and living together before marriage are not part of the general school discourses, and terms such as “*out of wedlock*” and “*living in sin*” which are cultural discontinuities are sometimes given expression in the classroom. A Foucauldian perspective would ask in what ways, or for what purpose? Mr Kenny mentions the anonymity of London and liberal French authors who allows such expression in comparison to the

restrictiveness of the isle of *Dancing at Lunasa*, where discourses on single mothers, and marriages that did not work out were subverted, like that of Larkin in the poem; *Purple Hibiscus*. He shows, through reference to publications and poets, that pluralism and family diversity are conveyed in curricular texts which in turn expose students to a more liberal society, even if his institution is less so. Teachers in general seem to be exceptionally sensitive about their students and want to provide a tolerant and understanding educational climate within their classrooms. They fail to recognise that the affective aspect of student life is an integral part of their education, and by silencing it in class, for fear of hurt, is causing further hurt and damage for student subjectivities.

Two interviewees, one from Mount Eagle School and another from Hawthorn Heights gave examples of blunders made around the topic of family, which result in this topic being subverted even further;

Ann: Do the changes in family composition here, impact on your teaching?

Ms. Redmond: No, I'd be very careful now, if I'm giving out to someone. Generally I'd say, I'll be phoning home, 'cause I remember one time when I did say it, one of the kids said; "Well, my Dad's not there!". I felt kinda bad after I said it because I did not want to sound insensitive.

Ann: What challenges do the changes present for you in the classroom?

Ms. Redmond: Well I suppose whatever theme you're using in class, to be more sensitive, especially in RE, and in CSPE too, when referring to home.

Ms Redmond constructs the subject of family as sensitive and problematic based on her own experience of verbalising her assumption of two-parent families above any other. However instead of exploring her assumptions and attitudes to families further, she closes down all family talk which renders this topic taboo. The subtext of silencing pervades the system in many ways as the only way of speaking or thinking about family is presumed or sanctioned. These teachers are expected to be tolerant but silent, as endorsed by the institutional discourse. They are to deliver curricular material as outlined by the Department of Education, and to adhere to the recommended material and steer clear of personal topics which might encourage students to open up or discuss matters relegated to the personal sphere. Ms. Redmond in Mount Eagle College explained that she quickly moves on when such incidences arise in class.

The Religion teacher in Hawthorn Heights also reported a blunder by a colleague of her's:

Ann: Have families changed much since you began teaching?

Ms. Hannon: That was thirteen years ago. I've spent the last eleven in this part of Brownstown, not hugely here, but before that I was in a rural area and there were mainly traditional families, very little diversity. Now with each new group of first years, I'm conscious of not offending anyone because of a blunder that happened in my previous school. A business studies teacher had been teaching business and accounts and the teacher, in the context of the classroom talk, said as a throw away comment, "How could any father walk out on his children?" One student responded "Mine did". The teacher in question was mortified and did not know what to say.

Ann: How did he get around it?

Ms. Hannon: He got such a shock, he moved on but at least he recognised it. Most of the kids know anyway. It came up recently with St. Valentine marrying people in secret and the early church not allowing people to get married during Lent. The kids were amazed at that and that it's a grave sin to have sex before marriage, they don't get that.

Ann: Are different family situations discussed in RE Class?

Ms. Hannon: No, not really. There's the exam in Religion so not a lot of scope to discuss anything. The lads are more open in senior years, no exam and more freedom. They know I'm not going to be judgemental.

Blunders such as this one with the student openly challenging his teacher's prejudices are circulated among teachers and serve to further silence and suppress familial issues. Ms. Hannon sounds grateful for the Religion examination as a Junior Certificate subject as it serves to close down sensitive topics which could arise in RE class. Her comment about the lads being more open in senior Religion class suggests that she is more open and comfortable with the older students; it also is more natural and less suppressed. She projects the freedom to be more open about sensitized topics onto the students, which is generally not the way in which power in the classroom works. Classroom codes generally marginalise family identity talk but in examining the responses of more classroom teachers they understand that it is the students who avoid the topic of family in class not themselves. This is interesting as it establishes vagueness around who is silencing whom, because all the staff in these schools position the parent/s as the silencers. This prompts a Foucauldian insight that silencing and exclusion is not accidental but cultural and structural, serving the values of the status quo family. These teachers understand that the students want to silence family talk but maybe it's because they have been inducted and institutionalised to stay silent about certain topics.

The Home-school liaison officer in St. Brigids School explained why she thinks students stay silent, and many teachers believe this same discourse and use it in justifying their own reticence in discussing family topics in a public forum;

Ann: Is the topic of family diversity ever dealt with at meetings?

Ms. Good: Not to any great extent, it is quite a sensitive topic, and a lot of students like to keep home and school separate. School is a safe place for them. The ideal for parents is to manage it all at home. Some of the families most at risk don't have just one problem, they have many. There isn't long term planning, they just survive from day to day. They may have no strong support system for themselves. We have mothers and fathers in families; we have single moms, live-in partners, a few single dads, and people in foster care. One girl who's with a foster mom, said to me the other day, "I'm going to visit my Mam today". It's part of their world, and they take no notice of it.

Ms Good's private use of reason (Allen, 2011, p.370) says these girls can be quite sensitive about their families, and sometimes they might think it's not to be spoken about (In Chapter Six these girls said they wait for the teacher to mention it first). They share things with their friends though. She is amazed at how well some are getting on in school, given their home situation. For them school is constructed as a safe place. They like to keep home and school separate, but as a researcher I'm thinking that they have been conditioned to think of keeping the two areas separate due to the suppression of intimate interpersonal relations in school. This construct of school as a safe haven from home normalizes practices around family sensitivity while distancing relations between both. School personnel act as part of the family governance system through obedience and fidelity to the institution that they serve.

Schools govern family difference through suppression of intimacy

The staff in these schools construct a need for sensitivity around family discourses through the understanding that the affective aspect of student life belong to home as opposed to the public space of the school (McInerney, Smyth and Down, 2011, p. 6). This is a useful means of officially suppressing intimate relations and keeping the focus of school on academic pursuits. Distancing the home from school shuts down family difference as does the one to one talks with the school counsellor. When I asked the principal in Cogito College if she thought family diversity was silenced, she responded;

Ms. Kearney: This comes from the parents themselves. They want to keep the silence around it themselves. They don't want anyone else knowing it, probably not in tune with their own emotions at that stage.

Ann: Are there assumptions made about these families?

Ms. Kearney: I don't think so. We try not to. I wouldn't have thought so. Just deal with the children in front of you and support them. We have pupils who are orphaned, with parents no longer living together, and some where one parent is deceased.

Ann: Are there communication difficulties between school and homes? Should they be kept separate?

Ms. Kearney: *If they want it private, I would always respect what they ask for. I haven't come across any situation where there is a danger to the child. If there is some crisis they will tell me, otherwise they want life to go on as normal. I suppose you have to look at the positive and negative in every situation. If there's conflict going on, they're better off out of that.*

This principal claims that it is the parent/s who take the initiative when it comes to communicating information about a student's background, and if they want to keep aspects of this life private, then the school personnel respect that. Her reference to "as normal" suggests that they want to be treated the same as families which are traditional. "We try not to" suggests that the negative essentialising of these students present educators with prejudices about their homes, even when the educators are making an effort to be tolerant and accepting. She adds that young people are better off out of conflictual family situations, which is an angle that is only tacitly referred to by the other principals. This principal puts the responsibility of communication on the shoulders of the parent/s as opposed to the school, which suggests that it is easier for school personnel to render family difference as non-existent than it is to acknowledge its existence and change accordingly.

3). Families Differences are configured differently in each School Structure

The issue of early intervention is a key issue for the staff of St. Brigits School. Getting to know the home and support the family unit is an integral part of their pastoral care structure. Good communication between both is understood to be in the best interest of the child/student, yet what these staff describe in their conversations reflect more of a power/knowledge basis which justifies their intervention at certain intervals. When I asked the Home-School Liaison officer in St. Brigits about communication between her school and the homes of students she described what I understood as a hyperbole where the school positions itself as an officer over the homes.

Ann: *Do parents approach you or the school to talk about family issues?*

Ms. Good: *Some of them would, last week a Mom said to me I'd like a small bit of extra help because we are separating. It was an effort for her, and of course people are proud too. I meet the parent/s once when their daughter is in 6th class at a group level, (usually January), so they can relate to me again at the induction night in Feb/March where we meet the family individually, with their daughter. Here we stress the need to confide any particular sensitivity, in a confidential manner. In September we meet with the parent/s again formally for a half an hour, and then the girls are split into class groups and meet with their class-teacher. They try to get to know them at a more personal level. I am like the nurse, between the doctor and the patient, explaining what is meant or expected. I find as a school, we are very open; always welcoming the parents in, no one is turned away. It's very important. Our support centre is*

one they can go to if they need to. We've incorporated it into our induction system, that all girls who come in for first year get 6 weeks in the centre so there's no stigma around it.

Ms. Grey: It's very important in the transition from primary to post-primary for them to know someone who can make it easier for them.

Ms. Good: When I'd go to their door then, they know me immediately.

Ann: How do you decide who to visit?

Ms. Good: There's a priority list in determining the visits. At the moment I'm visiting a girl who was living with her Dad and is now moving back in with her Mum. I need to meet with the Mom and I need to build a relationship for her with the school so that she seeks us out when she needs support.

The progressive discourses of the DEIS programme (Chapter Five) are evident here in terms such as “*support centre*”, “*induction*” and “*no stigma*”. The `lay selves` of parents are constructed as in need of `expert` help and intervention so that problematic families in this socially disadvantaged area can be adjusted by strengthening the links between home and school. Ms Good constitutes her clients as narrow subjectivities of the school system and uses her time with them to try to bring their lifestyles more in tune with that of the school and market principles. Her comment “*we stress the need to confide any particular sensitivity*” smacks of what Foucault terms the “confessional” approach (Foucault 1977, p.38) where her school can then justify its surveillance of them. Ms Good's use of pronouns such as “*our*” support centre and “*we've*” incorporated, this demonstrates her commitment and solidarity with the programme. She does not consider that her inducting of these families reflects middle class value judgements about parental care-giving and socio-economic factors. She does not question her part in generating the knowledge claims which maintain this type of family governance or question the power relations which sustains it. The imagery of the vile weed as described by Harwood (2006, p.26) to capture the burgeoning fixation with family disorders seems relevant here.

The school counsellor in Hawthorn Heights gave similar justifications for his induction process which also involves a lot of contact with first year parents; motivated by the philosophy of early intervention.

Ann: What is your role in relation to families?

Mr Hunt: I do meet with a lot of families, I meet parents, I'm the first point of contact for them in regards to inquiries. I am in charge of recruitment for first year students. I hold interviews lasting 20 minutes which is the first meeting between the family and the school.

Ann: When you say pastoral?

Mr Hunt: It could be anything, learning support or often there's overlap between behaviour, emotional issues, learning support looks after them. Other than that it lands on my desk.

Ann: Do you solve all the issues?

Mr Hunt: *I do a lot of counselling support in school and I'm involved in counselling in Greystones College and Mallory College (3rd level). We facilitate the training of counsellors we facilitate them and vice versa. We've had a lot of issues here recently that have to do with the breakdown of the traditional family, separation and bereavement over the last 5-6 years. The breakdown of the marriage and the nuclear family is what puts most demands on me.*

The discourse of danger and under-performance in school has contributed to a sense of moral and temporal urgency around certain students and generates solidarity among school personnel to compensate for what they perceive as inadequacies in some home situations; This counsellor, with a `responsible` subjectivity is critical of irresponsible parents who do not take responsibility for their actions, or for their children. His blame discourse is similar to that used by Mr Green, principal of St. Brigids when he spoke about absentee fathers. They do not reflect on their positioning as middle class, privileged or gendered subjectivity. I asked Ms. Redmond about the routinized practices and constructions of families in Mount Eagle College, but she seemed oblivious to the power relations between schools and families, other than in an interview perspective. I found it interesting that a Catholic chaplain was the main liaison between home and schools in what is generally understood to be an inter-denominational community school (Inglis, 1998, p. 224; Nic Giolla Phadraig, 1997 p.606; O'Sullivan, 2005, p.489; Coolahan, 1981, pp. 196, 219). *"The finance for establishing community schools is largely provided by the state, through the local VEC and religious authorities pay about 10 per cent of the capital costs"* (Coolahan, 1981, p.219). The DES purchased the site for Mount Eagle College initially, but subsequently invited the VEC and local Diocese to be its trustees. The school is reported to have a broad Catholic ethos within an inter-denominational framework, but my personal (limited) insights into the establishment was that of a narrow Catholic ethos, with a principal who appeared to be fearful of upsetting parents or trustees.

Ann: *Does your school have a policy that caters for multiple family forms?*

Ms. Redmond: *I don't know, I haven't seen one*

Ann: *What do you think it (the policy) says?*

Ms. Redmond: *I'm not sure, the Chaplain is the first port of call; the Guidance counsellor is involved too. They fill in an application form before coming into school, there's a first years night, and there's contact information given for, Mother, Father.*

Ann: *What does it say on the form?*

Ms. Redmond: *I think it says Mother and Father*

Ann: *Do you think schools are supportive of families?*

Ms. Redmond: *Very much so. Michael deals with a lot of families, he's our lay Chaplain. If there's any situation going on, he usually knows about it, also the year heads are involved, and it filters down to the teachers.*

Ann: *They network?*

Ms. Redmond: *Yah, and also for example the book scheme, if families cannot afford them, the P/A set up to recycle the books and old uniforms. Mr Harrington (principal) has a list of those families.*

Ann: *Are parent/s/guardians obliged to inform school management about the nature of their home before the child comes into the school?*

Ms. Redmond: *I think they are. There are notes sent to the parents of first years before they come in and Kevin also meets them in first year and there`s a special mass for all of them with their families. Michael prepares it and Fr. Whooley says it. We`re a Community school, so we are not under the jurisdiction of the VEC.*

Her reference to “*he knows if there is any situation going on*” smacks also of the policing/panopticism evidenced in the induction processes of the other three schools. Parents who enrolled their sons and daughters in what they perceived as a religiously neutral community establishment must be surprised when their first contact with the school is via a chaplain and their first official ceremony is a Mass. Ms Redmond goes on to explain the disciplinary practices that are involved in her public role as educator when I asked her;

Ann: *Are there any legal considerations for educators/clerical staff to be aware of in relation to parents who are acrimonious to each other?*

Ms. Redmond: *The policy in school now is to say I know you are telling me this now, but I have to tell you before you do, that I have to say this to management if it`s something that must be reported. What happened in my friend Mary`s school (primary), the mother had given the school strict instructions not to let the child out when the father would come to collect her. So she (teacher) had to stay on until the mother came to collect the child, and now the mother collects her every day.*

Ann: *Is the topic of family diversity ever dealt with at staff meetings?*

Ms. Redmond: *No*

Ann: *Are peoples` attitudes to family diversity positive or negative do you think?*

Ms. Redmond: *Probably negative, I`d say, it`s not seen as a good situation. And there`s the stigma too.*

Ann: *What are the benefits of family diversity?*

Ms. Redmond: *I think whatever works works. There are different models of family, none are wrong or right –families are constantly evolving, and we have to accept whatever model that emerges. Openly, people say that`s fine, but their thoughts are probably thinking differently. In primary schools the patronage is still very conservative. It could affect your job, there`s still a feeling about carrying out the ethos of the school, the feeling is still there. Definitely in my interview there were four people on the interview panel. My contract is temporary, you don`t know.*

Ann: *Do you think we should talk about family changes more?*

Ms. Redmond: *Yes, as long as we get the balance right.*

She displays a vulnerable subjectivity here due to her temporary teaching position, which she admits impacts on her linguistic and embodied practices (similar to Mr Kenny`s in Cogito College) since the Catholic management could take action “*which is reasonably necessary to prevent an employee from undermining the religious ethos of the institution*” (Section

37(1998b), Employment Equality Acts), irrespective of the Equal Status Acts of 2000 and 2004. She is in a double bind between her authentic self, a very straightforward person, and her fears for her post. She explains that families are inducted into this climate with a default faith tradition which holds particular views on specific issues such as sexuality and personal living. This insecurity may explain the silence of her principal and his decision not to allow an interview with him or his students or parents. Ms. Redmond feels that the traditional homogeneous nature of families and Catholic Church links are still very prevalent in her school despite a veneer of acceptance for diversity. She is restricted in terms of her status, and cannot be proactive in terms of addressing exclusionary practices based on family identity among her students due to her own status. The shutting down practice of “*I know you are telling me this, but...*” ensures that very few students would be brave enough to press ahead with divulging whatever problem they wish to discuss. This links in with the confidentiality clause which was highlighted earlier by other staff and which has been updated by the *Child First National Guidelines (2011)*, from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Mr Kenny in Cogito College who is in a similar employment category to Ms Redmond expressed similar misgivings about the symbiotic relationship between the Catholic Church and State in Irish education, and how it helps to suppress differences through power links across school sites and personalities.

4). Differences are negated in interpersonal spaces

Officially teachers do not question the taken for granted suppression which shape family discourses in their schools. Many of them seem to believe that the Pastoral Care system of classifications available for families is legitimate and benevolent within their school structure, or maybe it is easier for them to believe so. However one teacher, Ms. Keane in Cogito College, counteracted the official suppression of non-family entities when she challenged the labels ascribed to these children, and explained that she gets cross when colleagues speak about them unofficially. Ms Keane reports that teachers show intolerance not only in the area of family diversity but are also judgemental of students` accents and appearances, as expressed at staff meetings. She was in excellent form on the day I interviewed her because she has just heard that her application for early retirement has been accepted, so she was no longer bound to the discourse of the institution.

Ann: I'm finding that some students will be open with their friends but are afraid to be open with teachers in case some judge them.

Ms. Keane: *Yah. Most still do, I don't mean all the time but if there's a problem with a student then that's the obvious answer. If a child is wandering the streets and forgets their homework then they'll say if the mother and father weren't separated, that wouldn't be the case. Yet pupils from other families are walking the streets and do forget homework, and it's not an issue. I'm thinking of someone in 2nd year and I'm thinking if the parents were together she would still be chaotic with lack of organisation, it doesn't help but I think she'd be exactly the same. We always find the reason. If the child comes into school and doesn't draw attention to herself we don't ask or wonder at all. We only hear about the problem child and start asking questions as to why.*

Ann: *Is the topic of family diversity ever dealt with at staff meetings?*

Ms. Keane: *No, only as a throwaway comment or as a bit of gossip. I heard that someone's grades have slipped-oh the parents are separated.*

Ann: *Is the discourse around family diversity mainly negative or positive?*

Ms. Keane: *Negative, I'd say*

Ann: *Why do you think that is so?*

Ms. Keane: *Because it only arises if there is a problem. In school nobody cares if you have 15 mothers or a mother on her own or a father that's abusing you, we don't care as long as you come into school and appear normal and work hard. It's only today someone said about a student's grades slipping and another staff member said what do you expect, her parents are separated. Shur they've been separated for years and she's been fine. Some look at the single mothers and think ah well what can you expect? When something goes wrong we look for something to blame, so if we see a problem that is home or family based we say ah, what can you expect, shur her mother had her at 15, when she was a child herself. Sure how often do you hear that kind of thing? I'm only thinking of city structures, out the country it's probably worse.*

Ann: *Would you consider your teaching colleagues to be sensitive to students from diverse families?*

Ms. Keane: *No actually we are sensitive but it depends on the child. I don't think it'd diversity only, but there have been some dreadful comments at staff meetings, e.g., oh the parents are split up, or no, worse; "me ma" and "me da" being taken off, or comments on how a child is dressed. No more insensitive to diversity, we're very judgemental. Young people are coming into that scene. We don't form the teachers into accepting children as they are. Staff development days, most staff are diverse themselves, lesbian, multiple marriages, two lots of children, children adopted, people who have left; serious days of in service can only do good.*

Ms Keane depicts her teacher friends as individuals who are intolerant of students and families who do not meet the criteria of the school. She says; "*We don't care as long as you come into school, appear normal and work hard*", this suggests that teachers see their role as public and market driven so that the course gets finished while interpersonal dynamics and dilemmas are kept outside of the classroom. This reiterates Foucault's lens on power, which is often masked so as to serve the interests of those with most power. Ms. Keane touches on grades slipping, or problems in the home and the blame game of teachers whose negative assumptions say; "*What do you expect, her parents are separated*". Some teachers ascribe blame on the home while exempting their own inability to engage with certain students. It is interesting that this point was also raised by students such as Lisa in Chapter Six.

This phenomenon of ascribing inferior status to certain family identities may explain why many of them are reluctant to be open in their communication with their school. It seems that teachers who experience diversity themselves stay silent because their contrary attitudes to the power and knowledge operations in schools cannot be voiced, not even within the acoustics of the staff room. The principal of this school adds to this counter discourse and maintains that it is not children from unhappy homes which present most difficulties for her, but students from nuclear ones.

Ann: What about the well-adjusted children from these homes?

Ms. Kearney: There are probably students in this school whose parents aren't together that I'm not aware of. The numbers who come to me are very few and far between. They just get on with their business. We also have a lot of children in nuclear families and they have a lot of issues. There's a lot of children who have behavioural difficulties and they are in nuclear families. It very much depends on the child.

Ann: How do students manage diversity?

Ms. Kearney: It depends, some do and some don't. Those who present with difficulties, they come from nuclear families mostly. A lot of students who get special mention come from nuclear families mostly. Most students from diverse families just get on with it. It's not cut and dried, there are so many other variables. You don't know what the dynamic is. Not my business to pry or ask, I have to respect that. At the end of the day it's the parents who decide what to tell you.

The staff I spoke with agreed that it is always the problematic aspect of family diversity which is amplified in schools and in society in general. The framing grid through which openness in schools is understood is as part of a liberal welfare state initiative which attempts to gap the differences/difficulties created by diversity. Foucault's lens on this type of panopticism and governance suggests that school governance is exacerbating family difference through suppression and through their stratification of family difference in institutional and interpersonal relations. This equating of difference with deficit is also evidenced by Mr Hurley's construct of families in difficulty;

Ann: Do you have students from families who have split amicably?

Mr Hurley: We do.

Ann: Mrs Coakley (parent's board) said the other night that we hear of the deficit families because they are the ones who present at the counsellor's office

Mr Hurley: Yes, I don't know how many of our students come from families that split successfully, I only know of two, there's possibly more.

Ann: Do a lot of the successfully parted families say nothing?

Mr Hurley: I don't know, maybe they don't have to say anything. The student is very well adjusted, it's a non-issue.

Ann: Would they be well adjusted over time or recently?

Mr Hurley: *In September, five years ago a lad came in and he`s never been anything but well adjusted.*

Ms Redmond in Mount Eagle School concurred with this finding also in response to my question; *do you hear of many happy families which are adjusted?* She responded; *No, fair point-they just get on with their work.* This reinforces the research done by Smyth (2006) which claims that young people negotiate their lives by consciously taking on different identities in different contexts. If their family identity is under-represented in the school context these students have no option but to take on a disaffected identity in the classroom and pretend to be from the normative family type.

5). Family differences are negated through administrative practices

The secretaries of the three schools were interviewed in their capacity as the first port of call between school and homes. Official suppression of family difference became evident in their accounts relating to practices around family names, and phone calls to home. For all three secretaries the issue of names and student name change due to family change were the most common challenge reported for the school. Also the practice of married women reverting to their maiden names was a common feature, or of mothers maintaining their maiden name irrespective of marital status, which leads to confusion for secretaries.

Ann: *Does your school have students from various family units?*

Ms. Hogan (*Hawthorn Heights*): *Yes*

Ann: *What work practices does that present for you?*

Ms. Hogan: *A lot of parents not married and a lot of different nationalities. Before it was always Mr or Mrs, but now, basically I try to avoid any mention of names, because they could have different names or married and kept their own name. When writing home I put parent/guardian.*

Ann: *In the case of surname, some of your students keep their mothers surname, how does that affect your work?*

Ms. Hogan: *Well, we have to go by the birth cert name.*

Ann: *Is that a problem for some students?*

Ms. Hogan: *Well no one has said anything. As soon as an application comes in all of it would be done. I put it all into the computer. There`s the father`s name, and mothers name and if it`s different I just spot it. Or if I know the parent and the student has a different surname, I find out that way.*

Ms Hogan has adopted the practice of avoiding the use of names as a safe guard against saying the wrong name. She uses the term parent/guardian when writing to homes as a precaution. Some of the students in this school spoke to me before this interview about changing their names to that of their mother`s after family separations, but Ms Hogan says;

“*No one has said anything*”. She has to go by the legal name on the birthcert. She catalogues each family on entry to the school and deduces the dynamics in some family formations by the difference in names between sons and fathers, or from the evidence gleaned from the use of a doubled barrelled name. Interestingly, no student has questioned her about her practice of following the letter of the law in addressing them, implying that this is another subtle form of institutional silencing. She says that parent/s are given a lot of forms before school entry for their offspring if they want to inform the school of anything, whereas a Foucauldian perspective would view this as a technology of surveillance by the school to elicit as much personal information as possible, while the parents are still innocent of the powerful framework involved in adjusting families to the expectations of the school.

Ms Grey, secretary of St. Brigits gets around the problem of name change by getting to know parents or partners by their first name. Her conversation reveals that name changes are not so much a consequence of marriage break-up for her school, but a result of a change in a mother`s partner. During this interview Ms Good (HSL Officer) interrupts to qualify that the single status on the admissions form may not reflect the reality of a live-in partner but may be because of tax implications that they tend to be silent about their family status.

Ann: Does your school have students from various family units?

Ms Grey: Yes, we have a lot of different types of family nowadays.

Ann: What difficulties does that present for you, Ms. Grey?

Ms Grey: Well it`s not clear cut, I`d meet a lot of mothers, they sometimes have a new partner. Mr and Mrs is written down, so I ask them if they would like me to change the name on the records, they say no, it`s grand, we`re fine.

Ms. Good: Some people do not want you to know that there`s a partner living in the house with them, for tax purposes, so it suits them to leave the single mother status on the computer.

Ann: What considerations do you have to be mindful of?

Ms. Grey: I think the best thing to do is to remember names and to know people personally, so that I can call the new partner by his first name if I need to, rather than

Mr Brennan, which could be a different surname to the student`s.

Ms Grey also raises the issue of double-barrelled names being prevalent now and she gauges a change in family circumstances by the adjustment in name. She speaks of the openness in her school around family changes thereby indicating a trust in this essentialising of family units. Ms Knowles, secretary of Cogito College, is also cautious when it comes to addressing parents and adults involved in the students` lives. She asks the student her mother`s name

before ringing home and any serious issues to do with custody battles or child safety she reports to the principal.

Ann: *How long have you been secretary of Cogito College?*

Ms. Knowles: *Seven years.*

Ann: *Has your work changed during that time?*

Ms. Knowles: *Not really, it's busier. I haven't come across any unusual situation.*

Ann: *Does your school have students from various family units?*

Ms. Knowles: *Yes*

Ann: *What changes in work practices does that present for you?*

Ms. Knowles: *I suppose the name changes, I have to be cautious when ringing home- if the mother is going by her maiden name. Usually when we are ringing home the child is sick, so I can ask the child what's the mother's name beforehand.*

Ann: *What experiences have you had in relation to confusion with regards to pick up time, access or other legal considerations?*

Ms. Knowles: *I haven't really come across it here. I had a situation a few years ago where the mother rang me and she was afraid that the father would come into the school and take the child-he didn't have permission -I made the principal aware of it. It didn't happen afterwards but she (mother) was just making me aware of it.*

Ann: *Did you ask if he had any legal rights or anything?*

Ms. Knowles: *No, I just passed it on to the principal.*

Ann: *Should there be more guidelines for families?*

Ms. Knowles: *Yes, definite guidelines*

Ann: *And birth cert?*

Ms. Knowles: *I get a copy of the birth certs of every student when they are coming into the school. I have to go by the birth certs name- I cannot go changing names without a legal cert. I can set up a name change facility, but I wouldn't do it without a parent's permission. If a surname is double-barrelled or whatever I can set up a system where she can just be called by one.*

Ms Knowles claims that she hasn't come across much confusion in relation to family conflict and hints at the ad hoc nature of policy-making in this area. Her reference to a father not having permission to collect his daughter shows how intergenerational relations have shifted. A similar situation to this was mentioned by Ger (Hawthorn Heights) in Chapter Five, and is treated by Daly (2009) in her assertion that, "*Schools must now be able to adapt to changing family structures*" (p. 365). Ms Knowles takes on a legislative subjectivity in dealing with the names on birth certificates and double-barrelled names as a feature of family changes. All three secretaries construct family changes as additional work for them. As a means of getting around these dilemmas the secretaries adopt legal terminology to safe-guard them from blame or malpractice. They adhere to legal guidelines and procedures relating to family practices, but in a second-hand manner, as relayed to the school principal via the school secretary from one of the parents (p.187, Ms. Redmond's friend). The Irish Family (Divorce) Law Act (1996) renders the rights of the non-custodial parent to educate their child questionable. Thus

the fear of child endangerment raised by Ms Knowles is a major risk discourse for secretaries and security personnel in school buildings, which in turn adds further to the negative framing of non-traditional families in schools. The absence of clear legal guidelines relating to homes and schools add a sense of confusion to the mix which may or may not be accidental.

6). Conclusion

What is clear from the interviews carried out is that there is a very definite system of family stratification, in post-primary schools; good families who do not present any hassle for the school establishment, and not so good families who are constituted as a major hassle for schools, and so are made to look invisible by schools pastoral practices. The disciplinary practices as reported by these school-staff reveal that silence is the norm around such families, and silencing happens through the suppression of intimacy in the school space, as well as through constructs of vulnerable children. A Foucauldian perspective on our conversations suggest that this suppression of family difference is not haphazard or accidental but structured and political so that the broader needs of society, and the interests of those with most power, are met.

Most school staff reflected a negative attitude to family change/difference because it involves extra work for them. They are caught then in a double bind between feelings of resentment towards `troublesome` students, which they have to repress in class and be professional about, and their `real` conversations about family difference in the staff-room, or when they are off duty. The most vulnerable staff involved those whose teaching contract was not permanent and whose lifestyles were different to the expectations of the school ethos. They report that they feel a pressure which they articulated as binding, whereas the students felt it but could not adequately articulate it from a disciplinary angle.

Secretaries too seemed to be in another type of bind in relation to confusion when making contact with home situations which were not constructed as normative. They have to be careful about getting parent/s names correct as well as abiding by the official student`s name as per the birth certificate. They reported vagueness around protocol in dealing with family difference, which they felt added to the tensions between school and homes. They did not question the power plays behind such vagueness but I got the sense that they were very cautious of not saying or doing anything `wrong` or insensitive, as it could impact on the school or on themselves.

Chapter Nine- Strategies for Change and Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this study, as outlined in the introduction, was to investigate how schools operate a system of family adjustment for non-traditional family types at post-primary level. This investigation, as explained on page six, was prompted by the fact that my two young daughters were made to feel different from the other students in their rural primary school, because they were the only students there with parents who did not live together. I decided to investigate the disciplinary practices around families in post-primary schools since my girls are at present navigating that terrain. I wanted to know, as a mother and educator, if other students were experiencing similar feelings of alienation due to their family composition being `different` from other families in schools. Zoe, one of the students I interviewed subsequently, revealed that post-primary school was a better experience for her than primary because there were other students there from non-traditional families, whereas Sally thought otherwise; she raised the issue of having to continually explain family `difference` to numerous teachers as a difficulty within the post-primary sector. What certainly became clear as the research process unfolded was that self-regulating subjects/students are produced by the subject position offered to them in school, and that this was intentional rather than accidental.

I decided to investigate and analyse the techniques that are used to govern family so as to understand how non-traditional families are constructed in school contexts, through the operation of power and knowledge discourses around them. Data from students, parent/s and school staff found that conventions and dominant discourses tend to frame the `problem` of family difference as individual irresponsibility on the part of adults, and as a burden for schools and society to deal with. They reported that Pastoral Care structures define family practices in their school settings. The patterns which emerged from doing field work in four post-primary schools crystallize their accounts of school practices, and policies involving the suppression of family difference, since it is constructed as a deficit through multiple discourses across various sites, but centralised via PC structures. My data illustrates that family issues are silenced through coded language among school staff, the DES, curricular materials, through teacher assumptions, through the suppression of students` inquiries about family, and through the confluenting of difference with deficit. The conversations I had with

students, parents and school staff suggested that this adjustment and stratification happens through two key ways;

- i) Institutional suppression of family discourses in formal settings, which distance school and home relations by reinforcing intergenerational relations, and
- ii) Suppression of intimacy such as the carving up of private and public spaces through discrete entities within the school space.

This duality safeguards school personnel while ensuring that the school and home do not interfere in each other's activities too much. It is clear from the discussions in interviews that there is a very definite system of family suppression, adjustment and stratification, which begins the moment parent/s enroll their son/daughter. Families are categorized into 'normal' families; those who do not present any hassle for the school establishment, and 'deviant' families, those who are constituted as a risk or hassle for the school.

A Foucauldian perspective on my interview conversations suggests that this suppression of family difference is not haphazard or accidental but structured and political so that the broader interests of those with most power are met. The school/home dichotomy helps in distancing families, particularly those framed as problematic, along the public and private lines (Slater 1998) through Pastoral Care practices. Parent/s, particularly those new to the post-primary system, are not empowered to challenge dualities such as public/private, normative/non-normative families, so an air of silence and sensitivity surrounds family 'difference'. This relationship seems fraught with ambiguity, as many interviewees reported that families are unsure of their status in relation to the school ethos.

2). Intergenerational discourses produce double binds for parent/s, students and staff

This research findings suggests that schools/institutions construct public and private spaces and subjectivities through normalization and naturalization discourses on families through teacher assumptions, through psychological 'experts', through curriculum constructs of family and through the dominant discourses from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Families are rendered invisible by the education system through the use of the bland term of 'Parent/s/ Guardian/s' when referring to the family-school partnership in circulars and publications. School-staff claim to use these terms on the envelopes of the letters to home in an attempt to avoid any misunderstandings or insensitivity. Such distancing shows that the

symbiotic bond between school and family life is hierarchically structured while rendering `family` a private subject.

Foucault`s concept of normalization works in schools to standardize procedures around students and their families within structures. Difference to the norm is constructed as a deficit or as Mrs Regan named it “wrong”. *“A lot of older people think there is something wrong with you or your situation if it`s different”*. Because family difference is framed as a deficit at present, the way in which the school as an institution deals with it is to construct family change as individual rather than social; an individual catastrophe that must not be allowed to impact on other students, socially or academically. *“Disciplines do not function through consent- they do not derive their legitimacy of their goals from the individuals who come in contact with them. What disciplinary power does is to normalize”* (Ransom, 1997, p.16).

Foucault`s perspective throws light on this individualising of family difference as a social and political act of family discrimination. His lens suggest that this continued construction of lack and misfortune around family differences is a way of controlling and maintaining the traditional image of family by the combined power of the pastoral and political. Beginning in the first year of post-primary education, students and their parents are exposed to inductive discourses which serve to elicit knowledge from them in order to position their family`s hierarchy into the Pastoral Care practices by school management. Sanctioned `truths` through school counsellors and the DES material mainly, about what is a `normal` family implicitly produces difference, and thus categorise certain families as `non-normative`. They are signalled as troublesome and a potential threat to the main student body. School `experts` are employed as `reinforcements`, similar to technicians in order to pre-empt family problems and to fix others in order for particular students to survive the education system, and not `contaminate` everyone else. This enables schools/State to intervene in areas where they would not normally do, because young people from non-traditional families are constructed as `at risk`, bringing them and their families into care discourses which attempt to standardise, normalise and regulate their family structure and their family practices into line with the expectations of the school.

Normality, as a standard, like inequality, involves the production of politics of inclusion and exclusion. In Irish schools bio-power operates at horizontal and vertical levels through notions of risk that seek to pre-empt and privatize deviant behaviour. The self/family is

constructed through the application of particular modes of knowledge around good and not so good families. Schools isolate and frame `difference` as potentially problematic for the school body, through its Pastoral Care structures involving risk theories (Best, 2002) and panopticism, somewhat similar to Foucault's description of society's containment of illness and crime in the seventeenth century (1977, p.172). For example, Mr Ryan's (Cogito College) response when I asked him if he had any fears around his daughter associating with students from non-traditional families;

"I would hope not, but you can never be sure. You try to mould them in a certain way. Some children come with a different set of standards; some have chips on their shoulders. If the family is in turmoil it has a spin off on the children. This enters into their relations in the classroom itself" (Mr. Ryan).

Parent/s

New parent/s in particular are targeted and are encouraged to self-diagnose, to seek assistance from school counsellors until their family image is compatible with that of the norm. For example, Mr Hunt (Hawthorn Heights` counsellor) *"If a parent can trust us with putting out the fire, how come they can't say things aren't going great at home, can you help us out? We find out a lot from parents, good parents, they do let us know"*. Thus disciplinary discourses at induction night exhort parent/s to be transparent with the school, to work with it; to be reassured by the help it can provide for their young. These new parents to post-primary school rarely consider the `politics of knowledge` governing this support, or the hurt it may cause their young son or daughter if s/he are labelled as `different` for the duration of six years in the school. The power of choice which many `responsible` parent/ subjectivities make, can produce unintended and unforeseen effects for their children in constraining what space they can occupy as a student in a given context.

"The states` power is both individualizing and a totalizing form of power. ...a new form of pastoral power which spread out to the whole social body; it found support in a number of institutions ...pastoral power and political power more or less linked to each other ...which characterised a number of powers: those of the family, medicine, psychiatry, education and employers" (Foucault, 1982, p.784).

Some parents were aware of this dilemma, while most parents trust the liberal school governance to accept their child, on the basis that society has changed and that schools are more accepting of diversity nowadays. Parent/s want to do `right` by their children through assimilation but are fearful of being classified as a `particular family type`. They are in a double bind in relation to the contradictory discourses around families and school. As cogs in

a wheel, the parents on school boards felt that families should adjust to suit the school system, rather than expect the system to change in response to the challenges of modern family living. They seem to understand and value the school as a provider of academic education and capital, as opposed to the provision of a holistic education. One parent who was very conscious of his `community self`, made suggestions to safeguard the school institution when I asked; “*What mistakes are secretaries or school authorities likely to make in light of the changing nature of families?*” He replied;

Am, I don't know. They are the first port of call, so it's possible to make mistakes with the changing nature of families. Their best route is to follow legal guidelines. Parent/teacher meetings too could cause trouble for schools unless they have been pre-warned, if one or other of them turns up, the school authorities can't know how to deal with it, if there are no guidelines available to them (Mr Ryan, Cogito College).

This parent exhibits an institutional subjectivity as he considers family issues to be secondary to education and not a part of the public sphere at all. His tone, like Mr Crowley's in Hawthorn Heights (Chapter Seven) is one of `irresponsible` for parents who cannot manage their private lives. Such parents are constructed as burdens on the system and by implication so are their children. Mr Ryan mentions legal guidelines which suggest depersonalising issues and that schools need protection against risk discourses. What surprised me during this investigation was how much these parents had internalised the institutional discourse; that the maintaining a standard system is more important than individual student/family needs, especially given that these parents have been nominated by their parent cohort to represent and speak up for them. Their compliance with the dominant discourse resembles what happens at primary level, according to a letter to a national newspaper by a parent on a Board of Management at primary level in 2012;

“What became clear to me over the years is that the BOM (Board of Management) is no more than a rubber-stamp mechanism for the management decisions of the principal, priest and church-appointed chairman. There is no meaningful attempt to include the wider school community” (The Irish Times, Education Today, 6-03-2012).

None of my parent interviewees questioned the structural domination and suppression of family diversity in their schools; not even the divorced Dad. In fact, parent/s actually justified the invisibility of certain family types in the interest of least hurt for the student and the smooth running of the academic institution.

Students

Young people entering post-primary schools, from various family compositions, genders and socio-economic back-grounds are constituted as subjects of the education system and curriculum. They are assigned collective identities such as “*the student*” of “*our school*”. It is clear that students coming from families of `difference` are put in a difficult position by schools because their set-up is constructed as contrary to the good of the school. In many situations the student and her/his family are left in a no win situation because of the way family stratification is mediated via pastoral care technologies. Interviewees reported that schools privilege knowledge representing students from non-traditional family forms as limiting; therefore they can only fit meaningfully into the `other` category of family types.

Young people reported that they (or their friends) are placed in ambiguous positions as to whether or not to be open with school staff or peers about their family identity. *To Tell or Not to Tell* is an on-going dilemma for them. The politics of recognition becomes pertinent as part of the school regime since they are caught in a double bind. If they reveal their family difference, they will experience mis-recognition politics; which tends to suppress, rather than value their family identity. If they do not tell they experience non-recognition and have to assume the subjectivity of a member of a normative family type, which is contrary to their authentic selves (Mulcahy, 2012; Ecclestone, 2011; Smyth, 2006). This creates a tension in their consciousness` within the school space, to do either of two things; adopt an institutional subjectivity by saying nothing, or risk everything by being open and true to him/herself. Francis (2001) captures this dilemma well in her description; “*This continuation of belief and construction of ourselves can be illustrated by our common feelings of discomfort, when for some reason we feel we have not been `true to our beliefs` or have presented a `false picture` of ourselves*” (p.165). Many students reported being fearful that a teacher might think differently about them if teachers know of their family difference; they do not want teachers to treat them any differently to their peers. Jack (Hawthorn Heights) said “*Some teachers may think differently of someone who is not living in a normal family*”. Darcy (Hawthorn Heights) mentioned teachers overcompensating, as did Sally (Cogito College); “*You also feel the centre of attention for teachers, and that presents a pressure because they are tripping over themselves around you*”.

The students I interviewed had learned that silence is the expectation around the topic of family in their schools; they were educated into the institutional and ideological aspects of family, even when teachers said nothing. “*It doesn` t really come up that often. Guys might get*

upset so don't bring it up" (Fox, Hawthorn Heights). *"They (teachers) are very careful not to mention it much in case they say something hurtful in class"* (Hannah, St. Brigits). The constructs of `hurt` or `harm` are cited as to the reason for this suppression; so as not to upset students with a deceased parent or meddle in private affairs. What their schools are teaching them is DES- *Discrimination* of students from non-traditional family types; *Exclusion* of diversity; and *Stereotyping* of what constitutes an acceptable family type. This is the antithesis of what any educational institution should endorse in twenty-first century Ireland.

Students were also fearful of ridicule from fellow students with whom they were not friendly and reported ridicule and slagging which can go too far. Mocking someone over their family set-up seemed to hit a very raw nerve, with the boys in particular. The topic of embarrassment was also mentioned throughout interview conversations in relation to being different from the normative family. Fox (Hawthorn Heights) told about his friend who could not explain to his peers that he spent his weekends with his Dad *"He used to be embarrassed but now that he's older he has got over that"*, or Mrs. Barry (St. Brigits) *"At the end of the day you don't want your child to be embarrassed"*.

Thus students are shaped by and shape the position they are placed in, they desperately want to be themselves but simultaneously dread being so, because the atmosphere is not one of acceptance for family difference in these schools. The students from non-traditional families were very conscious of their muted subjectivity and this, in turn, was felt by fellow students and teachers. Peers felt conscious at mentioning their own family in case of offending someone. Name changes and misunderstandings were topics of concern in the midst of this silencing. The schools' website data has to include the official name on each student's birth certificate, so roll-calls and intercom announcements have one name for a student, irrespective of the fact that some students have rejected it, and are known to their peers as having a different surname. School secretaries also described the name changes as confusing and challenging, which presented an added pressure to their work-load. They expressed concerns around getting the name wrong during times of contact with home, or putting the wrong name on the correspondence to home/s.

My data on how family is represented in the curriculum and in text-books also suggest that an increasing number of students are troubled because they rarely see their own type of family represented. My tracing of family representations in texts as reported in Chapter Five, reveal

that the normative family is assumed and sanctified in most subjects which deal with the topic of family, such as RE and Languages, while efforts have been made in Home Economic texts to consider other types, as have SPHE and RSE. However their cursory references to family diversity and assumptions of two parented families reveal narrow understandings of diversity as do the references to parent/guardian in school policies. The students who were interviewed also referred to these assumptions and normalising discourses around the traditional family in the text-books and language classes of the above mentioned subjects. They claimed that father, mother and children were presumed when speaking of family, and that this type of family was represented as the happiest. One student, Ger (Hawthorn Heights) reported assumptions in SPHE material relating to family, such as biological children, and children having to spend time with both parents if in separated situations. He observed that there was no mention of sole-custody or children`s rights. Another student, Darcy (Hawthorn Heights) referred to the ideology of family being reinforced by holiday advertisements with two adults and two children packages. The insights of these students reiterate findings by researchers such as Laidlaw (2006) on advertisements, and Smart (2003/2004) and Bernardes (1997) on the need to re-theorize the concept of family.

This institutional silencing and suppression as reported by interviewees in Chapter Six, is compounding the family difficulties they are dealing with, because institutional discourses narrow and confine constructs of family authenticity. Students` sense of belonging is especially affected, since assumptions and practices by teachers and text books around family presume the normative one. They reported themselves or friends feeling invisible and disaffected due to classroom silencing and teacher assumptions. Sally told of her cousins in a class group in primary school making mother`s day cards, a week or so after their mother dying. They sat in a corner watching as the remainder of the class did this assignment. They were made to `disappear` within the school space because the teacher involved was not sensitive enough to amend her teaching programme. Teacher assumptions about normal families such as this, and references to contacting Mum or Dad, were reported by many students to be upsetting; *“Talking about family and assuming everyone has the same sort of family”* (Jack, Hawthorn Heights). Students related that issues of authenticity and recognition are very urgent for them and their peers, because of their inability to shape the meanings that define them and their family within the school community; their subjectivity renders them powerless to do anything about it. The identity of non-normative family members are objectified by the specific interventions to which they are subject; they are created as being

members of a problematic category of people, as opposed to the system being at fault in not meeting the challenges which family changes present.

My research found that most students are unaware that their personal profiling or their background information can be accessed by many school staff; they understand that their information is confidential. This may help to explain why students, in general, are so tolerant of staff blunders, since they understand that teachers may not know about their individual family set-up. This essentialised framing of individual family difference as secretive and negative compounds exclusion politics at school level and is contrary to a pedagogy of inclusive education. Consequently students and teachers are silenced about family topics in the classroom and only share family talk with very close fellow students or trusted friends outside of school. McInerney, Smyth and Down (2011) in writing about school space and the students` need to feel they belong there, describe it as a bitter-sweet experience at times. They ask; *“Why would students want to engage in learning that seeks to nurture a love of a place where they feel excluded or oppressed?”* (p. 10).

Staff

Most teachers did not question the family identifications assigned to them (or to their students) in school or the power relations governing them unless they experienced their own social world changing (as explicated by Glazier, 2005). This may be explained by the positioning the school assigns to them as part of the power structures of the school so that they are not free to act outside of the family ideology which their employers hold. School staff become subjects of institutional discourses and in general reflect society`s negative understanding about family discourses in their classroom assumptions and practices as well as doing so verbally in conversations with colleagues in the staff room (Chapter Eight).

My data illustrates that staff are reluctant to verbalise issues professionally that are perceived by the school as uncomfortable or threatening to students or to fellow teachers, which in turn positions them in a double bind dilemma, a no win situation. For example Ms. Redmond in Mount Eagle School explained why she has become more careful around family talk;

“I`d be very careful now if I`m giving out to someone. Generally I`d say I`ll be phoning home, because I remember one time when I did say it (mother/father), one of the kids said, “Well my Dad`s not there!”. I felt kinda bad when I did say it because I did not want to sound insensitive” (Ms. Redmond).

Because of the sensitising of family difference and reported blunders and fears, school-staff in general reflect a negative discourse towards family diversity. In their interpersonal relations with students and fellow-staff, they reveal assumptions and prejudices as well as resentment to the added workload which diversity is constructed as presenting for them. The 'at risk' discourses and the added workload of 'different' families are depicted by teachers, and school secretaries, as an extra burden on their work load. *"We've had a lot of issues here recently that have to do with the breakdown of the traditional family, separation and bereavement over the last 5-6 years. The breakdown of marriage and the nuclear family is what puts most demands on me"* (Mr Hunt, Hawthorn Heights).

Non-traditional family entities can also become easy targets for teachers when they are looking for someone to blame for school underperformance and wider social ills. For example Lisa's cousin's teacher; *"When she found out, she said that was why she was playing up so much in school"*. Blame games seem to be a global phenomenon of late, for example the PISA report (2011) on literacy abilities across European states place the responsibility for lower levels onto school-staff in member states, rather than researching the social, emotional and technological factors which also impact on change.

A number of school staff also reported issues involving differences between their personal lives and those supported by their school ethos. Silence is the only available option open for them at present, due to fears around their employment status. This power construct of a vague ethos renders many teachers vulnerable, especially those in part-time positions, and is probably the school patrons' way of regulating staff conduct, of maintaining 'standards'. For example, Ms Redmond and Mr Kenny referred to school ethos and vulnerability in relation to their teaching status; *"I couldn't put my career in jeopardy. Everything is so politically correct that it is hard to bring about change"* (Mr Kenny, Cogito College); *"It could affect your job. There is still a feeling about it, carrying out the ethos of the school, the feeling is still there. Definitely in my interview there were four people on the interview panel. My contract is temporary, you don't know"* (Ms Redmond, Mount Eagle School).

The irony of the situation is that there is a non-issue about diversity if schools know nothing about it. Ms. Keane (Cogito College) *"It only arises if there is a problem. In school nobody cares if you have fifteen mothers or a mother on her own or a father that 's abusing you, we don't care as long as you come into school and appear normal and work hard"*. Many of the

staff I interviewed did not realise how contradictory and complex their discourses seemed around family change. The power positions they exhibited and their positioning within the institutional practices made it difficult for them to critique the political allegiances between school and state. Some staff reported that their personal status is suppressed within the school space if it is `different` to the `norm`, but this was something they felt, rather than of having any tangible proof. They felt a double bind between their personal lives and that of the school ethos (McNamara and Norman, 2010). This ambiguity around school ethos and its implications for family enrolment, for school staff status, and for inclusion/exclusion politics needs to be addressed and challenged because the age in which the school managements` inflexibility and non-responsiveness to diversity and difference should be over.

3). Re-imagining school discourses involving families

The subtle ways through which disciplinary discourses work generate a fear around family difference in relation to school ethos and in relation to sensitivity. Vagueness around who is silencing family talk was expressed by students, parents and school staff. The principal of Cogito College felt it was the parents who wanted to keep the silence around family difference. *“They want to keep the silence around it themselves. They don`t want anyone else knowing it”* (Ms Kearney). The students think it is the teachers who are silencing family talk; *“We talk about it (family) among ourselves a lot, but not in class unless the teacher raises it”* (Abby, St. Brigids School), whereas parents think it is the school system which generates the silence around family talk; *“Not so much at the meetings, but among ourselves”* (Mrs Coakley, Hawthorn Heights). This mother, and Mrs Regan (Cogito College) and Mrs O`Brien (St. Brigids) also referred to older generations expectations about family standards; *“I think it depends on the way we`re brought up”* (Mrs O`Brien) This uncertainty amidst the rhizome of ethos discourses serves to confuse as well as generate fear among individuals and families of `difference` who may be made to feel that their standards are unacceptable within a given school context.

Some parents also emphasised the need for better communication systems between the school and homes. *“Good communication is very important”* (Mrs Coakley, Hawthorn Heights School). The limitations of such correspondence need to be raised, as all the parents I interviewed expressed an uncertainty as to whose responsibility it is to initiate contact at any stage. Again, this vagueness is probably not accidental on the part of the school`s disciplinary powers. Mrs Coakley stressed the importance of language. Her advice was for us to think

more about the language we use because it's the key vehicle of discourse; however the type of importance she's affording it politically is a closing down rather than an opening up of language. "I firmly believe that good communication between home and school is necessary, particularly if we are out of the norm we should tell the school what the situation is" (Mrs Regan, Cogito College). This mother suggests that the parent/s initiate communication with the school and let them know if there is anything 'unusual' about their family setup. Most interviewees associated school/home with trouble, which is another way of distancing relations between both parties. I think it is also important that the partnership between parent/s and schools is revisited so that parent associations are not just working with the agenda of the school institution, but are invited to challenge and contest school policies which are not agreeable to all concerned. The voices on the elected school Boards need to represent all parent/s, if they are to fulfil their function as envisaged in The Education Act (1998). I also believe that there should be more transparency in relation to the information parent/s give to the school when their son/daughter is being enrolled. Parent/s should be made aware of how and when this information is disseminated among members of staff.

Students also need to be informed about how schools operate family profiling and are entitled to know that many, or in some schools, all, staff members (in keeping with *Child Protection Guidelines, 2004/2011*), are privy to their files, as are outside agencies, when necessary. Adults need to listen to the concerns and views of young people as expressed in Chapter Six, and involve them in school/family agendas, as suggested by Neale (2002), Devine (2009) and Maes and Buysse (2011). This is also pertinent for educators and parent/s, in light of the thirty first Amendment to the Constitution (Children), (2012), which recognises children's` rights and citizenship. Post structural understandings of student agency become necessary for school staff. Legally also, school leaders have to be aware that issues such as custody rights and child endangerment discourses should be well managed and not crisis driven. Despite the fact that schools are increasingly enrolling students from a multitude of family entities, they are not appearing to be proactive in preparation or in expertise regarding the challenges which family diversity may present for educational establishments. Family and marital status are one of the nine areas outlined in the Equal Status Acts (2000/2004) for attention and improvement. Schools need to re-imagine how families could be understood and represented in their discourses and practices. School authorities and government also need to realise that they must take non-traditional families seriously, and not as a negative, narrow construct, which ends up creating new forms of recognition which further oppress them. Educational

discourses need to think beyond the traditional family if their policies and curricular materials are to support and include the many students whose family identity falls outside the schools' defined notions of 'the family'.

Reconceptualising the ways in which families at schools and in society are defined and framed is very urgent for school personnel so that certain family members are not positioned in a double bind or mis-recognised. The campaigning coalition called "*All Families Matter*" which is presently calling for a change in *The Irish Constitution* so that all families can be recognised and protected under Irish law should help to bring about positive family discourses, which will have a knock-on effect on schools. Schools' non-recognition and lack of acceptance for diversity, reflects and compounds a wider social rejection and misunderstanding about family diversity which needs to be challenged and transformed. It is the non-recognition by the school, through invisibility, that best sums up these family experiences. It is an injustice to all members of diverse families when the school institution fails to value their entity, as well as adding a discursive pressure which detracts from a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

4). Re-imagining family practices in schools

My findings suggest that, at present, schools are compounding the problems which non-traditional families are facing in society due to their being associated with deficit or risk discourses. This is not what was initially envisaged as the aim of PC. "*Rather it was seen as completing an education which is stunted by a conventional curriculum limited to the academic subjects*" (Collins and McNeff, 1999, p. 22). My findings suggest that PC practices are not "completing" students' education, but are actually compounding the worst aspects of the education system by silencing difference and stratifying families. Pastoral Care practices in schools tend to manage and assimilate rather than meaningfully value family differences. Code words such as parents or guardian enable educators to talk around family in ways that are perceived to be safer and less threatening. Non-traditional family entities are obscured and silenced by many patterns of discourse in schools. "*This system of operations permits one to act upon the actions of others...Every relation of power puts into operation differentiations which are at the same time its conditions and its results*" (Foucault, 1982).

The apparent homogenous discourse of one acceptable, ideal family type needs to be disrupted and replaced. Schools, as key transmitters of social values, could play a much more

positive and informative role in changing public perceptions and discourses about family diversity. Schools' Pastoral Care practices should create inclusive discourses so that all students can be open about their family composition. My findings suggest that this is not the experience of the students that I interviewed. Their accounts disrupt the normative school-home relations and assumptions; thereby providing what Foucault terms a counter-discourse. The pastoral care discourses which claim to help students and their families within schools are reported as suppressing family differences as opposed to valuing and integrating family diversity, within the wider context of social inclusion. Rethinking Pastoral Care discourses and practices needs to become a reality in schools in light of the data I gathered. The advocates for Pastoral Care, including Collins and Mc Niff (1999) envisioned it as a life-giving experience;

“Educative relationships are those in which the responses are life-giving for all and enable each person to develop those potentialities of humanity, in a way that is reciprocal and danger-free to all participants” (p. 49).

Questioning the dominant-discourses and describing the possibilities of that- which- was might no longer be, are the ruptures which Foucault describes in his genealogy as the catalysts' for change in truth and power, so that other possibilities around family practices in schools can be considered. It is by identifying and naming these oppressive discourses of power that individuals provide contradictory ones which could challenge the subjugated knowledges of family living and in doing so contradict the entrenched silences and injustices around non-traditional families and the established 'truths' which construct them as different or deficient. The quality of family and personal relationships which students referred to, and whom researchers such as Smart (2003, 2004) advocated as a priority, could be incorporated into the care practices in schools to balance the discourses of risk assessment and negatives which are rooted in questionable knowledge bases driven by fear of familial and social change (Fahy, Keilthy and Polek, 2012). These new discourses and spaces could be developed to affirm and value the existence of all family compositions. Diverse families who are successful do not seem to be represented in our educational institutions, so new curricular constructs should seek to rectify this by including a variety of family set-ups and integrate diversity as an aspect of every-day family life. For example, Fox, one of the boys I interviewed from a non-normative family was an example of a well-adjusted teenager. Students like him have no reason to be brought to the attention of school authorities, so they are assumed to be from a normative family. Schools should recognise and support the many different types of family that Irish society presents as an ethical and moral issue. Their major cause of mis-recognition

of family difference is due to negative discourses because the problematic scenarios are the only ones brought to the attention of school staff; the balancing arguments are not heard; or as Mr Hurley Principal (Hawthorn Heights) implied, do not need to be heard. I am arguing that they do need to be heard, in the interest of justice for all families in school contexts.

5). Re-conceptualising the governance of family difference in the wider research literature

The validity of the negative discourses and theories around non-traditional family types needs to be counter-balanced from a post-structuralist perspective, so that counter discourses can be heard “*Good reasons can be adduced that legitimate such exercises of power, which is not to say that these good reasons cannot be called into question or their specific applications criticized*” (Ransom 1997, p.11). The ways in which schools interpret family ideology and developmental theories can have a powerful impact in deploying `truths` about good families, and connecting the normative family to the good student, thus encouraging society to equate academic achievement with family stability (Chapter One). These `truths` become repeatable in particular ways, such as through curricular materials or pastoral care practices, so the effects of how it is deployed need to be examined. Certain `truths` still seem to be embedded in the DES policies, in the mind-set of teachers, in curricular materials relating to families in Pastoral Care, SPHE, RSE and in general subject textbooks. Conceptual frameworks which built on dichotomies such as normal-abnormal, good-bad, adult-child, private-public etc. need to be left behind so that a pluralistic perspective which appreciates pragmatic differences and commonalities is researched and recognized. Language classes, Home Economics texts, SPHE materials and Religious views could all offer balancing arguments on family diversity such as safety, quality time with parent/s and personal growth as mentioned by the students, and the work of post-structural researchers such as Smart (2004), should to be made part of the dominant discourse. The current revision of the Junior Certificate may be a very opportune time for the state and DES to consider introducing a module on family studies to educate students on the anthropological findings of current research. These educational discourses could help to dispel the ideology around the `perfect` or `normal` family, so that society could be educated to overcome some of the socially induced pressures on non-normative families in schools.

Educational institutional practices, particularly negative teacher attitudes to diversity and the structural framing of deficit around family status need to be challenged if the fluidity of new

family identifications is to be recognised and included at all levels of society. Positive family changes need to be recognized and responded to in future educational and legal policies in educational settings if structural, discursive and ideological change is to happen. This, I believe has to begin with a change in the attitude and assumptions of school staff. They need to be educated to reconceptualise family change as something which is not new or to be feared, since they create the atmosphere around acceptable and unacceptable discourses. Teachers need to be educated to transmit the message that there is no such thing as an ideal family, that it is a social construct which has changed in response to cultural, economic and religious discourses throughout history and that the changes which family compositions experience are part of a larger socio-cultural process, so should not be individualized or suppressed.

Teachers `positional lens`, as researched by Glazier (2005), need to be readjusted, so that they can understand family type diversity from the perspective of their students. This positioning becomes necessary in order to reconceptualise the ways in which families are defined, constructed and framed, because whatever issues young people are dealing with in their family life (as well as other pertinent social issues) tend to be compounded, not alleviated, by school attempts to compensate for what is perceived as deficit. Sleeter (2012) quotes the success rates of teachers who succeed in engaging effectively with students. She claims that *“Students need teachers who can relate to their families and communities, and read them as well as their families in culturally accurate ways”* (2012, p.214). Counter-discourses to the normative/deviant images of families need to be seen, spoken and heard, so as to provide a more balanced and humane attitude to family living. Research and education programmes could establish dialogues across different perspectives in order to accord recognition to diverse points of departure, and negate the categorizing and containing of `family difference`. The equating of family difference with deficit may be due to the absence of any real alternative discourse to challenge such constructs, a lack of socio-cultural research in this area and a void in Continual Professional Development (CPD) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Broader research perspectives could be brought to bear on their education and an understanding of change in family compositions as a positive could be amplified and circulated so that prejudice in classroom and the positioning of students from non-normative families into excluded spaces, could be ended. There is also a need for greater funding for strong teacher preparation among more diverse teacher candidates, together with research on teacher education which includes strategies for designing curricula across all types of cultural

and familial diversities. School staff should be educated to provide balancing arguments on the importance of understanding and valuing family diversity on the grounds of health and safety in the areas of school bullying and in domestic violence. School staff could be educated about emancipatory and qualitative ways of thinking and talking about family within school settings so that the family position of all students and everyone who wants a family to call their own can be advanced in the process. Adoption advocates such as Laidlaw (2006) claim that “*All children learn when all families are respected*” (p.49).

The importance of the emotional and cultural aspects of living needs to be incorporated into educational research, so that teaching can be linked to students` home lives, as argued in Chapter One. Theorists such as Smyth (2006), Ecclestone (2011) and Mulcahy (2012) all treat of the importance for teachers to attend to the identity and affective dimensions of schooling; they mention student drop-out, cultural discontinuities and affective spaces in relation to student engagement and happiness at school. Critical inquiry into the meaning of what is important in education, together with school space for reflection and dialogue on social issues such as injustice; inclusion and political action are also needed. They could be incorporated into teacher training programmes and prioritised alongside the marketised models of education and the normative impact of PISA (Breakspear, 2012, p.27). Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007) contest the European constructs of students as autonomous, self-determining human beings whose key educational aim is limited to cognitive skills. They stress the importance of emotions in and for education since schools are relational organisations. “*Ironically, the primacy of love, care and solidarity is often most visible in its absence*” (p.11). This too can be said of family talk and the importance of family authenticity in teacher/student relations as well as between school/home communications.

The question of how schools can best serve the needs of all families should be put forward for policy makers so that schools can meet the challenges presented by family diversity, instead of expecting families to adjust to the criteria of the school. Family members should not be positioned in double binds as a result of standardization targets. Instead schools should employ positive rhetoric to actively embrace family diversity so as to make connections across the learning and lived experiences of all students. In a study on; “*Well-being and post-primary schooling*” (O`Brien, 2008), every category of young person in the sample across age, gender and rural/urban location, named families as most significant to their well-being. This reflects what the students in my study said in how often family is mentioned by them

throughout their days, particularly with close friends. It also reiterates what Bernardes (1997) said when he questioned “*How can it be that something so central to our lives, so powerful in driving our hopes and ambitions, is banished to the sidelines?*” (p. 27).

6). Conclusion

My research journey into family discourses in post-primary schools touched on personal and professional aspects of my life. I was both gladdened and saddened to discover that, like myself and my daughters, many students and adults are made to feel like outsiders in their schools, due to a lack of education for, and tolerance of, various family compositions. It was consoling, yet disheartening, to know that this issue is collective and national one, as opposed to individual. I felt a great connection with the individuals I interviewed, and I believe that my honesty in relation to my own family situation helped them to be more open and trusting of me.

Foucault’s post-structuralist lens provided me with an excellent framework from which to analyze and consider other possibilities for understanding family formations. It was through his lens and listening to the experiences of school members, that I became convinced that, what I had known implicitly, but could not argue explicitly before this, was how unjust our education system is, in its administration of care and respect for certain family members. I discovered that any form of serious dialogue in Education fora in relation to changing family entities is mysteriously absent, especially given that Ireland claims to be a pluralist state. Schools seemed to be more interested in containing family difference, than in meeting the challenges which family type diversity presents. There is very little inquiry as to how schools can best serve the needs of the non-normative family.

There was also a definite reticence to define the school-home relationship or to explain what school ethos means for families. This hesitancy could be a political manoeuvre which suppresses and mis-recognises certain family identities, even though school authorities may feel they are being respectful of all family formations. Powerful rhizomes produce intended and unforeseen effects such as parent, and sometimes teacher, uncertainty as to the acceptance of their family status, and fears around the impact on students’ chances of social and academic success. Given the unprecedented growth in the variety of family formations it would be expected that the advocacy for understanding and provision for education in this

area would be a priority for the Department of Education and all educational institutions which purport to cherish all students equally (Education Act, 1998). It would appear from my research findings that the traditional ideology of family and the deficit theories surrounding any other family form is still very much to the fore front of educators` psyche. As witnessed by the interviewees in Chapter Six, Seven and Eight, the dominant typologies of family and the privatization of it, remain at the core of their schools, endorsed in the curricular materials, with complex linkages interwoven with other social concern assemblages.

Finally, I am arguing that family policy discourses need to be critiqued and interventions introduced, to reposition non-traditional families in schools, so that students do not have to deny their family identity, or fear peer/teacher rejection if their family is different from that of the norm in school. Counter-discourses such as changes in Pastoral Care discourses in schools, research into family diversity, better communication between school and homes, and teacher education for inclusion and diversity are all areas for re-consideration, so that student diversity can be valued as a positive rather than feared as a negative. Laidlaw (2006) captures my hopes for family valuing and recognition in her assertion;

“Embracing, supporting, and exploring the diversities that exist in classrooms can enlarge the space of the possible, and create opportunities for the emergence of new thinking and new ways of acting in the world. Thinking about difference, differently, and using difference, to make a difference” (p.52).

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Appendix 1

Patterns among all 3 Case Studies

Student Patterns

Codes	Categories	Themes/concepts	Theory
No words	Student Identity	Silencing	Foucault-Power
Silence	Classroom talk	Normalization	Panopticism
Taboo	Peers reaction	Assumptions	Disciplining Families
Hurt	Sensitive/Private	Standardization	Bio-pedagogies
Names	School books	Included/Excluded	Adjustment methods
Enrolment	Vagueness	Family Identity	II/Legitimate voices
Embarrassment	Admin.procedures	Curricular policies	Constructivism
Different	Counsellors	Belonging	Developmental
Negative	Fears	Risk discourses	Contamination

Educator Patterns

Codes	Categories	Themes/concepts	Theory
No definite guidelines	Professionalism	Silencing	Foucault-Power
Silences	Experts-safe	Normalization	Panopticism
Names-confusion	Conform	Assumptions	Disciplining Families
Enrolment-standards	Futuristic	Standardization	Bio-pedagogies
Private v. Public	Exam pressures-no space for affective	Conforming to school's ideals/ethos	Adjustment methods
Different-trouble	Public/Private-vagueness/awkward	Included/Excluded	II/Legitimate voices
Negative-for all	Meetings-fears-what is expected on each side	School Identity	Constructivism
School knows best	Uncertainty-no man's land	Policies answer problems	Developmental
Legalities-safe mode	Teacher identity	Inclusive	Contamination
Busy-academic targets	Difference framed as problematic for academic and social adjustment	Risk discourses	Purpose of schooling?
Time-wasters/stress		Legalities	
Forms-legalities, formalities		Good/Bad parents n Good/Bad teachers	
Insecurities re employment n ethos			

Parent Patterns

Codes	Categories	Themes/concepts	Theory
Formalities/Official	Concerns	Silencing	Foucault-Power
Silence	Good of young person	Normalization	Panopticism
Names	Experts	Assumptions	Disciplining Families
Enrolment	Trust	Standardization	Bio-pedagogies
Private	Future	Included/Excluded	Adjustment methods
Different	Examinations	Family Identity	Il/Legitimate voices
Negative	Public/Private	Policies answer problems	Constructivism
Tell all-scrutiny	Meetings	Belonging or not	Developmental
Legalities	Uncertainty	Risk discourses	Contamination
Busy	Parental confidence	Legalities	
Time	Problems/Fears	Good/Bad parents	
Forms			

Appendix 2

Survey Questions on Family Diversity for Students

This is a survey on different Family units, to try and raise peoples` awareness of it in Ireland today, and to try and find out in what ways Educators, Students and Parents/Guardians can help to make Post-Primary Schools a better place to be in for Students from all sorts of Family backgrounds.

Family Diversity refers to all different types of family unit`s e.g.

Nuclear - Father, Mother and Children all living together.

Divorced /Separated-Mother or Father living away from each other, with the children with one parent or moving between both.

Single Parent-One parent living with children

Cohabiting -Mother and Father living together, not married.

Reconstituted /Binuclear -Two households which form after a divorce.

Same-Sex –Where both parents are the same gender.

Other forms -Fostered, or living with grandparents or.....

1. Who do you live with?

2. Which of the following family styles best describes yours?

a. Single-Unit b. Nuclear c. Reconstituted

d. Same-Sex e. Other

3. If you had a different family set up to your fellow students, would you feel comfortable talking about it in class?

4. What, in your opinion, is the most difficult aspect of family diversity for a post-primary student?

5. Do you think that teachers treat students differently if they come from an alternative family type?

6. Are there any subject materials or words which could be offensive to a pupil who is sensitive about his/her family set-up?

7. Have you heard any comments in your school day which could be offensive to students from alternative families?

8. Have you heard any comments which showed understanding of alternative families?

9. If students are moving between two homes, what problems does that present for them in school?

10. Do you think that students` concentration and/or academic achievement is affected in school as a result of moving?

11. What can students do to make this system work for them?

12. If there are difficulties, what changes could schools introduce to help students?

13. Any other comments or insights?

14. I hope to interview some students during the next academic year, if you are interested, please give your name here.

The research method used here is a survey with spaces between each question to allow for the student`s response. They are advised of their right not to participate, and assured of confidentiality. Question fourteen is used as an invitation to any student who is willing to do a semi-structured interview with me. I was be present in the classroom at that time enabled me to help some students understand questions. The questionnaires were gathered, and the students thanked for their co-operation. They were labelled, dated and filed for analysis.

Questionnaires

Before handing the questionnaire to senior students in their classroom setting, I gave them an explanatory sheet to explain the aim of my research, and to clarify the sociological definitions of family structures. I remained in the classroom while the survey was being conducted, so as to allow for any questions which may have emerged as the students wrote their responses (See appendix 3)

Explanatory Sheet

This is a survey on different Family units, to try and raise peoples` awareness of it in Ireland today, and to try and find out in what ways Educators, Students and Parents/Guardians can help to make Post-Primary Schools a better place to be in for Students from all sorts of Family backgrounds.

Family Diversity refers to all different types of family structures, for example

Nuclear - Father, Mother and Children all living together.

Divorced /Separated-Mother or Father living away from each other, with the children with one parent or moving between both.

Single Parent-One parent living with children

Cohabiting -Mother and Father living together, not married.

Reconstituted /Binuclear -Two households which form after a divorce.

Same-Sex –Where both parents are the same gender.

Other forms -Fostered, or living with grandparents or.....

Appendix 3

Responses to Survey questions on Family Diversity from Students

Q1: Who do you live with?

Students in all the schools that I surveyed came from mainly nuclear family units, then reconstituted unions, then single parent families and a few from extended families. Two came from same-sex unions, (School 2 and 4) and one girl wrote of living with her Mum and her brother who is gay. (School 3)

The reconstituted comprised of Mam and boyfriend, or husband with step- siblings, or Step-Dad and step brothers or sisters, and Dad and Step-Mum.

Q2: Which of the following family styles best describes yours?

- a. Single-Unit b. Nuclear c. Reconstituted
d. Same-Sex e. Other

Pupils filled in the box to indicate which family style they belonged to. Some ticked the single-unit box and wrote with Mum beside it, and ticked reconstituted and with Dad beside that.

Q3; If you had an alternative family set up to your fellow students would you feel comfortable talking to them about it?

The majority of answers here said, not in class, but with friends, yes. Some said they would have no problem talking about their family in class if the topic came up.

Many replied that it depended on the particular situation and if they felt comfortable with the teacher and the class.

One respondent said “Yes I do because I have nothing to be ashamed (of?)”. Another pupil wrote “At times, but sometimes my family are embarrassing and should not be mentioned publicly”. This same student wrote “I’ve seen abusive relationships” (School 4)

Q4: What, in your opinion, is the most difficult aspect of family diversity for a post-primary student?

Question four produced a wide array of answers. The pupils in all four schools felt that the most difficult aspect of family diversity was the feeling of being different to everyone else. “Trying to fit in and be like everyone else”(School 2) or being different to “normal” families (School 3) Many mentioned same-sex families or divorced/separated as being the most very difficult. “I should know”, was the reply of one girl with a same-sex family. (School 4) Many highlighted the emotional and practical difficulties of living between two homes. “Being stuck in the middle and having to choose which one” (school 4) “Having to spend time with both families” (School 3), this student who lives between two homes wrote, “I found it difficult to call my Dad now, `Dad`, and not by his name, though he was the male figure in my life”. Pupils in all schools mentioned parents fighting, or giving out about the other parent, as a difficulty. A good number of students mentioned not being able to see both parents

everyday as another hardship. Some mentioned bullying and people talking about their family, and a few boys in school 1 mentioned not having a father figure or role model in life. The practical difficulties of a student moving between houses and forgetting stuff, feeling stressed and losing out on time with friends were all considerations. Some also mentioned not having any say in their lives, not knowing his/her rights or if a step-parent has legal rights over them.

Q5: Do you think that teachers treat students differently if they come from an alternative family type? Explain your answer.

Most pupils said no, that teachers “don’t think too much about a student’s background” (School 4) or “Yes if they knew they would feel more sensitive about it” (School 2). Most students felt that the teachers would be very sensitive and understanding if they knew the student was going through a tough time, but a few qualified it by saying it depended on the teacher, or on who the student was.

Q6: Are there any subject materials or words which could be offensive to a student who is sensitive about his/her family?

In question six many subjects such as Religion, SPHE, Language classes, Maths and Home Economics make reference to family, or ask students to describe theirs. Teachers assume that there are two parents at home, “Get your parents to sign that” (School 1), or “Ask you Mum and Dad to ...”(School 4).Some letters to home start with `Dear Parents`. Mothers` Day and Fathers` Day preparations and references to ideal families can be upsetting for pupils from alternative family types. One student wrote “The nuclear always seem happy” (School 2). Mentioning divorce, bereavement, same-sex, adopted can all be difficult. “Teachers assume there are two parents and if one is no longer there or has passed away, then that may be an issue” (School 3) Religion was the subject most often mentioned in school 1 and school 3 as a subject which touches on sensitive topics. “Religion in general is extremely offensive to divorced/co-habituating or same-sex families” (School 1). “The families are all fairytale style. Growing up my real Dad was not around and I was adopted by my Mum`s husband” (School 4). Some students qualified the impact by saying it depended on how sensitive the person is.

Q7: Have you heard any comments in your school day which could be offensive to students from alternative families? If yes, give examples.

A lot of students said no here. Some qualified it by saying not at my school. Some said it is never mentioned. Other students gave a list of homophobic words such as bender, gay, lesbian. Quite a number of students said yes but gave no explanation. In school 3 a fostered girl wrote that people had said to her, “*You have no Mam or Dad*”, and in the same school the student who had mentioned the difficulty of calling her present Dad, `Dad`, had the following comment thrown at her, but not at school, “*He`s not your real dad anyway*”. Other comments such as “*I d hate if my parents split up*”, or “*Same-sex parents are weird*” were prevalent in all schools. “*If someone says my Dad isn`t with us, people are like ooh and don`t know what to say*” (School 2). Others said that their school understands diversity. More said that assumptions of plural parents could be offensive.

Q8: Have you heard any comments which showed understanding of alternative families? Explain.

A lot of no's but a majority of yes answers. In relation to teachers, comment such as "Tell whoever is at home", "Parent/s/guardian", "*Teachers understand if you have left books in the other parent's house*" (School 1). "*We did family trees, and the teacher said not to do a side of your family if you had a problem with it*" (School 2). Many mentioned friends or fellow students supporting them, not making a big deal or mocking them about it. The issue of silence was referred to often. "*Yes, but rarely. People are stuck with this idea of a perfect family, and are slow to change*" (School 4). "*Not that I've heard. People don't really talk about that kind of thing. I think anyone would understand though*" (School 3).

Q9: If students are moving between two homes, what problems do that present for them in school?

The answers here ranged from practical issues of uniforms, books, collecting children, distance from the school, or disturbing homework. "*I'm moving between homes and find that I leave books in the other house that I need*"(School 4) Others mentioned the impact it had on their social life and losing out on time with friends, "*Not being able to go places at the weekends with friends if you have to spend time with the other parent*".(School 1)

Q10: Do you think that students' concentration and/or academic achievement is affected in school as a result of moving? If yes, say why.

The vast majority here agreed that concentration would be affected, especially if the family change was a recent event. "They might feel upset some days if their parents fight or if they reflect on what life was like with two parents" (School 4). The manner in which parents dealt with each other was a major qualifier here. "If the separation is bitter, you may not be able to concentrate" (School 3). If the parents work together to make it easier for the student, plan ahead more and talk to teachers about circumstances at home" (School 1). Some students said it was easier to study in one house, more than the other and others said the disruptions in routine affected concentration, "Yes, if you are settled into study and are picked up to go to another house, in the middle of it, it's hard to settle back into study again" (School 2)

Q11: What can students do to make this system work for them?

"Talk about it more, don't bottle it up", and "Keep organized and talk to both parents" (School 3). "Talk to parents or a trusted person about how it affects them", and "Get on with it". (School 1) Many students said to let the teacher know, while a few said don't let the teachers know. Practical suggestions were offered, such as "Think ahead, use one bag and have a check list" (School 2) Plan ahead more (school 3).

Q12: If there are difficulties, what changes could schools introduce to help pupils?

Answers here ranged from talk about it more, to going to the school counselor. "Mention it more in class and make it more recognized" (School 3), "Be more educated and aware of different types of family" (School 1). "Try to make the subject less of a taboo and people need to talk about it" (School 4). "Actually listen to the student instead of snapping" (School 2), financial considerations (School 1), put less pressure on students (school 2)

Q13: Any other comments or insights?

Most answered no, here.

In relation to teachers some students mentioned that they need to be more aware of differences and changes and not to react negatively about an unusual situation. “Teachers must first be comfortable with ideas of family, so not to be surprised, as it may be offending”(School 4) “ The teachers should be more sensitive to pupils who are going through a divorce/separation because it may take time to get used to it”(School 3). One student said “I think school life and private life should be separate” (School 2), while another wrote, “If there is one subject that students don` t mock others about, I think it is this one” (School 1).

In relation to family life one student commented, “*With separated situations it is often better if the parents don` t go near each other, same with adoption*” (School 4) “*People can often be more happy after a divorce*” (School 4) “*Your bonds with each parent may grow because now you have more time alone with them*” (School 1).

Some comments were liberal such as “*I think it is very positive that gay couples are finally getting their rights*” (School 4), and “*It shouldn` t matter who you love, same-sex or otherwise, but it shouldn` t be the child`s fault and shouldn` t be bullied about it*” (School 4), while a few more were more conservative in tone, “*I don` t think same-sex couples should have children. It is unfair and stressful for the child*” (School 3)

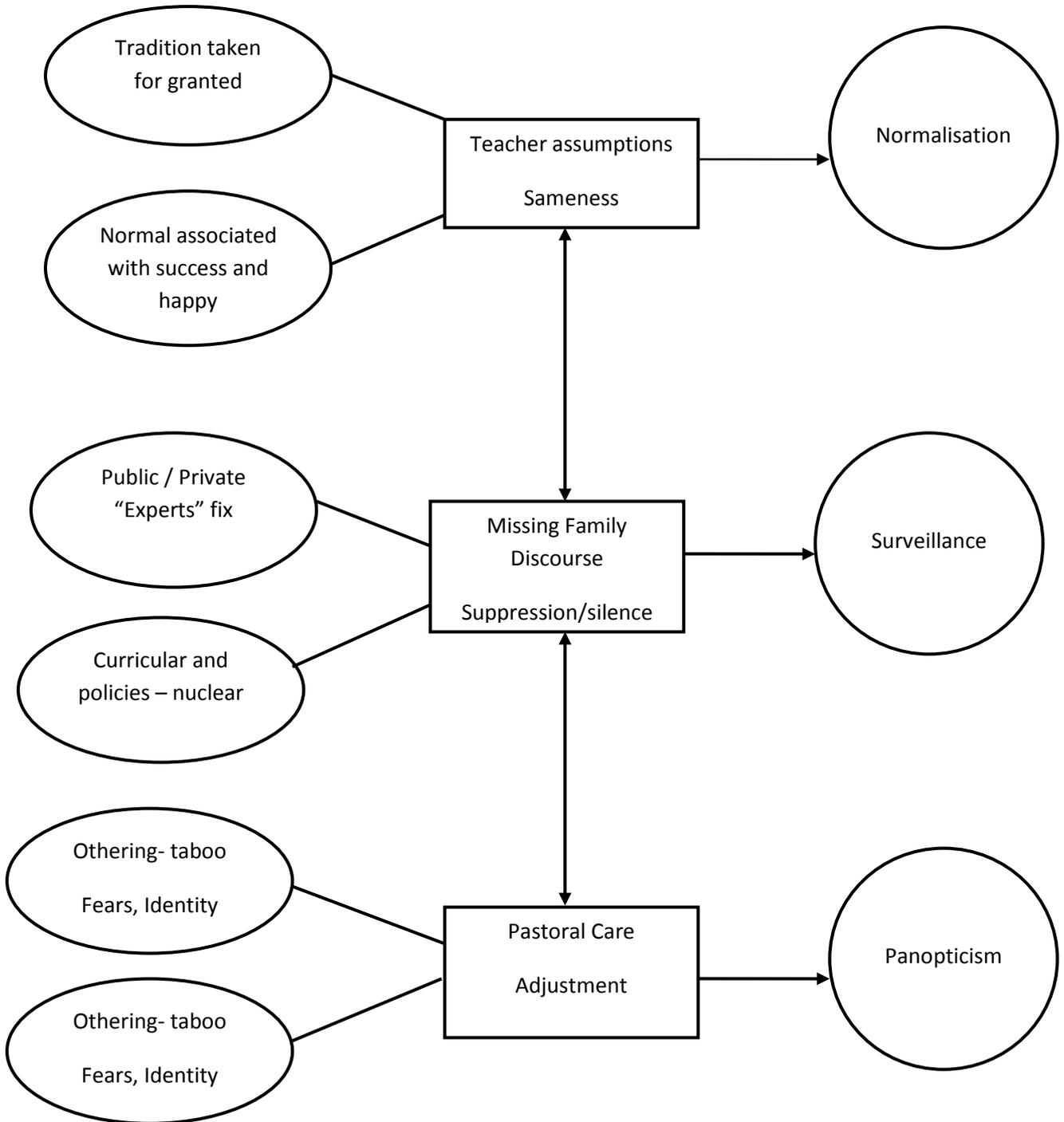
Q.14 I hope to interview some students during the next academic year, if you are interested, please give your name here.

Most left this section blank. One wrote; “*No interview, never*”.

About 8-10 students in 3 schools gave their names here. In school 3 I left this question out, by request of the Principal. Of the number who signed up, when it came to returning the permission slip with their Signature together with that of a parent/guardian`s, about half of that overall 10% committed to an interview with me.

Appendix 4

Coding Student Discourses



Appendix 5 Student Written Consent

Date April 2010-April 2012

Name; Ann -Marie Desmond

Ph.D student at University College Cork

Dear Students,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study, which is part of my Ph.D research. The purpose of this study is to investigate how you, the students in a post-primary school feel about alternative family forms in Ireland today and what changes you feel are being made in your school, or should be made, to deal with the challenges that these changes bring.

Alternative family forms, or family type diversity involves single parent families, divorced/separated parents, same-sex families, reconstituted families(two households blend) and any other style family which may not be as accepted as the traditional type family.

If you agree to be interviewed for this study please sign the permission slip at the end of this sheet, with a parent`s/guardian`s approval. Then return the permission slip to your Principal.

The information you provide is confidential. When I write my thesis about this study I will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

I thank you for your consideration, and I hope that other students may benefit in the future from your suggestions and insights as a result of this study.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

Signature of Student:

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Appendix 6

Parent Permission Sheet for Student Interviewees

Date April 2010-April 2012

Name; Ann -Marie Desmond

Ph.D student at University College Cork

Dear Students,

I am inviting your son/daughter to participate in a research study, which is part of my Ph.D research. The purpose of this study is to investigate students in a post-primary school feel about alternative family forms in Ireland today, and what changes they feel are being made in schools, or should be made, to deal with the challenges that these changes bring.

Alternative family forms, or family type diversity involves single parent families, divorced/separated parents, same-sex families, reconstituted families(two households blend) and any other style family which may not be as accepted as the traditional type family.

If you agree to allow your son/daughter to be interviewed for this study please sign the permission slip at the end of this sheet, giving parent/guardian approval. Then return the permission slip to your Principal.

The information the students` provide is confidential. When I write my thesis about this study I will do so in such a way that they cannot be identified. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary, and they can withdraw their participation at any time.

I thank you for your co-operation, and I hope that schools may benefit in the future from your suggestions and insights as a result of this study.

I agree to allow my son/daughter to take part in the above study.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Appendix 7

Suggestions for Interview Questions for Students

- Q1. Who do you live with?
- Q2. In what ways is your family similar to the other families around you?
- Q3. In what ways is your family different?
- Q4. Is difference a good thing or not so good? Explain
- Q5. What is the one thing you love best about living with your family?
- Q6. What is the one thing you would change if you could?
- Q7. Do you chat to your fellow students about your family?
- Q8. About how many times each day do you or someone else refer to family?
- Q9. Do you know many peers from alternative families?
- Q10. Are some of them fellow students?
- Q11. Do you think they feel comfortable when family is mentioned in class?
- Q12. Do they talk openly about their family to their friends?
- Q13. Do they talk openly in class about their family?
- Q14. Should there is more openness about family structures?
- Q15. What is the best aspect of alternative living do you think?
- Q16. What would the difficulties be?
- Q17. Should parents stay together for the sake of the children?
- Q18. If parents are constantly fighting is that good for the children?
- Q19. which would teenagers prefer-their parents together even though they fight alot, or for them to live apart?
- Q20. What aspects of their teenagers` lives should parents living apart take into consideration?, for example, student life etc.
- Q21. Do you think that teenagers should have a voice or rights in the decisions affecting their family life?
 - At what age?
 - In what circumstances?
- Q22. If there are difficulties in a family, should they let the school know?
- Q23. Should schools offer to help?

Q24. In what areas or in what ways could the school help?

Q25. Have you any ideas about how schools could communicate better with parent/s or guardian/s about family issues?

Q26. Have you any suggestions regarding the ways in which parent/s or guardian/s could improve on communication with the school?

Q27. What topics or subjects present difficulties for students from alternative families?

Q28. What are the advantages of educators knowing a student`s set-up?

Q29. What are the disadvantages?

Q30. What mistakes are school secretaries likely to make if they are not informed about a student`s family identity?

Q31. To what extent do you think family structure influences a student`s academic success, his/her identity, his/her well-being?

Appendix 8

Parent Interviewee Written Consent

Date April 2010-April 2012

Name; Ann -Marie Desmond

Ph.D student at University College Cork

Dear Parent,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study, which is part of my Ph.D research. The purpose of this study is to investigate how parent/guardians, students and school staff in post-primary schools, feel about alternative family forms in Ireland today, and what changes they feel are being made, or should be made, to deal with the challenges that these changes bring.

Alternative family forms, or family type diversity involves single parent families, divorced/separated parents, same-sex families, reconstituted families(two households blend) and any other style family which may not be as accepted as the traditional type family.

If you agree to be interviewed for this study please sign the permission slip at the end of this sheet, giving your approval. Please return the permission slip to your school principal after signing it.

The information you provide is confidential. When I write my thesis about this study I will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

I thank you for your co-operation, and I hope that schools and families will benefit in the future from your suggestions and insights as a result of this study.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree to my interview being audio recorded.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

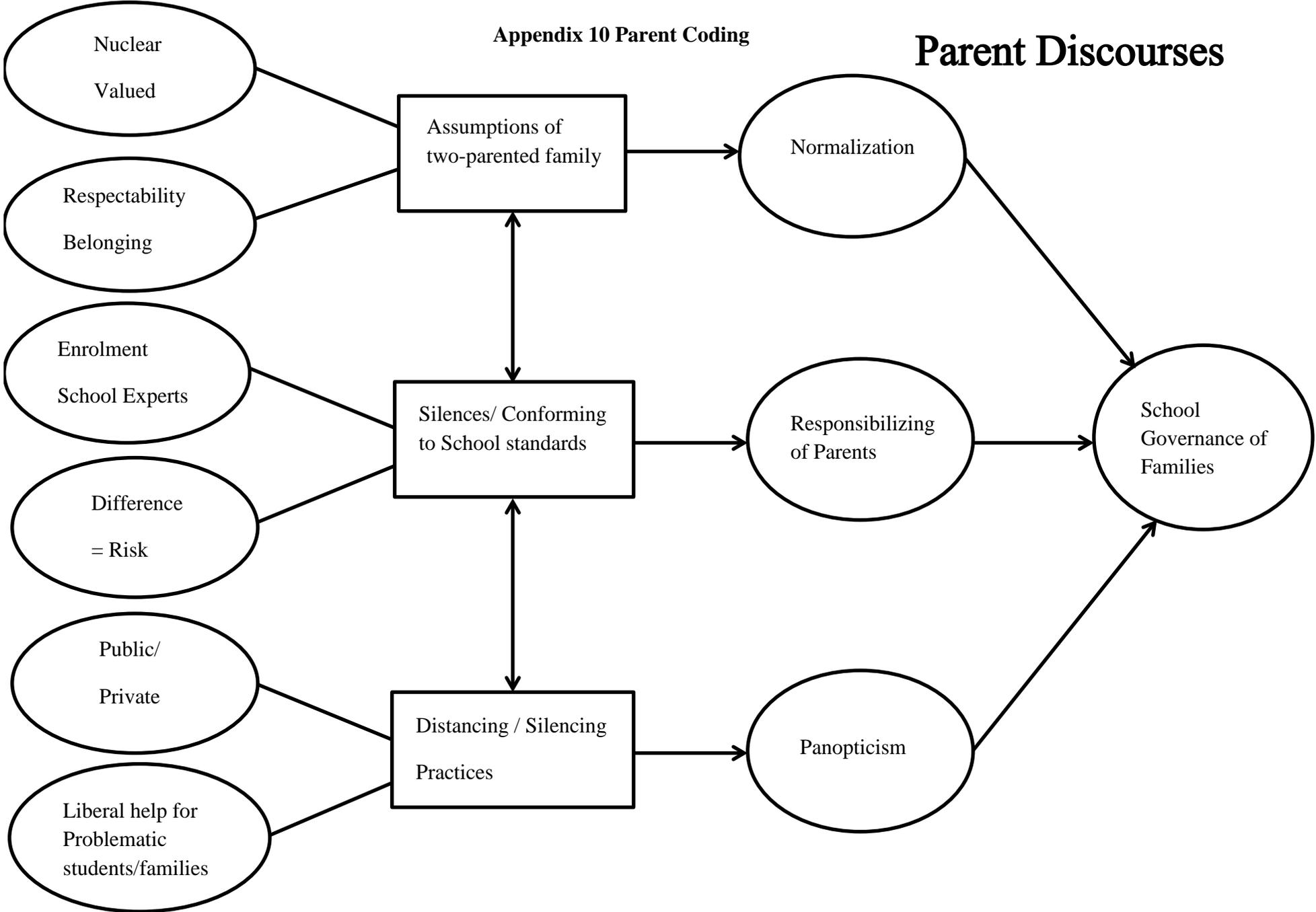
Appendix 9

Questions on Family Diversity for Parent/s/Guardian/s

1. What do you understand by the term `Family Unit Diversity?
2. Do you feel that the school authorities are sensitive and supportive of families?
3. Do you think families are treated differently if they have a different composition to most other students? Please explain.
4. Do Parents talk to fellow Parents or Guardians about changing family forms and their impact on Education?
5. If so, is most of the discussion about deficit outcomes or positive?
6. Please explain.
7. What difficulties do you think arise most around family diversity in a Post-Primary context?
8. What positive actions do your daughter`/son`s school take to help families?
9. What practical hints would you offer Educators to try and overcome difficulties in relation to family changes?
10. What aspects of school policy or curriculum need to be addressed in order to make family diversity better understood and recognised in schools?
11. What can parent/s or guardians do to help schools to better understand family diversity?
12. Has your daughter/son or any other individuals in your circle, raised issues around family diversity to you? Please explain.
13. What mistakes are secretaries or school authorities likely to make in light of the changing nature of families?
14. Any other insights?
15. What advice would you give to someone researching this topic?

Appendix 10 Parent Coding

Parent Discourses



Appendix 11

Date: October 2010- September 2012

Name: Ann-Marie Desmond

Ph. D student at UCC

Thank you for taking part in this research on family type diversity. The purpose of this research is to investigate, across three post-primary schools, the ways in which family discourse is being developed in educational circles.

Family type diversity involves single parent families, divorced/separated families, same-sex families, reconstituted families and any other different style family which may not be as accepted as the traditional style family.

This survey is intended for educators of teenagers from diverse homes with the hope of gaining an insight into how educators/schools are meeting the new challenges which this diversity presents.

Thank you in advance for your time and commitment.

All information collected in this survey will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Questions for School Staff

1. Does your school have a policy that caters for multiple family forms?
2. If yes, what does the policy say?
3. What considerations informed the development of the policy?
4. If no, would you like if the school had a policy on how to deal with children from alternative family entities?
5. Do students speak openly about their family group in your class or to you, outside of class?
6. What do you understand by family unit diversity?
7. Are parent/s, or guardians obliged to inform school management about the nature of the home which their child is coming from?
8. Would you consider your teaching colleagues to be sensitive to students from alternative families?
9. If so what has informed them of same?
10. If not, would you consider organising a staff development day to raise awareness of family diversity.
11. Have any student or family, to your knowledge, complained about lack of understanding of their family structure in your school?

12. What steps could your school take to improve tolerance of such diversity?
13. Are there any legal considerations for Educators/Clerical Staff to be aware of in relation to parents who are acrimonious to each other?
14. In what ways have changes in family entities impacted on your teaching?
15. Is the topic of family diversity ever dealt with at the meetings for teachers?
16. Do you think it should be?
17. Is there an adequate discourse surrounding family change in your school or do most people avoid it?
18. What aspects of family diversity need to be researched more?
19. What do you consider to be the most difficult aspect of school life for students from alternative families?
20. What could you as a teacher do to raise awareness of family diversity in educational circles?
21. What advice would you give to someone researching it?
22. Any other comments or insights?
23. I will be interviewing interested school staff at a later date. If you would like to be interviewed please write your name or number here.

Appendix 12- School Staff Written Consent Form

Date April 2010-April 2012

Name; Ann -Marie Desmond

Ph.D student at University College Cork

Dear Staff,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study, which is part of my Ph.D research. The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers, students and their families within post-primary schools, feel about alternative family forms in Ireland today, and what changes they feel are being made in schools, or should be made, to deal with such challenges.

Alternative family forms, or family type diversity involves single parent families, divorced/separated parents, same-sex families, reconstituted families(two households blend) and any other style family which may not be as accepted as the traditional type family.

If you agree to be interviewed for this study please sign the permission slip at the end of this sheet, giving your approval. Please return the permission slip to your school principal after signing it.

The information you provide is confidential. When I write my thesis about this study I will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

I thank you for your co-operation, and I hope that schools and families may benefit in the future from your suggestions and insights as a result of this study.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree to my interview being audio recorded.

Signature of Staff Member:

Appendix 13

Date: October 2010- September 2012

Name: Ann-Marie Desmond

Ph. D student at UCC

Thank you for taking part in this research on family type diversity. The purpose of this research is to investigate, across three Post-Primary Schools, the ways in which Family discourse is being developed in educational circles.

Family type diversity involves all family compositions: single parent divorced/separated, same-sex, reconstituted, fostered etc.

This survey is intended for administrative staff in Post-Primary Schools with the hope of understanding how you are meeting the new challenges which Family diversity presents.

Thank you in advance for your time and commitment.

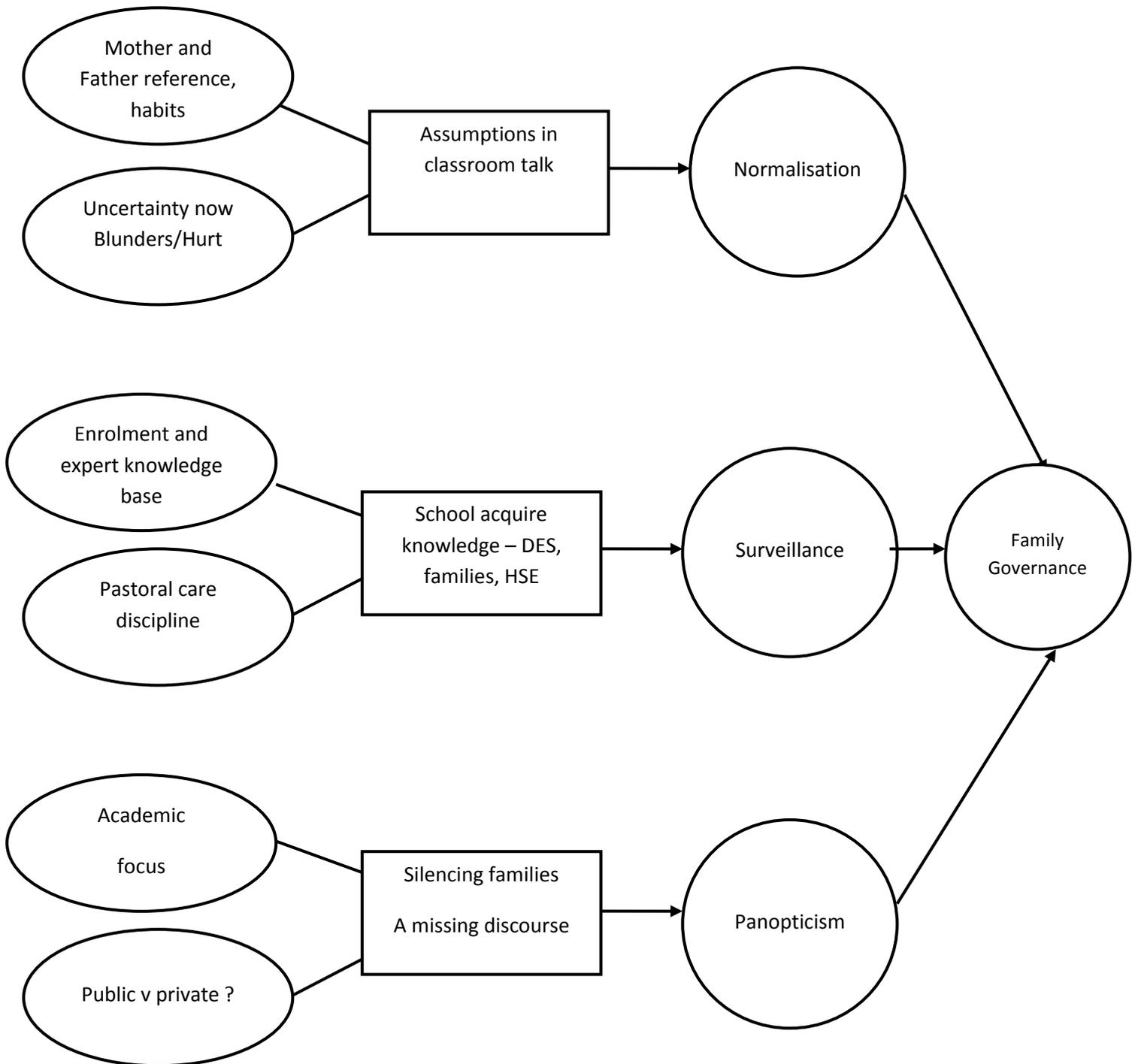
All information collected in this survey will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Questions for School Secretaries

1. Does your school have students from various family units?
2. What work practices does that present for you?
3. What considerations do you have to be mindful of?
4. What experiences have you had in relation to confusion with regards to a name change, pick up time, access or other legal considerations?
5. Do you encourage parent/guardian to be open about their family situation? Explain.
6. Would more education for such changes help school staff?
7. Are parent/s, or guardians obliged to inform school management about the nature of the family entity which the student comes from?
8. Has any student or family complained about lack of understanding by administrative staff for their family composition?
9. Are there any legal considerations for administrative staff to be aware of in relation to parents who are acrimonious to each other?
10. Would your principal alert you to certain family situations on the grounds of health and safety?
11. Is the topic of family diversity ever dealt with at the meetings for administrative staff?
12. Do you think it should be? Why?

13. Is there an adequate discourse surrounding family change in your school?
14. What aspects of family diversity need to be researched more?
15. What do you consider to be the most difficult aspect of school life for students from alternative families?
16. What could you as the front line of a school, do to make school life a little easier for these students and parent/s?
21. What advice would you give to someone researching it?
22. Any other comments or insights?
23. I will be interviewing interested Staff at a later date. If you would like to be interviewed please write your name or number here.

Appendix 14
Coding School Staff



Appendix 15

See no Family, Hear no Family, Speak no Family

See no family-Assumptions

Speak no family-Silences



Hear no family-Practices