

ABSTRACT

“Learning on the Run” refers to the educational experiences of the primary school children travelling along the agricultural show ‘circuits’ in ~~coastal~~ and western Queensland. This thesis examines those educational experiences by drawing on the voices of the show children, their parents, their home tutors and their teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education, which from 1989 to 1999 implemented a specialised program of Traveller education for these children (in 2000 a separate school was established for them).

The thesis focusses on the interplay among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of the show people’s itinerancy. It deploys Michel de Certeau’s (1984, 1986) concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ and Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1986a) notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ to interrogate the show people’s engagement with their absence of place, the construction of their otherness and forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about their schooling. Data gathering techniques included semi-structured interviews with forty-two people between 1992 and 2000 in seven sites in Queensland – Mackay, Bundaberg (over two years), Emerald, Brisbane, Rockhampton and Yeppoon – and document collection.

The thesis’s major finding is that the show people’s resistance and transformation of their marginalising experiences have enabled them to initiate and implement a significant counternarrative to the traditional narrative (and associated stereotypes) attending their itinerancy. This counternarrative has underpinned a fundamental change in their schooling provision, from a structure that worked to marginalise and disempower them to a specialised form of Traveller education. This change contributes crucially to understanding and theorising the spaces of itinerancy, and highlights the broader significance of the Queensland show people’s *“learning on the run”*.



**Central Queensland
UNIVERSITY**

**Learning on the Run:
Traveller Education for
Itinerant Show Children
in Coastal and Western Queensland**

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Doctor of Philosophy,
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with love and affection to
the memory of

MAURICE DANAHER

(28 September 1930 - 5 February 1988)

“Yet in my lineaments they trace
Some features of my father’s face.”

Lord Byron, “Parisina”

“–Adieu, dit le renard. Voicimon secret. Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu’avec le cœur. L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux. ...C’est le temps que tu as perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante. ...Les hommes ont oublié cette véritéMais tu ne dois pas l’oublier. Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que tu as apprivoisé. Tu es responsable de ta rose. . .”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, pp. 72-74

“When he [José Arcadio Buendia] became an expert in the use and manipulation of his instruments, he conceived a notion of space that allowed him to navigate across unknown seas, to visit uninhabited territories, and to establish relations with splendid beings without having to leave his study.”

Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, p. 4

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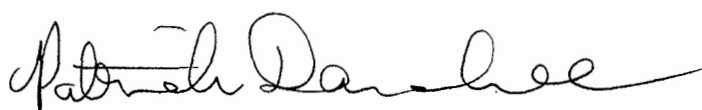
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DECLARATION

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work and that such work has not been previously submitted **as** a requirement for the award of a degree at Central Queensland University or any other institution of higher education.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patrick Danaher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrick" and last name "Danaher" clearly distinguishable.

(Patrick Danaher)

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND THE QUESTIONS

“Questions are invented, like anything else. If you aren’t allowed to invent your questions, with elements from all over the place, from never mind where, if people ‘pose’ them to you, you haven’t much to say. The art of constructing a problem is very important; you invent a problem, a problem-position, before finding a solution.”

Deleuze, 1987; cited in Buchanan, 1996c, p. 99

“He came to the point. He remarked that in his job, the problem isn’t really finding the answers. It’s finding the questions. ‘We need the man who can find the key questions.’”

Lynn & Jay, 1986, p. 14

1.1 The problem

This thesis is concerned with marginalisation, and with the possibilities of resistance and transformation of that marginalisation, in the lives of the children of itinerant show families whose travels take them through coastal and western Queensland. More specifically, the problem with which the thesis engages is the ways in which educational provision for these children has been complicit with that marginalisation as well **as** being the site of alternative understandings about how Travellers can and should be educated. (Throughout the thesis, I use the British term ‘Traveller education’ – including the capital ‘T’ to reflect respect for the self-asserted ethnicity of many itinerant groups – to denote educational provision for occupational Travellers such **as** show children, and I use ‘itinerancy’ to refer to the set of conditions involved in occupational travelling.)

The statement of this problem establishes the parameters for this thesis. The focus is clearly on the show children and their families, **as** a specialised group whose educational needs depart from the ‘norm’ of children living in permanent residences and attending their local schools. The show children’s home tutors, and the teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education, are important, but here their roles are analysed from the standpoint of how they contribute to the show children’s educational experiences.

The statement of the problem also signals my interest in the recipients’ consumption of an educational policy **as** opposed to the designers’ development of such a policy. **As** I explain at length in Chapter Three, the conceptual framework guiding this study has been selected for its utility in explaining

how the show people used their consumption of the education program designed for their children to subvert their marginalised status, and in the process to capitalise on educational providers' outsideness that promotes greater mutual and creative understanding of the other group's circumstances. This approach reflects my continuing interest in the actions of minority groups as exercises of social agency (Giddens, 1984) in educational contexts.

In view of the problem to be addressed in this thesis, the following concepts have been assigned prominence in the study:

- marginalisation
- resistance
- transformation.

These concepts underpin the research questions of the study and provide the framework for the analysis of data in the substantive part of the thesis. The concepts are linked logically and sequentially. The show people's marginalised status (and its educational consequences) provide both a backdrop and an impetus for their resistance of that status, which in turn creates the possibilities of counternarratives, or 'alternative stories', about the show people's lives and educational opportunities. The intention is to emphasise marginalisation, resistance and transformation **as** shifting and fluid markers of the dynamic relations between show people and educational providers, not **as** fixed receptacles for ossified interactions between 'us' and 'them'.

Martinez (1994) captured something of the spirit of this intention when she commented:

My growing conviction is that our work on the context of teaching should lead us to recognise the importance not of the factors, aspects or components we identify, but of what goes on at the human level as real people interact with these factors in particular sites. The action is not in the named parts of our conceptual maps, but in the arrows that join them. (p. 138)

The aim of this thesis is to analyse “the action” that takes part in “the arrows” joining the show people and the educational providers in coastal and western Queensland, particularly in reference to the key concepts of marginalisation, resistance and transformation.

1.2 The significance of the problem

The 1990s in Australia, as in many other developed countries, witnessed a proliferation of educational programs designed to address particular manifestations of ‘special needs’. These ‘special needs’ are generally involved in some way with particular constructions of marginalised identities: women (see for example Rowan, Bartlett & Danaher, 1996); Indigenous Australians; residents in rural communities; students with physical and intellectual disabilities; the illiterate; and the itinerant.

Of these groups, there is no doubt that itinerants have a considerably lower profile. Yet one of the most predictable questions likely to be exchanged when strangers meet is: “Where do you live?” – or possibly its variant: “Where do you come from?” (Winning, 1990, p. 246). Establishing a new

acquaintance's physical location is "*a pervasive and effective mechanism for regulating social relations*" (Danaher, 1993, p. 71).

Permanent residence is also a means for constructing one incarnation of 'the other' – the shiftless wanderer whose address at 'no fixed abode' renders her or him at best unreliable and improvident, and at worst likely to be found in a court of law on some kind of property charge. (Danaher, 1993, p. 71)

Within the field of open and distance learning, Traveller education is further marginalised. By far the most common view sees clients of distance education programs as residing permanently in one of two sites: either on farms and properties, or else in towns and cities. The two groups are assumed to be prevented from enjoying the benefits of face-to-face teaching and learning – the first group by 'the tyranny of distance', the second by non-negotiable work commitments or by being 'tied to the home' for other reasons. In both cases 'home' is a fixed element in the equation. The notion that 'home' – or at least the physical manifestations of 'home' – *can* move on a regular but sometimes unpredictable basis is rarely acknowledged.

The relative positionings in distance education of people whose homes are fixed and those who take their homes with them were neatly summarised in the following extract from a review of "*Distance education around the world*".

Itinerant wanderers delivering information by word of mouth were perhaps the world's first distance educators bringing information from afar to eager recipients encountered during their travels. This centuries

old practice was irrevocably changed by the invention of writing and later, print. Print was first put to use in distance education with development of correspondence courses created by universities during the middle 1800s to disseminate learning beyond the walls of existing institutions. . . .Technology of information transfer has now outstripped the ability of educators and trainers to develop programs to serve the exponential increase in learners who wish to be educated outside traditional place-bound learning sites. (Brown & Brown, 1994, p. 5)

Here “*itinerant wanderers*” are positioned as belonging to the ‘prehistoric age’, before the advent of writing and printing. This view of itinerancy provides a stark contrast to the technological developments that enable learners “*to be educated outside traditional place-bound learning sites*”. By contrast, this thesis reveals that the itinerant show children in fact receive an education that is precisely non-place-bound in the way described by Brown and Brown (1994).

This study is significant, therefore, in seeking to direct attention to representatives of a generally undervalued lifestyle that **has** nevertheless a large number of manifestations: homeless youth, Gypsies, seasonal fruit pickers, fisherpeople, miners, circus people and participants in Australia’s several agricultural show circuits. These people and their forebears have been speaking for centuries, but their voices have typically not been heard by ‘the mainstream’ or ‘the centre’ – largely on account of their residential patterns, around which so much that is connected to identity and education is organised, deviating from ‘the norm’ of permanent residence.

Here I am using ‘speaking’ and ‘voice’, not literally in the sense of verbal interactions, but rather from a highly politicised perspective, which emphasises the analytical necessity of identifying what is said by whom, to whom, in which contexts, thereby drawing attention to the fact that, while some may speak and their voices are interpreted **as** commands that will be obeyed immediately, others may **speak** and their voices are regarded **as** being safely ignored. It is in this sense that this thesis is conceived as a counternarrative – **as** helping to record and disseminate an alternative ‘story’ about the purposes and effects of the show children’s educational experiences.

In addition, there are at least three ‘practical’ ways that the problem outlined above is significant. Firstly, policy makers and planners of the increasing number and range of specialised educational programs need information about the perceived effectiveness of such programs in addressing the clients’ needs, and also an understanding of how the results of policy *can* be consumed. This is so particularly in the context of the simultaneous trends during the 1990s and early 2000s of greater local control over decision making and increased requirements for accountability in the expenditure of public funds.

Secondly, the area of activity that **has** been assigned the broad label ‘open and distance learning’ has been promoted in some quarters as a possible panacea for all lunds of educational and socio-cultural ‘deficiencies’ in the existing education system. This study provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which such optimism is justified, by investigating one specific initiative in open and distance learning from the viewpoints of its clients.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, educational programs encapsulate many of the trends, pressures, values and behaviours evident in the society at large. In particular, identities – whether marginalised or otherwise – are created and contested within constructed learning situations, with the potential to render students empowered and literate (in its widest sense), or alternatively disempowered and less likely to participate fully in the post-industrial age. It is hoped that more far-reaching conclusions about the responses to and the consequences of educational programs in Australia will be made possible as a result of the investigation outlined below.

1.3 The research questions

As I indicated in the first section of this chapter, this study is concerned with the operation of a specialised education program designed for the show circuits of coastal and western Queensland. The program arose in **1989** as a direct consequence of the lobbying of the then Queensland Department of Education by members of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia. These members were motivated by a strong desire to improve the educational opportunities available to their children, while at the same time to maintain their children's contact with the rich traditions of show life. The Guild members were successful in attaining their objective of pressing for the establishment of an education program specifically designed to meet the identified learning needs of their children. In 2000, the program was superseded by the establishment of a **separate** school for the show children.

This situation suggests two important characteristics of the show people. The first characteristic is their conviction that they constitute a special group, different from ‘mainstream’ Australian society. They have distinctive mobility and residential patterns; they use terms such as ‘showies’ and ‘mugs’ as conscious ways to valorise and strengthen their own identities; they cherish their links with previous generations of show people, **both** in Australia and in the United Kingdom. The show people see themselves, and they believe that other people see them, **as** belonging to a minority group.

The second characteristic of the show people with which this thesis is concerned is their political ‘know-how’. They use their heightened self consciousness of what they believe makes them different from other Australians to articulate a set of objectives, ranging from the education of their children to greater access to water and electricity at particular showgrounds. They formulate and enact a series of tactics to achieve those objectives, from seeking meetings with government ministers to reinforcing the show people’s considerable contributions to the local economy. They pride themselves on their persistence in overcoming obstacles that they believe would defeat less well-organised and less cohesive minority groups.

These two characteristics of the show people – their ‘difference’ and their political ‘know-how’ or agency – are taken up in the study’s three research questions. The first research question asks: “***How do the show people experience marginalisation?***”. This question seeks to identify those **aspects** of the show people’s identity constructions and educational experiences that reflect their sense of being both distinctive and disadvantaged in comparison with ‘mainstream’ Australians.

The second research question asks: *“How do the show people resist their marginalised status?”*. This question derives from an assumption that, rather than passively accepting their disadvantage, show people exercise agency to ameliorate and if possible to change the bases of that situation.

Another dimension of the interplay between the show people’s ‘difference’ and their agency is the extent to which their position *vis-a-vis* other groups undergoes positive change. Pursuing this theme, the third research question asks: *“How do the show people transform their marginalising experiences and resistant practices?”*. While accepting that such a transformation is neither inevitable nor necessarily permanent, the question examines the possibilities of thinking otherwise about the show people’s identities and educational experiences.

These three research questions, then, are linked and integrated in the ways that they seek to reveal different aspects of the show people’s ‘difference’ and their agency. The first question examines how the show people’s marginalisation originates from their ‘difference’ from ‘mainstream’ society. The second question investigates how the show people exercise their agency to resist that marginalisation. The third question discusses the show people’s capacity to channel that agency to transform the marginalisation of their ‘difference’ to an understanding and a valuing of that ‘difference’. Or to express the political importance of each of the three data analysis chapters slightly differently: each helps to tell the story of the show people’s resistance and transformation, first by explaining the need for change, second by highlighting the potential for resistance, and third by discussing transformative moments associated with the circulation and endorsement of new ways

of thinking about show people and their education. The questions are therefore all filtered through reference to educational issues, but of necessity they also engage with a wider range of issues that help to demonstrate the concerns identified in the questions.

1.4 The outline of the thesis

This thesis is arranged in eight chapters. This chapter has stated the problem to be investigated and has outlined the significance of the problem, and has also articulated and explained the research questions to be answered. Chapter Two reviews selected literature about two key issues. Accounts of Australian shows are discussed. Several Australian and European studies in Traveller education are interrogated. In both cases, gaps in, and limitations of, the existing literature are identified to create spaces for this study's contribution to knowledge.

Chapter Three elaborates the conceptual framework of the study, beginning with an analysis of the connections between itinerancy and marginalisation from the perspective of Traveller education. Michel de Certeau's (1984) concept of 'tactics of consumption' is examined in detail, as are Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986a) notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'. These ideas in combination constitute a conceptual approach that assists in understanding and theorising the interplay among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the lives of the show people.

Chapter Four discusses the research design of the study. That design derives from, and builds on, the links between researching Traveller education and marginalisation, resistance and transformation on the one hand and de Certeauian ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtinian ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ on the other. These elements have implications for the study’s ethical and political dimensions, which also articulate well with the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three. Specific data gathering techniques are outlined, **as** are the study’s delimitations and limitations.

The next three chapters constitute the **data** analysis of the study. Chapter Five addresses the first research question, by examining the show people’s experiences of marginalisation. The second research question is considered in Chapter Six, which analyses the show people’s resistance of those marginalising experiences. Chapter Seven provides information relevant to the third research question, which examines how the show people’s tactics of consumption, and their capitalising on outsidedness and creative understanding, contribute to transforming their marginalising experiences and resistant practices, as well as to presenting a counternarrative about what Traveller education *can* and should be.

Chapter Eight draws the study to a close by synthesising the data analysis chapters’ answers to the three research questions outlined at the outset. It concludes by revisiting the personal note outlined below, **as well as** suggesting some possible directions for future research projects in Traveller education.

1.5 A personal note

In keeping with the practice of eschewing authorial anonymity favoured by the approaches to research ethics and politics adopted in this study, it is appropriate to insert here a brief personal note about the researcher. My research interests have a bearing on this study in at least two important respects.

Firstly, my substantive position as Foundation Lecturer, and more recently Senior Lecturer, in Open and Distance Learning in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at Central Queensland University constitutes the framework for my interest in Traveller education. I consider that open and distance learning has much of value to learn – conceptually, methodologically and empirically – from the lives of people whose physical spaces change constantly, yet who aspire to continuity of learning in two senses: continuation of the education program regardless of physical location; and ensuring the continuation of a rich cultural tradition that is intimately connected with itinerancy. These shifting and fluid understandings of ‘place’ *can* significantly enhance current efforts within open and distance learning to theorise ‘mixed mode’ and ‘flexible’ approaches to educational provision.

Secondly, my previous research projects have concentrated on several types of ‘marginalised groups’. These have included Indigenous Australians, women students, student teachers, beginning teachers, academic staff members in recently proclaimed universities and proponents of unfashionable disciplinary paradigms. Despite the diversity of these groups and the varied rates of intensity with which I have studied them, the projects have given me a developing understanding of people whose identities are seen by significant

others as inferior or less valued in particular ways – or else as unacceptably challenging to the *status quo*. This understanding should assist my examination of the ‘marginalised group’ under review in this study. Furthermore, my long standing interest in ‘marginalised groups’ constitutes the academic background against which my use of postmodernist theory in this work takes place. That is to say, like Griffiths (1995, p. 224), I am “*interested in post-modernism – but only insofar as it is relevant to my wider values*”. For me, those “*wider values*” are intimately connected with the links and relations among social groups with differential power and status being reflected in the implementation of particular education programs.

In combination, these two points – my conviction of Traveller education’s potential contribution to theorising open and distance learning, and my focus on members of ‘marginalised’ communities – have had a significant impact on the way that I have designed and conducted the study reported in this thesis. In Chapter Four, I outline how I have sought to carry out Traveller education research by applying a more fluid and less dichotomised approach to the ‘researcher’ – ‘researched’ relationship. In Chapter Eight, I revisit this personal note by reflecting anew on the “*situated, partial and interested*” (Kenway & Willis with Blackmore and Rennie, 1998, p. xii) aspects of my developing subjectivity as a researcher. In this thesis, my interest in delineating my own ‘learning on the run’ operates in parallel with my identification of the show people’s educational experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Itinerancy is also a problem of international importance and not one peculiar to Australia. Mobility and distance are synonymous with the educational disadvantage of children.”

Lally, 1993, p. 202

“I would make the same argument for all children – the necessity for parents and teachers to work together to let the children have the chance to learn from both and then move onto be truly themselves. . . I argue it particularly for Gypsy and Traveller children because for them the tensions are greater, the hostility they can face is more intense, the stereotyping is more negative, history weighs more heavily on them and they have been too long at the margins.”

Kiddle, 1999, p. 156

2.1 Overview of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed and critical review of selected sections of the literature relevant to the research problem outlined in Chapter One. The aim is to identify what has already been written about the context in which the problem is situated, and to discern the strengths and limitations of those writings. This will assist the substantive section of this study in contributing results that are original and of interest to other researchers.

The chapter is divided into the following major sections:

- Australian shows
- Traveller education.

In each section, the intention is to review the existing literature critically, identify its strengths and limitations, and indicate how this thesis can contribute to addressing those limitations. Thus I seek to establish a point of departure for my own research, which **as** I noted in Chapter One is conceived **as** a counternarrative to traditional ways of understanding – **as** demonstrated in the existing literature – Australian shows and Traveller education.

In particular, I established in the previous chapter my focus on three key organising concepts throughout the thesis: marginalisation, resistance and transformation. Those same concepts constitute the framework informing this chapter's interrogation of the existing literature. My goal is to present this study **as** a counternarrative to the stereotypical and marginalising images of itinerant people, and particularly of the Australian show people, contained in a

large proportion of existing studies of Australian shows and of Australian and European Traveller education. Similarly, I seek to position the study as akin to, and contributing to, the still small but steadily growing literature that emphasises the resistant and transformative potential of itinerant people and their education.

2.2 Australian shows

It is appropriate to acknowledge at the outset of this account of the literature pertaining to Australian shows that lack of space precludes my inclusion here of the detailed study of the literature relating to British fairs that I undertook in an earlier draft of the thesis. Suffice to say that many striking parallels between the lives and educational experiences of Australian show people and British fairground people were revealed, with the themes of marginalisation, resistance and transformation being very strongly in evidence.

Similarly, the thesis has not interrogated the literature relating to North American carnivals. Partly this is because Australian ‘showies’ generally portray themselves **as** being significantly different from their North American counterparts. Frank Foster, one of Bill Morgan’s (1995) informants, identified a crucial element of that difference: *“But in the history of American showman [sic] their business is basically, and mainly, run by tent men, even today they still have their tent shows”* (p. 136).

A practical difficulty with interrogating the North American literature is a difference in terminology. There the term ‘migrant’ is used to refer to occupational Travellers, such as Mexican fruit pickers working in the southern United States of America, as well as being used in the more conventional sense to denote people who travel from one country to another, without necessarily being itinerant. This difference in terminology prompted a British researcher in Traveller education to assert that there is no North American equivalent of the European literature on occupational Travellers (Pullin, personal communication, 1996) – although that year marked the publication of the edited book *Children of la frontera* (Flores, 1996).

Therefore, although I am aware of the existence of both the Showmen’s Guild of Great Britain and the Outdoor Amusement Business Association (founded in 1964) in the United States of America, and of the latter’s affiliation with several Showmen’s Associations in individual states (<http://www.oaba.org/index.htm>, 1996), I acknowledge that a limitation of this thesis is that an intensive examination of the British and North American literatures on fairs and carnivals respectively has been postponed until an appropriate future occasion.

Within the parameters set by that limitation, then, the literature about Australian agricultural shows can be characterised as scattered and fragmented – much as Australian show people are often depicted by the ‘mainstream’

literature.’ This characterisation creates a point of entry and of departure for my study, which aims in part to synthesise and extend certain key elements of the literature about shows and show people. The most substantial Australian literature emanates from the Showmen’s Guild of Australasia. The Victorian Showmen’s Guild’s quarterly magazine, *The Outdoor Showman*, includes articles of interest to travelling show people in Australia and New Zealand, such as reports on major shows, references to legislation pertaining to equipment registration and advertisements for rides (like the ferris wheel) and ‘joints’ (like the laughing clowns). A regular feature is devoted to circuses.

Several articles in *The Outdoor Showman* reflect the ‘showies’ conviction that they have a specialised and valuable lifestyle – a conviction that, as the data analysis chapters of this thesis demonstrate, has considerable impact on their attitudes to and experiences of marginalisation, resistance and transformation. For example, a New Zealand ‘showie’ wrote in the ‘Letters’ page:

We can be perceived by others as strange. We are both divided and united. Anywhere in the world you would be greeted warmly by show families without prejudice. I read letters from old show people worldwide and the stories are similar to our own. Sad that their friends have

¹ The same is true of studies of circuses, another group of occupational Travellers. The European literature is substantial and steadily growing; the Australian literature is relatively fragmented and the academic dimension of that literature is largely dominated by the writings of a single author, Mark St Leon (see for example Cannon with St Leon, 1997; Ramsland with St Leon, 1993; St Leon, 2000).

*passed on and happy that **our** new generations are coming through to carry on with this wonderful profession.* (Ashworth, 1997, p. 7)

The fact that this letter was written by a New Zealander gives special point to the assertion that “*We can be perceived by others **as** strange*”. In other words, being rejected by one’s fellow citizens contrasts with a sense of identification with ‘showies’ in other countries. This is a construction of marginalisation with which ‘mainstream’ Australia would not be familiar. The last sentence of the paragraph emphasises the importance of passing on the cultural traditions of “*this wonderful profession*” to the members of “***our** new generations*”.

Similar feelings were evident in Lew Osborne’s (1997) retrospective essay “*Behind the loudspeakers, toffee apples and fairy **floss***”. For example, he referred to:

*The thoughts of a young boy that take me back to when **as** a Showie kid going to school, inundated with questions about the show. What’s the best ride? The fastest one? Will it **make me** sick? What’s your dad got at the show? The questions that went on. I felt important, commanding this unbelievable respect **from** kids that normally wouldn’t give me the time **of** day.* (1997, p. 21)

Here the contrast is between an identification among children of a shared delight in the excitement and glamour of the show **and** an awareness that those same children “*normally wouldn’t give me the time **of** day*”. This sense of being marginalised on the basis of a perceived ‘difference’ and ‘strangeness’ is a major theme of Chapter Five. Similarly, Chapter Six takes up the ways in

which show people actively resist, rather than passively accept, that experience of being marginalised.

Chapter Seven elaborates the notion of transformation to both marginalisation and resistance of and by show people. Osborne (1997) identified the source of change within the show circuits that contributes to that transformation: competition among ‘showies’ for the money of the ‘locals’ attending the shows.

Showmen for 70 plus years have lived and breathed this competition factor improving their business, knowing full well that if they don't the operator across the alley will. Looking for the next thrill ride from America that will turn heads or buying the best plush toys. What will be the most popular one this year? The monkey or the big wrinkleface dog to put on their games. (1997, p. 21)

This account of internal competition driving change on the showgrounds is a timely reminder that there is no such phenomenon as a ‘typical showie’, despite the linguistic convenience of using this term. Chapter Six analyses the ways in which the multiplicity of experiences of being a ‘showie’ helps to strengthen the show people’s resistance of their marginalised identities.

Osborne’s (1997) essay ended with a characteristic call to unity among ‘showies’:

The atmosphere, this magic that is created is unique to shows and can only get better as we strive to hold a place in a rapidly changing world and it's happening right now, behind the loudspeakers, toffee apples and fairyfloss. (1997, p. 21)

This rhetorical flourish is characteristic of many of the show people's statements recorded in the data analysis chapters. The intention is clearly to depict Australian shows as "unique" in creating "this magic", which is evoked by such images as "the loudspeakers, toffee apples and fairy floss". The optimistic belief in progress – "this magic. . . can only get better" – contrasts with the slightly ominous reference to the need to "strive to hold a place in a rapidly changing world". This last point is particularly important. The writer has constructed "a place" as the show people's 'portion', their equitable share of the available resources. That "place" exists independently of the show people's itinerant lifestyle, which means that their "place" changes from one week to the next. These themes – multiple understandings of terms like "place", using those terms to assert a right to consuming available resources and in the process to engage and hopefully to transform the understandings of resource providers – are elaborated throughout the data analysis chapters of this thesis. The thesis thereby extends the existing literature, by providing an analytical and a conceptual dimension to terms of that kind used by and about show people.

Written in a similar vein to *The Outdoor Showman*, Bob Morgan's (1995) book *The showies: Revelations of Australian outdoor side-showmen* is a celebratory text that recorded the life stories of several 'showies' who

“are fairly representative and reflect the history of their industry” (p. xvi).²

A major theme of the book was the distinctive contribution made by these individuals to Australia’s cultural history. One chapter dealt with Jack Allan, who joined the show in 1928 at the age of fourteen and who developed a very successful career as, among other roles, a ‘spruiker’ (a ‘front man’ charged with attracting the crowds to a particular act) and a promoter of the wrestler Chief Little Wolf. In a representative passage about Jack and his wife Dawn, Morgan (1995) wrote:

...they have the satisfaction of knowing that they were a part of those magnificent people who brought so much joy and entertainment to the multitude of Australians who were so dependent on them and their kind for decades – from the Depression days of the 1930s through the dark days of the Second World War, and into the post-war years leading up to the advent of television. (p. 112)

² In presenting selected quotation from *The showies*, I am conscious of the methodological injunction of Duncan Dallas, author of *The travelling people* (1971):

Due allowance must be made for the exaggeration with which any old man who has achieved a respectable prosperity tends to view the hardships of his youth, yet equally we must be cautious of dismissing as fantasy the vicissitudes which a more protected age finds hard to credit. (p. 3)

In any case, it is precisely the voices of the show people such as those presented in *The showies*, and the constructions of ‘reality’ that they represent, with which I am concerned in this thesis.

This close identification between ‘showies’ and central events in Australian history is intended to emphasise the size of the contribution that show people continue to make to Australia’s cultural life. This integral association contrasts with other passages in *The showies* in which Morgan emphasised the feelings of his selection of ‘showies’ that they were marginalised from ‘mainstream’ Australian society. This was particularly evident in their recollections of their schooling experiences. For example, Frank Foster, ~~born~~ in 1927 and “a member of one of Australia’s oldest and best known show business families” (p. 113), had the following recollection of his school days (which, in view of its encapsulation of several themes underpinning this thesis, is worth quoting in full):

Well, believe it or not basically I had very little schooling at all. I was self taught, we went from school to school. This was no fault of my parents[,] it was just the way things were in those days. I went to each public school that we could make it to, but. . .the roads were so bad in those days it could take three to four days to get to a show and town.

By the time we got into a town it might be Thursday and then you’d go and see the local school and they just couldn’t be bothered with you. The teacher would tell you to sit in the class and if you couldn’t pick up the work it was too bad. With the result that by the time you had to move on it almost proved a waste of everyone’s time.

Then we got correspondence courses and for a while that was all right, but going from town to town the mail was never able to catch up. Some of those outback places we would have left before the mail arrived. I remember one time the teacher from the correspondence school wrote

to my mum and said, "Frank's work is all right but I wish he'd stop using too much bread". Everyone used to help me, and to rub out words we used bread – there were so many different handwriting styles in my work they must have thought I was Chinese! Now at my stage of life I look back on those early days and wonder how much better off I might have been had the education system for we travelling people been a better one.

Again on reflection, in those days your education was on how to survive and what you did for a living, there was no need to be an academic, your education, believe it or not, was your craft and how you huddled things – such things as what to do when the rent is too dear for a show! By that I mean, if you get on a showgrounds you know a good position from a bad one. You don't need a college education for that, nor do you need a college education to know how to get the pitch for an act up there on the platform. All you know you have to work for it. The average person walks around a fairground or showground and may think we get it easy but it's never that way. Mostly we live out of doors, and we have to forgo a lot of other things that other people have. (p. 123)

Several comments can be made about this memoir of one 'showie's' educational experiences. The general and crucial point underpinning those comments is that the literature on Australian shows examined in this section of the chapter has shaped the design of the thesis, not by accident, but rather by my deliberate structuring of interview questions to ensure that the issues that recur in the literature – including the three themes in Foster's recollec-

tions (cited in Morgan, 1995) identified below – are acknowledged and used to extend existing knowledge about Australian show people. (Chapter Four elaborates the study’s research design and makes these links among that design, current literature and the study’s conceptual framework explicit.)

Firstly, many of the show people whose voices are heard in Chapter Five recollect the same kinds of difficulties associated with travelling from school to school and dealing with teachers who were ill-equipped to engage with these temporary visitors. The sense is very strongly of incomprehension, apathy and possibly distrust or dislike on the part of the ‘locals’ against the ‘showies’ – all crucial elements of the show people’s marginalisation.

Secondly, Foster’s reference to receiving family assistance with his “*correspondence courses*” evokes the multi-age learning and peer tutoring that are strong features of current educational provision for the Queensland show children. This reference also emphasises the continuing involvement of show parents in their children’s education, either through their employment of a home tutor or through their taking that role themselves. This valuing of formal education, and the preparedness of family members to provide assistance in completing this important **task**, echo Foster’s recollection of the fact that “*Everyone used to help me*”.

Thirdly, this valuing of formal education sits somewhat uneasily beside a distinction between ‘book’ and ‘real’ learning. This can be seen in Foster’s assertions that “*You don’t need a college education*” to decide “*what to do when the rent is too dear for a show!*” or “*to know how to get the pitch for an act up there on the platform*”. Foster’s pride in this arcane ‘situated learning’ was reflected in the comments of many of my interviewees, who also

concurred with Foster that show life is difficult and *“we have to forgo a lot of other things that other people have”*. The point to emphasise here is that Foster’s constructions of his educational experiences were firmly located in the context of his working life and the cultural traditions surrounding that life. This same context and these same traditions also animate the voices of the show people heard in the data analysis chapters of this thesis, and form the framework for understanding the show people’s accounts of marginalisation, resistance and transformation on the show circuits. As such, I build on and extend significantly this crucial dimension of the literature in this thesis.

Many of these themes were also exemplified in *Sideshow alley* (Broome with Jackomos, 1998), a collaboration between Australian historian Richard Broome and Indigenous Australian travelling boxer and wrestler Alick Jackomos. The authors’ account of the rise and fall of ‘sideshow alley’ referred not to the joints and rides that that term evokes today, but instead to the ‘alley of wonder’ that comprised animal acts, boxing troupes (many of whose members were Indigenous Australians), ‘freak’ shows and illusion acts. The authors emphasised the resistant agency of the itinerant inhabitants of ‘sideshow alley’, arguing that their extended family provided a refuge from a marginalising broader community and a recognition of skills that were not valued outside the ‘alley’:

A dominant theme of the book is that Sideshow Alley was a place of power for its participants. This may seem surprising given that showpeople were viewed by the rest of society with both fear and wonder, and as outcasts. However, showpeople evolved their own culture over generations and this enabled them to forge their own self-

assured identities and a unique way of life. Those who fought in the boxing tents in Sideshow Alley were often seen as victims of low wages, a hard life and too many punches. Despite this view, they too relished their unique life, felt powerful being tent boxers, and they look back on it as a golden age in their lives. Seen in their own terms there are few victims in Sideshow Alley. (p. viii)

This thesis certainly eschews a portrayal of show people as “victims”, and aspires to communicate their experiences of marginalisation, resistance and transformation “in their own terms”. At the same time, Broome and Jackomos recognised that ambivalence was evident in other Australians’ views of the inhabitants of ‘sideshow alley’:

Sideshow Alley was also a place of power for other Australians. Those who did not visit it demonised it as a powerful place of low and dangerous entertainment. Those who frequented Sideshow Alley found it a powerful source of wonder in their lives. For both groups it helped to shape their identities by gazing at difference; because human identities are formed partly by knowing, seeing and experiencing difference. We know who we are, in both a positive and a negative sense, by that which we are, as well as by that which we are not. (p. viii)

For me, ambivalence lies at the centre of these ‘mixed feelings’ about difference. Ambivalence can be enlisted to further the strategies of marginalisation, if the ‘fear’ of difference is emphasised and exploited. Alternatively, ambivalence can be deployed to facilitate the agency of those who are marginalised and accordingly assist them to resist and transform and thereby become more powerful. So “a dominant theme” of Broome with

Jackomos's historical account of 'sideshow alley' from the 1870s to the 1950s and 1960s is played out in this thesis in the context of contemporary concerns. This is another vital respect in which the thesis is conceived as contributing to and extending the store of knowledge about Australian show people.

I turn now to consider how 'showies' are depicted in a small number of Australian newspaper and magazine articles. The intention is to record some elements of popular constructions of how 'locals' are held to regard shows and 'showies'. In June 1996, when the show came to Rockhampton, a provincial city in Central Queensland, Ken Coombe, the president of the Rockhampton Agricultural Society, was interviewed for a local newspaper.

Mr Coombe said the show provided an important social and economic function.

He said the show's rural component was an essential element in the success of the show which offered the opportunity for town and country residents to exchange views and talents. . .

Mr Coombe said the Rockhampton Show incorporated a lot of tradition while remaining progressive and responsive to what the community wanted. ("Show offers the best of town and country", 1996, p. 6)

These remarks underline the symbiotic – *albeit* sometimes tense – relationship between show people and show societies. A major attraction for many people to attend the show each year is undoubtedly the delights of sideshow alley and items like fairy floss and show bags. So the show societies

depend on the ‘showies’ to provide these attractions, which are helpful and perhaps even necessary to entice people to view local products in the paddocks and the pavilions. Yet the ‘showies’ rely on the show societies for the logistical support and the organisational framework required to conduct the annual show.

Coombe’s reference to “*a lot of tradition*” echoed another sentence in the article: “*Visitors passing through the gates follow in the footsteps of a marvellous tradition as they enter the annual show to marvel at this year’s latest attractions*” (“Show offers the best of town and country”, 1996, p. 6). This complements statements by some of the interviewees in *The showies* (Morgan, 1995): local people should attend the show because it is part of a significant rural tradition that celebrates rural life and strengthens the solidarity of living in a rural community. Suggestively show people themselves received no mention in this article, implying that ‘showies’ do not spring immediately to ‘locals’ minds as being an integral part of this significant rural tradition. This invisibility carries over into scholarly constructions of itinerant people, as the next section of the chapter demonstrates. This thesis is intended to counteract, as far as possible within the study’s parameters, the marginalising impact of that popular and academic invisibility – an approach that accords with Terry Evans’ (1998) assertion:

In many respects, show children can be seen as travelling the margins of modern Australian society, living and learning as their families earn their livelihood providing the facilities and services which keep the country shows alive. (p. xii)

The week before the publication of the interview with Ken Coombe was 'show time' in Gladstone, a port city in Central Queensland south of Rockhampton. The local newspaper marked this event by featuring an article about a travelling show family. The article was entitled incorrectly "*Codey's circus' fifth generation traveller*" (1996), the misconception that shows and circuses are synonymous evidently extending to newspaper subeditors. Beginning with the statement, "*Codey Miller represents the fifth generation of a family which has chosen to make travelling with the show a way of life*" (p. 1), the article featured an interview with Richard Miller, who contrasted his own schooling experiences ("*In his day the [show] children had to attend school at their various stops along the way*" [p. 2]) with those of his grandchildren: "*His grandchildren and the 30 or so other students who travel with the show now have a teacher who travels with them and teaches them from 9am to 3pm*" (p. 1).

Although this was an accurate – *albeit* abbreviated – account of the education program implemented for the show children by the Brisbane School of Distance Education, what interests me here is the construction of this phenomenon of attending school "*from 9am to 3pm*" as a special event worthy of relatively lengthy mention in a brief article. Again we encounter the ambivalence attending many of the interactions between 'showies' and 'non-showies': on the one hand attending school on a regular basis is constructed as something that 'showies' and 'locals' now have in common, yet on the other hand this is contrasted with Richard Miller's own schooling experiences, which marked his family and him as essentially different from 'normal' Australian families. This textual treatment is part of a superficial celebration of

the exotic lifestyle of itinerant people that is no less marginalising than constructing those people as ‘other’ to sedentary people.

This same ambivalence was manifested in a longer article (Olszewski, 1995) about show children in *The Australasian Post*, a popular magazine. The combination of seemingly discordant images in the headline “*Carnivals with class*” was followed by the subheading “*Showkids don’t have to learn on the road any more. . . school follows them around*” (p. 2). This suggestion of a previously disadvantaged group just now ‘catching up’ with their ‘normal’ peers was carried into the beginning of the article.

It’s one of Australia’s most unusual classrooms, a tiny caravan that travels backwards and forwards across Australia each year.

But to Wendy Lou Stewart it’s the world’s most important classroom – because it’s her very own.

Wendy Lou reckons she’s just another ordinary Aussie schoolkid, but to people who don’t understand the way of life she’s regarded as different.

Until recently, Wendy and her mates were considered outsiders, and denied things lots of kids take for granted, especially a good education.

Wendy Lou is a “showies” kid – her mum and dad travel the agricultural show network and make a living by running a sideshow shooting gallery.

Showies are a special group of people and some of them, the “aristocrats” of the show circuit, have been running their stalls for two or three generations.

The showies keep to themselves, many families often inter-marrying, which is probably a legacy of the way they’ve been regarded over decades by townsfolk who have shunned them as sort-ofgypsies, not to be trusted.

If you can cross the barrier and actually get to meet the showies, you discover that behind the gruff exteriors they’re warm-hearted, fascinatingfolk.

Many are successful small-business people. Some are downright wealthy. (p. 1)

These paragraphs traverse the gamut of possible constructions of Australian show people. ‘Showies’ are represented as barred by their itinerancy from enjoying what most Australians take for granted, “*especially a good education*”. Furthermore, they are marginalised because of decades of being regarded by ‘locals’ as “*diflerent*”, “*outsiders*” and “*sort-ofgypsies, not to be trusted*”. The construction of marginalisation gives way to that of a ‘minority group’, by possessing “*one of Australia’s most unusual classrooms*” and by being “*a special group of people*”. The putative identification of ‘showies’ with ‘mainstream Australia’ comes in the revelation that “*beyond the gruff exteriors they’re warm-hearted, fascinating folk*”. Finally, the suggestion that show people are an Clite with privileges not available to other Australians is contained in the references to “*the ‘aris-*

tocrats' of the show circuit, [who] have been running their stalls for two or three generations", and to some of the 'showies' being "downright wealthy".

The point to emphasise about these constructions is that they reveal that 'showies' do not 'fit the mould' of itinerant people constructed by people who are not, and usually never will be, itinerant. They seem to the journalist – and through him to the readers of *The Australasian Post* – to be fascinatingly shifting and fluid in seeming from one perspective to be 'exotic' and 'strange', from another to be 'just like us', from another to be shamefully disadvantaged, from another to enjoy 'the best of both worlds' – travelling and operating successful businesses.

These somewhat confused and conflicting constructions of show people for popular consumption articulate with the earlier quotations from *The Outdoor Showman* and *The showies* (Morgan, 1995). These quotations demonstrate that 'showies' themselves consume and 'make use' of such constructions, and engage directly with their 'difference' from 'locals', in order to disrupt marginalising stereotypes of show people and transform people's understandings of the multiple elements of 'showie' identity. This crucial issue is acknowledged and built upon in the thesis, which goes beyond ambivalent description to a critical analysis of the ambivalence and its relationship to the production and contestation of marginalisation. As the data analysis chapters will indicate, these 'tactics of consumption' and this focus on 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' provide an appropriate framework for conceptualising, not only the show people's marginalisation, but also their resistance and transformation of that marginalisation.

The principal finding of this section of the literature review, then, has been to locate these processes of marginalisation, resistance and transformation directly in the ‘showies’ and popular accounts of Australian shows. Furthermore, I have staked a claim for the thesis’s original and substantial contribution to knowledge, as a significant extension of the existing literature on Australian shows and show people, particularly their educational experiences and opportunities. Equally importantly, the study is conceived as a counternarrative to the marginalising stereotypes still prevalent in most ‘mainstream’ renditions of the show people’s lifestyle and culture. It is therefore designed to contribute to filling some fundamental gaps and attaching sound to some crucial silences in the established understandings of the show people and their education.

2.3 Traveller education

As with the literature on Australian shows, the literature on Traveller education has been for a long time, and largely remains, scattered and fragmentary. As I elaborate later in this section, there is a strong tradition of educational provision for, although less so of research into, Travellers in Europe; as I indicated above, there is a limited literature about American itinerant ‘migrant’ people’s education (Flores, 1996); the Nigerian National Commission for Nomadic Education has conducted a vigorous research program into educating nomadic pastoralists and migrant fisherpeople (see for example Tahir, 1991; Tahir & Muhammad, 1998; Umar & Tahir, 2000); there are a few studies of nomadic pastoralists in Asian countries such as India (Dyer, 2000;

2000; Dyer & Choksi, 1998) and Mongolia (Robinson, 1999); and relatively little has been written about Australian Travellers.

This scattered international coverage illustrates important and substantive differences among different groups of itinerant people. I have concentrated in this study on the literature relating to occupational Travellers, rather than to other itinerant groups such as Gypsy Travellers, military personnel (who, as Duffy [1987] pointed out, exhibit significant differences from other kinds of Travellers) and New Age Travellers. However, I refer to literature about those groups if they appear to have particular implications for researching the education of occupational Travellers.

This critical review of selected literature about Traveller education is framed around the interplay among the thesis's organising concepts: marginalisation, resistance and transformation. I argue that much of the literature is posited on blinkered and unexamined assumptions that actually contribute to Travellers' ongoing marginalisation. By contrast, a small but growing number of studies, mainly from the late 1990s, directly challenge the marginalising assumptions of earlier (and in some cases continuing) literature, and focus instead on Travellers' agency and the possibilities of alternative, more enabling educational provision and research. This thesis is located unequivocally in the community of research formed by those exceptional studies.

The review is organised around the following themes:

- the dearth of research
- the prevalence of negative stereotyping

- some exceptional studies.

2.3.1 The dearth of research

Two comments about the literature on Traveller education can be made immediately: not very much has been published; and what little is published – with some significant exceptions, detailed below – tends to portray – and to marginalise – occupational Travellers as unfortunate ‘victims’ of an ‘unnatural’ lifestyle. This situation was graphically summarised by Lucassen, Willems and Cottar (1998) in their review of the literature in a related field:

The student of European history who searches for Gypsies will find them only in footnotes. Today we still know little about how they worked and lived in the past. The same holds true for itinerant groups in general. (p. 1)

With regard to the extent and scope of the literature, no single text attempting comprehensively to identify and categorise various itinerant groups was encountered, apart from the specialised publications of the European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers, which I discuss below. Indeed, the literature can be characterised as focusing separately on a number of such groups, particularly defence force personnel (in Australia and North America) and Gypsies (in the United Kingdom), but also including caravan park dwellers, fruit pickers and other seasonal employees, and circus workers (see for example Ramsland with St Leon, 1993). These items tend to be isolated articles appearing in journals dealing with general social concerns; a special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues*

devoted to residential mobility (Shumaker & Stokols, 1982) was a noteworthy exception to this observation.

The absence of a substantial literature is especially surprising given that fifteen per cent of the Australian (Rahmani, 1985) and twenty per cent of the American (Shumaker & Stokols, 1982) populations were estimated as being itinerant in the early 1980s. More recently, a journal article published in 1987 (Welch, 1987) had the dramatic title "*As many as 100,000 Australian school children move school each year*". In the same year, Harrington (1987) referred to "*530,000 migrant [itinerant] students*" (p. 36) in the United States of America. Miller and Cherry (1991) reported that, in the United States of America, "*Mobility projects remain at approximately 20%*" (p. 52). Fields (1997) reported literature that indicated that Australia's population is "*one of the most highly mobile in the world*" (p. 45), and that between 1986 and 1991 forty-six per cent of children aged between five and nine years, and thirty-eight per cent of children aged between ten and fourteen years, changed their permanent location at least once (p. 45).

Despite these statistics, only limited research has been conducted into Traveller education since then. For example, itinerant children were conspicuous by their absence from Keith Harry's (1991) review of the distance education literature, which conceived of distance education students as living permanently in one place, at a distance from the source of instruction.

This theme of a dearth of research about Traveller education was reiterated by several commentators, although surprisingly this recognition did not seem to prompt them to remedy the perceived deficiency. One example was the comment by Blair, Marchant and Medway (1984) that "*there is no*

comprehensive body of literature” (p. 251) about the impact of itinerancy on children, and another was the observation of Brown and Orthner (1990) that “*Despite the fact that millions of family relocations occur each year, we are only beginning to understand the effects of these moves on the youngest members of these households*” (p. 380). In confirming this deficiency, these commentators often identify particular questions that they believed should inform such research. After stating baldly, “*Much remains unknown about mobility*”, Shumaker and Stokols (1982) argued:

We need to explore the processes that mediate people’s decisions to remain in an area or to move, and how these processes relate to the health of individuals and communities. (p. 2; emphasis in original)

One conclusion of a meeting of specialists in itinerant education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1989, paragraph 62(a)) was the claimed need for “*a general international policy for the collection of data*” about itinerant children.

This is necessary to ensure researches [sic] at national and international levels and to establish an international data bank on the conditions governing the education of nomads, for dissemination of information, for proper planning and implementation of their education projects.

According to Duffy (1987):

The complexity of the many issues associated with mobility, and the very uncertainty of its real magnitude and extent throughout the school-age population, pose difficulties in the interpretation of the available

research findings. No clear picture of the problems of mobility and methods for coping with them emerges from the literature. . . (p. 544)

On this basis, “More research into the effects of mobility on the psychosocial development of children” was warranted. Birch, Lally and Tomlinson (1986) complained:

Evidence accumulated from several decades of research. . . [into itinerancy] has not provided any firm insights into long-term consequences of itinerancy for school learning. If anything the results are either indeterminate or contradictory.

Clearly this study is seen as making a substantial contribution to redressing the imbalance resulting from this dearth of research. Its particular anticipated significance lies in its intended status as a counternarrative to traditional ‘stories’ about Australian show people and about itinerant people more broadly. It is in that guise that it is proposed to supplement and augment the still too few studies of Traveller resistance and transformation analysed in a later subsection of this chapter. Equally clearly, the thesis is premised on the belief that this is a valuable area of analysis – one with highly significant implications for show children in particular, but also for understandings of marginalisation generally.

2.3.2 The prevalence of negative stereotyping

According to Lucassen and his colleagues (1998):

Our knowledge has been severely restricted not only because of historical negligence, but also because of two closely connected paradigms, one which views Gypsies and other itinerant groups as criminal, marginal and poor, and another which focuses almost exclusively on their alleged common ethnic identity and origin. (p. 2)

Furthermore, they referred to “*the inclination to view itinerant groups predominantly as down and out riff-raff*” (p. 2).

In terms of the negative portrayals of Traveller education that this “*inclination*” is likely to promote, while academic educationists might very well eschew the prejudices outlined in the previous subsection in favour of an ‘objective’ understanding of itinerancy as a complex social phenomenon, they do not necessarily produce more ‘balanced’ accounts of the educational dimensions and implications of itinerancy. On the contrary, many of the assumptions that position fixed residence as ‘normal’ and itinerancy as ‘abnormal’ carry over into the literature dealing with the schooling experiences of itinerant children – and doing so helps to perpetuate the marginalisation of those children.

This construction of the ‘itinerant:abnormal’ homology was implicit in the definition of ‘itinerant children’ presented by the compilers of the *Australian thesaurus of education descriptors* (Lavender & Findlay, 1984):

Children who move frequently with their families from one semipermanent location to another – includes children of military personnel, construction workers, gipsies, etc. (p. 114)

Attempting to include the widely varying experiences and patterns of itinerancy in a single, brief definition such as this is not effective. In this case, for example, the significant differences between the show people's organisational strength that derives from the Showmen's Guild of Australasia and the 'extended family' basis of operating most Australian circuses are elided in the almost throwaway "*etc.*". The inadequacy of this definition derives from its implicit assumption that 'the norm' is permanent location, and the corollary belief that if people are unfortunate enough to have to move at least they can enjoy the benefits of moving "*from one semipermanent location to another*". In other words, the location (or what de Certeau [1984] would call 'the place') is privileged, and in the process any understanding that moving is potentially pleasurable and enabling is elided.

This depiction of itinerancy as 'abnormal' characterised the majority of studies in the 1960s and 1970s – and has continued as a theme in some research in the 1990s. To be a travelling student in that period was to be the recipient of considerable academic concern, verging on pity. Swendson (1958) used a gardening metaphor, by comparing itinerant students to the processes of "*transplanting vegetables, flowers, or nursery stock*" (p. 332). She acknowledged that for children "*The results of the transition are infinitely more important than the results of moving plants, but many of the relationships are parallel*" (p. 332). She concluded by emphasising the ameliorative role that education could perform for such an itinerant child:

Best of all, like the well-adjusted plant, he [sic passim] sends out new shoots of growth. In school achievement, in social relations, and in personal development, he blossoms into fuller living and learning. When

these signs appear, the teacher knows that the transplanted child has taken root and is at home. (p. 334)

Levine (1966), an American clinic psychologist, hypothesised that “*any move represents both a problem in adaptation for children, and an opportunity for the development of preventative mental health programs*” (p. 62). Although he acknowledged, “*While it seems reasonable to expect a relationship between the frequency of moves and academic performance, some studies do not obtain the expected [negative] result. . .*” (p. 67), his overall finding was emphatic in relation to the connections between itinerancy and school adjustment: “*The problem is clear, but the solution is far from obvious*” (p. 68).

The response by Morris, Pestaner and Nelson (1967) to a confounding in their research of their hypotheses about the different achievement levels of itinerant and non-itinerant students was to point to what they assumed were the contaminating effects of “*individual prediction and personality variables*” (p. 78). The authors identified “*the etiologically significant variable*” in the link between itinerancy and academic achievement as likely to be “*the value system and motivation of the child and his [sic passim] family; i. e., what kind of child tends to improve, or retain his status with mobility and what kind of child suffers a decrement with mobility?*” (p. 78). They expressed their frustration that “*Analyses in the research literature on mobility, to date, do not contribute to this vexing problem*” (p. 78). As I elaborate below, I regard these kinds of “*Analyses*” as misconceived and as contributing little to a genuine understanding of the educational needs and

aspirations of itinerant people. This is therefore a literature that I disavow rather than one upon which I seek to build.

Two other and extreme explications of the assumption that itinerancy is a mostly negative experience (a proposition from which I vigorously dissent in this thesis) also appeared in 1967. One was the *Plowden report* (Plowden, 1967), which designated Gypsies as “*Britain’s most educationally deprived group*”. The other, which itself used the term “*extreme*” to refer to a particular group of itinerant people, was a study of Gypsy education in Britain:

. . . although the group of children involved is too small to justify a discussion of this length in the body of our Report, the children’s educational needs are nevertheless extreme and largely unmet. Moreover the economic and social handicaps of the group from which they come arise to a large extent from the fact that successive generations of gipsy children are deprived of the education that would enable them to compete on equal terms with the rest of the community. Extreme as they are, the needs of gipsy children cannot be effectively met by measures of the kind we recommend for the more general problems of urban deprivation. (Adams & Smith, 1967, p. 595)

In the early and mid 1970s, the Swedish psychologist Joseph Schaller published several studies relating itinerancy to such issues as emotional wellbeing and school behaviour. Often his studies reported contradictory findings. For example, “*Research results on the relations of residential change to mental health are inconsistent*” (Schaller, 1972, p. 5), and “*There are children who suffer from a move, but also children who benefit from it*”

(Schaller, 1975, p. 3). Schaller's response to this inconsistency conformed to that of most writers on Traveller education: he questioned the research design of the studies (1972, p. S), or he emphasised the apparently unequivocal negative associations of itinerancy: *"These results show clearly that geographic mobility is related to poor school adjustment, especially peer relations"* (1975, p. 3). The following statement encapsulated his overall view of itinerancy: *"It is very important to recognise this potential social problem and to try to help the child during the adjustment process after a family move"* (p. 3).

Whalen and Fried (1973) extrapolated from the results of their tests of itinerant and non-itinerant senior high school students in Livermore, California that *"a relationship does exist between mobility and achievement"* (p. 165). They acknowledged that this relationship could be either positive or negative, so that *"It is possible that the interests and attitudes of higher intelligence students are stimulated by frequent geographic relocations"*, and *"Less capable students may find frequent moves too bewildering to cope with"* (p. 165). (Long [1975] made a similar finding, hypothesising that *"Interstate migration is most likely to be undertaken by well-educated persons whose children tend to do well in school"* [p. 369], but he also noted that *"Except for children of college graduates, . . . increasing frequency of interstate migration is associated with increasing likelihood of a child's being enrolled below the modal grade"* [p. 373].) Nevertheless, their overall conclusion was in keeping with the 'problem' and 'difficulty' discourse that characterises most studies of Traveller education: *"Because we live in such a highly mobile society, educators and counselors should be aware of the*

problems faced by their mobile students and be ready to help those who find more difficulty in adjusting to new school settings” (p. 165).

Commentators in the 1980s and 1990s would hesitate to use words such as “*extreme*”, “*handicaps*” and “*deprivation*” in relation to itinerancy. These underlying preconceptions nevertheless continue to characterise the tenor of most contemporary writings on Traveller education. For example, King-Stoops (1980), in presenting her list of “*Goals for Migrant [Itinerant] Education*” (p. 16), referred to the children of seasonal fruit pickers in the United States of America, and related the statement of Carlos, one such child, that he did not want to become a lettuce picker like his father. According to King-Stoops, “*Neither does the school want to see Carlos end up as a lettuce picker. The school’s ultimate goal for Carlos is to have him get as much intellectual and social distance between himself and the lettuce fields as he is able*” (p. 16). This aim contrasts starkly with the determination of the Queensland show people to maximise their children’s access to formal education without threatening the continuation of their cultural traditions. Such a contrast reflects the point that, while this kind of literature can be useful, it fails to address the broader questions with which I am concerned regarding culturally produced understandings of marginalisation and disadvantage, and the ways in which marginalising effects *can* be challenged without the abandonment of a particular lifestyle.

An equally marked contrast was evident in an account of Operation SAIL (“Students Assimilated Into Learning”) (Panagos, Holmes, Thurman, Yard & Spaner, 1981, p. 452), an innovative orientation program for new students in a Missouri suburban school district. The program’s three components included

teacher professional development, parental orientation and involvement, and student development in cognitive and affective domains (p. 453). On the one hand, the program was described very positively, and was shown to have “*significant gains within the academic domains*” (p. 463) (although the gains in the affective domains were found to be “*minimal*” [p. 463]). On the other hand, the students involved in the program, who had been selected on the basis of having migrated from the inner city areas and who therefore exhibited limited patterns of itinerancy, were constructed as “*new students with educational deficits [who] can be remediated and assimilated into the mainstream of their new school district*” (p. 467). In other words, the well-conceived educational program was judged by its effectiveness in remedying the students’ “*educational deficits*”. That those “*deficits*” were constructed as linking itinerancy (even in a limited form) to poverty, low socio-economic status and people of colour reflects many of the preconceptions of the literature on Traveller education (and confirms the synthesis cited earlier by Lucassen and his colleagues [1998] of the “*two closely connected paradigm*” [p. 2] that have perpetuated negative stereotypes about itinerant people for centuries).

In the same way, Blair, Marchant and Medway (1984) reported on a program that they had developed for mobile military parents to assist their children to assimilate into new schools. Generalising from the effectiveness of that program, the authors concluded, in terms that again linked itinerancy with “*school problem*” that school personnel must work to “*reduce*”:

By recognizing the needs of families in transition, counselors and psychologists in schools can broaden their roles to serve a needed function, namely, the provision of planned consultation and training services designed to reduce the number of children exhibiting school problems because of relocation. (p. 258)

Taking up some of the themes of the *Plowden report* (Plowden, 1967) in the United Kingdom, *Education for all* (Swann, 1985) included Travellers in a report devoted to the education of children from ethnic minority groups in that country, prompted by concerns by West Indian parents about their children's education (p. vii). Fairground and circus children were excluded from the section of the report dealing with Travellers because of lack of resources rather than because they did not conform to the criterion of "*ethnic minority groups*" (p. 748, note 11). However, *Education for all* included a 1983 discussion paper from the English Department of Education and Science that emphasised that "*Fairground and circus children experience particular problems in maintaining continuity of education, because their families move so frequently*" (p. 759). The correlation in this construction is clear: the itinerant parents are the cause of their children's educational "*problems*", which the Department is thereby required to address.

Rahmani (1985) developed the concept of "*turbulence*" to describe the harmful effects on the children of service personnel of continually transferring from one school to another. Particular problems have been identified as including parental perceptions of inconsistencies in State based educational delivery (Duffy, 1986), and teachers' and itinerant students' preconceptions

about one another and the children's schooling experiences (Mills, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c).

All of this indicates that there is a great deal of emphasis almost exclusively on what is 'wrong' with itinerancy. Indeed, the usually unspoken assumption and starting point for these accounts is that itinerancy is inherently problematic and scandalous. This false assumption creates a scholarly 'blind spot': literature predicated on this assumption fails to address, or even to acknowledge, the issue of what is 'wrong' with a 'mainstream' education that can represent itinerancy only in negative terms of 'deviance' and 'lack'. This thesis, by contrast, seeks to highlight that 'blind spot' and to turn the spotlight onto 'mainstream' education that routinely marginalises the education of Travellers but that potentially can help to make Traveller education transformative and enabling.

In a similar vein to other studies that described education programs in terms of 'remedying' the 'educational deficit' involved in itinerancy, Harrington (1987) listed some of the elements of that 'deficit': "*Migrant [itinerant] children are among the most vulnerable in America's classrooms. Theirs is a history of poverty, mobility, cultural alienation, and low expectations becoming self-fulfilling prophecies*" (p. 37). Although he acknowledged that itinerant students' strengths included "*resiliency, resourcefulness, and responsiveness*" (p. 38), Harrington's overriding construction of itinerancy as educationally harmful was encapsulated in his pleasure at recording one fruit picking family's ambitions to graduate from high school and attend college: "*Alex and his siblings will be bucking the statistics, which show that about 90 percent of migrant [itinerant] kids follow*

their parents into the fields. But kids like Alex are the success stories that remind all educators what is possible” (p. 39). For Harrington, “success stories” and itinerancy were mutually exclusive phenomena.

A group of specialists in itinerant education at a UNESCO sponsored conference in 1989 asserted:

The education of the children of nomadic, migrant and itinerant groups has been considered a major problem needing the attention and consideration of governments and national and international organisations. It is the firm belief that, without a prompt consideration of this problem, at a time when other children of sedentary groups are advancing in science and technology, the children of mobile groups will be marginalised for lack of adequate preparation to cope with the changes of the future. This will create an impediment to them and to others. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1989, paragraph 53)

Miller and Cherry (1991) presented a series of strategies designed to assist itinerant students to adjust to their new schools. In doing so, they acknowledged that itinerancy influenced those students in different ways, and that more intelligent students often found itinerancy an intellectually stimulating experience (pp. 15 and 51). Nevertheless, the dominant discourse in their publication constructed itinerancy as ‘stressful’ and ‘difficult’ and as creating educational challenges that schools must address. For example, “Frequent moves do not reduce the stress associated with relocation” (p. 17), “Children who move about are at risk socially and emotionally” (p. 51) and “The special needs of these mobile children demands schools and

parents accept the responsibility for addressing the needs” (p. 52). Once again ‘blame’ for the ‘problem’ was directed at itinerant families, rather than at educational systems, even though schools were identified **as** carrying the burden of ameliorating the educational side effects of this undesirable lifestyle.

Miller and Cherry drew a particularly bleak picture in relation to the educational opportunities of the children of itinerant fruit picking families: *“Migratory children face challenges and stresses unique to their nomadic way of life”* (p. 13). The authors also noted that *“Although these youngsters pass from state to state, they acquire little knowledge of the places they pass through since most of the travel is done at night”* (p. 14). By contrast, the Queensland show families travel mostly during the day, and many of them comment on the educational uses to which this travel is put.

Despite their complaint about the dearth of research into itinerant education, Birch, Lally and Tomlinson (1986, p. 1) felt sufficiently emboldened to hypothesise that *“frequent changes of schools will be disruptive to the social and intellectual development of children”*. Their own preliminary research (1986, p. 21) suggested that itinerancy *“may have a cumulative negative effect on academic achievement”*.

Lally’s (1993, pp. 201-202) summary of the study in which he had earlier been involved (Birch, Lally & Tomlinson, 1986) drew a bleak, even depressing, picture of itinerant education:

1. Itinerancy poses a world-wide educational problem. The research evidence is conclusive in suggesting that children in itinerant families are disadvantaged educationally, compared with stable-resident family populations. Furthermore, it is the younger child who is most adversely [affected]. . . . Hence not only is there a special problem faced by the itinerant child, it is one which has to be addressed at the earliest possible age, in the pre-school and early school years.

2. Parents ~~of~~ itinerant families may themselves have come ~~from~~ itinerant families and, ~~f~~ so, it is also likely that they may have had limited access to post-school educational provisions. . .

3. It is symptomatic ~~of~~ the attention paid to itinerant families that Australian statistics are not available to determine their number. . .

4. Itinerancy is not merely a feature ~~of~~ the tyranny ~~of~~ distance such as Australia experiences. It is also a feature ~~of~~ the major metropolitan centres which contain most ~~of the~~ country's population. The caravan parks and other evidence ~~of~~ mobility support this contention. . .

*Itinerancy **is** also a problem ~~of~~ international importance and not one peculiar to Australia. Mobility and distance are synonymous with the educational disadvantage ~~of~~ children.*

The last point in Lally's list echoed an earlier finding by Smith, Husbands and Street (1969). These authors argued that "*pupil mobility has significant retarding influences upon intellectual achievement among slum children*", and that this relationship between mobility and achievement "*is greater before third grade than afterwards*" (p. 269). The authors **claimed to**

draw on “*an extensive tradition of research pointing to the fact that mobility itself has basically disruptive properties*” (p. 270), which could be considered to underscore the marginalised status of itinerant students.

Further discussion of the negative connotations of educational itinerancy was included in Binns’ (1990) account of recent attempts to expand the provision of Traveller education in the United Kingdom, in a clause of the Education Reform Act of 1988. He alleged that Traveller children were at least potentially liable to greater rather than reduced marginalisation, contrary to the original intention of the policy makers, because local management of schools increased pressure to discourage school attendance by lower achieving students at schools competing for government grants. Similarly, with the introduction of the National Curriculum:

Teachers will find an extra difficulty in having to cater for pupils who have missed out on large areas of school experience. . . . A sudden influx of numbers of unschooled, unskilled pupils could completely disrupt the teacher’s planned progress through the levels of the Key Stages for the class. (1990, p. 257)

Binns (1990) acknowledged that both local management of schools and the introduction of the National Curriculum also had the potential to assist the educational provision for Traveller children. The point to emphasise here is that Traveller education is portrayed as unstable and subject to the uncertainties – if not the vagaries – of broader government policy and educational change. An associated assumption by the educational system is that itinerant students are automatically disposed to be less academically successful than

their permanently resident peers – clearly a supremely unhelpful assumption if the aim is to disrupt and reduce the marginalisation of itinerant people.

A recent Australian commentator on itinerancy (Fields, 1995, 1997) echoed most of the themes identified in this subsection. For example, he claimed in one article, *“The findings of this study are strongly indicative of mobility having adverse effects on both the social and academic achievement of young adolescents”* (1995, p. 30). Similarly, in another paper he noted, *“It is widely believed that children who change schools frequently are adversely affected by the experience. Research on the effects of student mobility seems to support this belief”* (1997, p. 47). Fields acknowledged that *“There have been contrary findings, however, and this has led some researchers to describe the link between mobility and school adjustment as ‘inconsistent’.. ‘mixed’.. and ‘inconclusive’..”* (1997, p. 47). Despite this qualification, he concluded his article with the following comment about the Australian literature: *“What is missing is a broad recognition of the significance of the problem [of itinerancy] as a social and educational issue. Such recognition should be the impetus for a far greater resolve to do something about it”* (1997, p. 53). In many ways very little has changed in the perceptions of itinerancy from the studies in the 1960s and 1970s reported at the beginning of this subsection.

I have not intended in this subsection to suggest that itinerancy is a universally happy and educationally valuable experience. On the contrary, in the data analysis chapters many show people refer to the difficulties of occupational travelling. My intention has been to highlight constructions in the literature of itinerancy as inherently educationally disabling, creating

‘deficits’ and ‘gaps’ that formal education must work hard to address and remedy. I have sought to relate these constructions to a deeply embedded stereotype that views itinerants **as** deviating from accepted social ‘norms’ associated with permanent residence. As the data analysis chapters demonstrate, it is precisely this marginalising stereotype that the Queensland show people actively resist and seek to transform into a more enabling and satisfying form of educational provision. It follows that this is a section of the literature – and a major and in some ways still dominant one at that – from which I depart in this thesis; indeed, I pose a very different framework for looking at the issues of itinerancy and Traveller education.

2.3.3 Some exceptional studies

Despite the prevalence of marginalising stereotypes about itinerant people identified above, a small but growing number of publications has departed from the pervasive view of Traveller education **as** inherently disadvantageous to participants. From the perspective of this thesis, these publications have contributed to a necessary resistance and intended transformation of the marginalisation too often associated with itinerancy and Traveller education.

The earliest example that I encountered was written by an American primary school principal (Evans, 1966), who deduced from itinerant and non-itinerant students’ scores on achievement tests that itinerant students performed consistently, but not significantly, more effectively in arithmetic, reading, science and social science than their non-itinerant **peers**. Arguing that *“mobility does not have an adverse effect upon the academic achievement of*

those students who have experienced it” (p. 22), Evans’s concluding words make a salutary contrast to the stereotypes perpetuated by considerably more recent studies:

*If moving must be considered a “handicap,” **as** we have traditionally thought it is, then this study shows definite ability on the part of the mobile students to adjust. The resiliency so evident in the bones of the youngster seems to manifest itself in his [sic passim] personality, and thus he is able to bounce back **from** the “handicap” and achieve acceptably. (p. 22)*

Barrett and Noble (1973) applied **a** questionnaire and the Louisville Behavior Check List to one hundred and fifty-nine families in Louisville in the United States of America to establish whether mothers’ fears about the impact of long distance moves on their children were realised. The researchers found that *“The results ~~of~~ this study suggest that anxiety about negative effects of moving on the emotional adjustment ~~of~~ children represented by this sample were largely unfounded”* (p. 187). Furthermore, emphasising social agency in a similar way **to** this thesis, the researchers concluded:

*Within the limits ~~of~~ this study, it is **our** view that the long distance move should be laid to rest as a specific variable in children’s disorders. It seems more appropriate to us **for** families who face a move to **focus** on their adaptive strategies rather than to seek out ways to avoid “stress.”* (p. 188)

Continuing this theme of resisting and seeking to transform the marginalising stereotype of itinerancy, while conducting research into British Traveller education, Reiss (1975, p. 2) felt

...increasing apprehension about the almost universal view expressed by teachers that Travellers and their children were suffering from acute verbal deprivation which was, in many cases, seen as an insurmountable obstacle to educational progress.

With tongue firmly in cheek, Reiss (1975, p. 3) described the discipline of education in the early 1970s:

There was more interest than ever before in the world's distinctive minority groups. . . . The ubiquitous European Gipsies and travellers, the fairground and circus showmen, and the bargees of Europe could be looked upon as another fascinating area for action and research. The days of concentration on the 'normal' child were over.

Presenting a summary of his findings, Reiss (1975, p. 8) cautioned against the automatic designation of itinerant people as “disadvantaged”:

Though Travellers often reveal classic symptoms of severe social and cultural deprivation, they cannot easily be placed within the general spectrum of the disadvantaged. Their unique and fascinating case presents a very real challenge to teachers and administrators.

Continuing this cautionary tone, Lacey and Blane (1979) concluded from their meta-analysis of studies of itinerancy:

The simple assumption. . .that more geographic mobility necessarily means an impairment of academic attainment can be shown to be erroneous. The direct effect of mobility is likely to be small and be itself affected by the social context and reasons for mobility. (p. 200)

Lacey and Blane (1979) warned in particular against generalising to all itinerant groups from the various studies of children of military personnel, on the grounds that to do so “ignores the complex interrelationship of social class factors and educational attainment and the confounding variables within the mobility matrix” (p. 205).

Brett (1982) discussed a study of three hundred and fifty United States families whose jobs were highly mobile, compared with three samples of non-mobile people. Her interest lay in discerning the relationship between the participants’ mobility and their sense of wellbeing. Her study found that mobile people were generally similar to non-mobile people in relation to the work, self, marriage and family life, and standard of living dimensions of their wellbeing. On the other hand, “the only data that consistently separated the mobile sample from the comparison samples” (p. 460) pertained to a higher level of dissatisfaction with social relationships for both mobile adults and children. Brett’s conclusion was accordingly positive about the link between mobility and wellbeing:

Few families in the transfer sample believed moving is easy. However, the data from this study show that despite their mobility, these families were as satisfied with all aspects of their lives, except social relationships, as were stable families. (p. 462)

Talung a positive view of what others have perceived **as** the drawbacks of Traveller education, Pullin (1985), himself a member of a longstanding Yorkshire fairground family, cited a British school principal whose school was attended by show children:

*The Travellers are a breath of fresh air in the school. With their supportive home backgrounds, they are courteous, co-operative, hard-working and want to learn. They know **who** they are, **what** they are **and** where **they** are going.* (p. 2; emphasis in original)

Pullin (1985) commented about this statement, “*This will certainly have an important bearing on formulating appropriate aims and methods in providing an appropriate education for these children*” (p. 2). In other words, the positive attributes of itinerancy, such **as** the show children’s social maturity and personal confidence, need to be enhanced rather than eroded by the schooling provided for them. The alternative is the situation described by one of Pullin’s informants: “*Because of my people’s wandering about most of the year, our children don’t get the education they should*” (p. 1).

Pullin’s (1985) set of case studies began with “*a success story*” that in his view “*convincingly illustrates what an individual can achieve, given determination and support from people in a position to advise and assist others to achieve their educational potential and ambitions*” (p. 4). This “*success story*” concerned a young woman who left school early but whose thirst for academic knowledge led her, against considerable odds, to return to secondary school, complete a degree in economics and begin a preservice teacher education course. Pullin’s comment on this “*success story*” reflected

his construction of itinerancy as not inherently disabling but rather as the potential site of the exercise of individual agency:

*Whether or not she returns to follow her traditional life of a travelling showman [sic] following the completion of her university studies or pursues a career outside showland is insignificant. She will have realised her personal potential and ambition and can **choose** to return or not return as a free agent. She is now able to make a **free, rational** choice, the **most important** gift of education.* (p. 6; emphasis in original)

The then Queensland Department of Education Northern Region (1992) provided a somewhat grudging acknowledgment that itinerancy was not necessarily intrinsically disadvantageous to participants: “*There are both positive and negative aspects to moving, and care should be taken to ensure that mobility is not always seen as a ‘problem’*” (Book 1, p. 10).

Brown and Orthner (1990) studied the experiences of itinerancy of seven hundred and twenty early adolescents from five communities in the United States of America, in an effort to trace the connection between mobility and personal wellbeing (measured in terms of self-esteem, alienation, depression and life satisfaction) in this age group. They were particularly interested in the gender dimension of this connection. Contrary to much of the literature on mobility and adolescence, Brown and Orthner found that the only significantly lower measure was mobile girls’ general life satisfaction, which led the researchers to hypothesise “*that females may require more time to make substantial adaptation to relocations and that high mobility rates may inhibit that capability*” (p. 378). On the other hand, the researchers’ overall conclusion conveyed a positive view of itinerancy: “*The present study’s*

findings that substantial changes in self-worth were not found to result from moving may offer some hope to parents and others who are concerned with dramatic psychological effects following a work-induced family relocation” (p. 378).

Lee and Warren (1991) explored the sophisticated alternative conception of education developed by the Romanis or Gypsies, a group often compared with occupational Travellers such as show people, and with its own substantial literature that is outside the provenance of this thesis. This educational conception is derived from Sophistic and Socratic traditions and the ideas of Georges Sorel and quantitative instrumentalism (whereby “*The Romani is quite happy to be trained. But this is always and everywhere only to the extent that this training reinforces Romani life*” [p. 319; emphasis in original]), and is based on a crucial distinction between education and schooling. Lee and Warren’s concluding note (1991, p. 322) was infectiously admiring:

Perhaps a boast expressed by the Romanis – but one with a large element of truth and one which few Gaje [non-Romani] would feel confident to make – captures the value they place on their own education system, and is a fitting note on which to end: “You could put me down anywhere in the world and I could make a living”.

Máirín Kenny’s book *The routes of resistance: Travellers and second-level schooling* (1997) provided an admirable of educational provision for Irish Travellers in one school. Kenny’s approach, drawing on theorists such as Bourdieu, Giddens and Giroux, was to examine the posited links between the Travellers’ ethnicity and their practices of resistance in the educational setting that she investigated. In the process, she sought to shift the focus of

attention from “*the all too commonly discussed ‘Traveller problem’*” to what she termed “*the provider problem*” (p. 7). In doing so, Kenny consciously eschewed “[s]ub-culture of poverty theory” in favour of “*ethnicity theory*” as “*the most powerful framework to date for analysis of issues relating to Irish Travellers*” (p. 59), and, with clear parallels to the approach taken in this study, she focussed on how Irish Traveller children’s identity (including their ethnic identity) animated their resistance – and potentially their transformation – of marginalising schooling practices.

In an exemplary demonstration of teacher-as-researcher and reflective practitioner, Cathy Kiddle, Coordinator of the Devon County Council Traveller Education Consortium in the United Kingdom, has drawn on her life experiences as an educator of both fairground children and Gypsy Travellers to highlight the erroneousness of ‘deficit’ assumptions about Travellers. In *Travelling children: A voice for themselves* (Kiddle, 1999), she traced negative educational experiences to the prevailing discriminatory stereotypes ascribed to Travellers, yet she also demonstrated the mutual benefits accruing from positive educational experiences based on reciprocal trust and understanding (a theme that she continued in Kiddle, 2000). (A similar approach was taken by Elizabeth Jordan [2000] with her research into Scottish Traveller families, and also by Ursula Scholten [2000] about the education of Dutch bargee people.) Earlier (Kiddle, 1981) she had used her account of living in a caravan to work for a touring theatre company to emphasise the fundamental link between itinerancy and educational provision – or lack thereof.

Although the education of nomadic pastoralists and fisherpeople is outside the province of this study, it is pertinent to note the work of the Nigerian National Commission for Nomadic Education. Established in 1990, the Commission has carried out an effective lobbying of the Nigerian government to enhance educational provision for those two groups. The Commission distributes a biannual magazine called *Nomadic Education News*, and in 1998 published the inaugural issue of a planned annual journal entitled *Journal of Nomadic Studies*. In addition, the Commission has also published monographs about nomadic education in Nigeria (Ezewu & Tahir, 1997; Tahir, 1991; Tahir & Muhammad, 1998) and more broadly in Africa (Tahir, 1997). Consciously eschewing a 'deficit' approach to conceptualising nomadism, the Commission locates nomadic education in the context of the culture, economics, history and politics of nomadic people and in the broader perspective of a developing country that continues to position itself as a postcolonial nation. A similarly socially critical approach underpins the work of Caroline Dyer (2000; Dyer & Choksi, 1998) in her research into Indian nomadic pastoralists, and also Bernadette Robinson's (1999) study of the education of Mongolian nomadic pastoralists.

Another group of itinerant people who are outside the parameters of this thesis are the Gypsy Travellers. Nevertheless it is important to note the pioneering work of the Gypsy Research Centre in Paris, which was established at about the same time as the European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers, which I discuss below. Under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Liégeois, the Gypsy Research Centre has lobbied the European Commission to help to improve the life chances of European Gypsy Travellers, including the enhancement of educational

provision, partly through its regular publication *Interface* and partly through monographs that it has published or sponsored (Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and Other Travellers, 1993; Liégeois, 1998). The dominant discourse underpinning the Centre's activities has been the previous and ongoing discrimination against European Gypsy Travellers and the denial of their equal human rights.

The resistant and transformative potential of studies such as those promoted by the Gypsy Research Centre, and indeed such as this thesis aspires to be, was realised in a recent publication by the Leeds Travellers Education Service (Saunders, Clarke, Kendall, Lee, Lee & Matthews, 2000). Entitled *Gypsies and Travellers in their own words: Words and pictures of travelling life*, the **book** featured lively, amusing and often moving accounts by Gypsy Travellers from the Leeds area of England of their lives and their educational experiences. The movement from being 'written out of' official and academic discourse to producing their own text demonstrates the power of constantly circulating counternarratives to the traditional 'stories' about itinerant people.

A particularly significant contribution to the literature on Gypsy Travellers, with strong resonances with this thesis, was McVeigh's (1997) effort to engage in what he called "[t]heorising *sedentarism*", whereby "*the roots of anti-nomadism*" (p. 7) could be laid bare. McVeigh defined *sedentarism* "**as that system of ideas and practices which serves to normalise and reproduce sedentary *modes* of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic *modes of existence***" (p. 9). This definition sets in sharp focus, and helps to explain, the various negative assumptions and stereotypes underpin-

ning many conventional studies of Traveller education. McVeigh's analysis has the virtue of a historical grounding that demonstrates that these assumptions and stereotypes have a very lengthy provenance, having been evident in different ways in the transition to agriculture, the fall of the Roman Empire and the move to industrialisation. The contemporary marginalisation of Australian show people elaborated in Chapter Five thus has a much older heritage than the beginning of British colonisation in Australia in 1788.

McVeigh's (1997) analysis is helpful also in strengthening and putting in a broader historical and sociological perspective the two logical extremes of 'unproblematic othering' and 'unproblematic celebration' posited below. Following McVeigh, the major point to emphasise here is that both these extremes are equally destructive and antithetical to accurate representations and understandings of itinerant people. According to McVeigh:

It is wrong to use notions which reproduce the dichotomy between 'good' Travellers (ethnic, exotic, romantic, free) and bad travellers (non-ethnic, dispossessed and debased sedentaries, subcultures of poverty). In fact, the suggested dichotomy between the construction of the romanticised 'RaggleTaggle Gypsy' and the pathologised 'itinerant' is a false one. Both simultaneously inform Contemporary ideas about, and the treatment of, all nomadic peoples. (p. 15; emphasis in original)

Furthermore, McVeigh (1997) argued that, as well as both these "romanticised" and "pathologised" constructions of itinerant people (which parallel respectively the 'unproblematic celebration' and 'unproblematic othering' identified at the end of this section of the chapter) underpinning "contemporary ideas about, and the treatment of" those people, those same

constructions feed equally ineluctably and deleteriously into ideas about what should be 'done about' those people.

Thus both 'liberal' and 'reactionary' sedentarisms have posited 'final solutions' to the 'problem of nomads' which actively seek their annihilation. Because of this the historical and contemporary treatment of nomads should not be dichotomised as repressive extermination versus sympathetic assimilation. Rather both approaches have been part of a complex dialectic committed to a 'final solution' to the 'problem of nomads'. (p. 22)

While some observers might find McVeigh's (1997) reference to "a 'final solution'" extreme, such a reference emphasises the seriousness and the significance of the kind of analysis undertaken in this thesis. It also reflects the extremely high 'stakes' involved in Traveller education, whereby inappropriate schooling provision *can* shade all too readily from "sympathetic assimilation" into "repressive extermination" – or from "sympathetic incorporation" into "unsympathetic repression" as McVeigh also named these processes (p. 23). Certainly such inappropriate provision contributes crucially to the ongoing marginalisation of Australian show people, as Chapter Five demonstrates.

The European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers (EFECOT) was established in 1988 (the year before the beginning of the specialised education program for the Queensland show children). Based in Brussels, Belgium, EFECOT is financially supported by various funds provided by the European Commission and uses its connections with other bureaucrats to promote the educational interests of European

occupational Travellers. Its four target groups are fairground children, circus children, bargee children (who live on the barges that ply their trade in Europe's inland waterways) and the children of seasonal fruit pickers (added latterly).

The reason for examining selected EFECOT publications in this literature review is twofold. Firstly, these publications provide a stark contrast to most of the literature on Traveller education that constructs itinerancy as a 'problem' to be 'solved'. EFECOT's approach is generally to insist that the occupational Travellers' itinerant lifestyle is an intrinsically valuable and worthwhile set of experiences, and that educational systems need to change to make specialised and appropriate provision for these people.

Secondly, EFECOT has established a very effective lobbying base to promote the interests of European occupational Travellers. Its congresses are attended by ministers for education of several European countries and high level officials in the European Commission. It has forged close links with leading practitioners of Traveller education in such countries as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. While Australian show people still experience disruptions to the educational provision for their children when they cross state boundaries, EFECOT has contributed to a reduction in disruption to European occupational Travellers who routinely cross international borders as part of their employment.

In addition to its regular journal *Newsline*, many of the EFECOT publications are administrative, such as work programs and annual reports, and developmental, such as the strategy to evaluate the TOPILOT project (*"To OPTimize the Individual Learning process of Occupational*

Travellers”), whereby telematics technology using CD-i were provided to travelling families, initially in four subject areas in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Botke & Willems, 1996; Marks & Pullin, 1996). Other publications consist of handbooks for teachers of travelling students, and reports of the outcomes of meetings convened by EFECOT (see for example Bernaert, 1997; Knaepkens, Van Ryckeghem & Verheyen, 1993; Pullin, 1994).

The other major category of EFECOT publications is surveys of particular groups of occupational Travellers, sometimes in specific countries. Representative examples of such publications include *The education of fairground children in the European Community* (Knaepkens, 1989), *Survey: The number, age and geographical distribution of children of show and circus families in the Republic of Ireland* (Magee, 1992) and *The secondary education of circus and fairground children: Addressing discontinuity of learning through information provision and distance learning: Report on the United Kingdom Project A4(B7)* (The European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers, 1994).

These publications are typically detailed, painstaking and thorough. They are also almost entirely empirically grounded, with no explicit theoretical framework guiding the collection and analysis of the data that they report. Furthermore, the orientation of the research is almost exclusively quantitative, with an abundance of statistics and an absence of voices of individual occupational Travellers. This is perfectly appropriate, given the bureaucratic environment in which EFECOT operates, where the explication of outcomes and the measurement of achievement of those outcomes are integral elements

of EFECOT's interactions with other agencies in the European Commission. This work also makes a valuable contribution to research into Traveller education and itinerancy more generally, by providing information about such matters **as** the number of itinerants and the extent of their itinerancy.

On the basis of the stereotypical and marginalising literature analysed in the previous subsection of this chapter, it would seem that little has changed in the thirty-four years since Morris, Pestaner and Nelson (1967) observed: "*Perhaps mobility studies generally have suffered not ~~from~~ deficient but ~~from~~ an absent theoretical basis*" (p. 78). The exceptional studies canvassed in this subsection, however, indicate that there is a growing recognition of the need to move beyond marginalisation and to conduct research in ways that will resist and hopefully transform the easy assumption that itinerancy is 'deviant' or 'problematic'.

It is certainly that spirit of resistance and hopeful transformation that animates the ongoing and growing contribution to the literature on Traveller education by my colleagues and myself at Central Queensland University. A representative list of ~~our~~ publications appears just before Chapter One of this thesis, and includes the edited book *Beyond the ferris wheel: Educating Queensland show children* (Danaher, 1998a) and more recently the editing of a theme issue of the *International Journal of Educational Research* pertaining to Traveller and nomadic education in several different countries (Danaher, 2000b). Although we would certainly not claim to be free at the outset of the research in 1992 from many of the negative assumptions and stereotypes attending the education of itinerant people, since then we have concentrated increasingly on articulating and disrupting those assumptions and stereotypes,

which are central and crucial to the continuing marginalisation of the Australian show people. While this thesis is separate from that research project, it is consistent with, and both extends and makes appropriate use of concepts and theories deployed through, that work.

The main findings of this selective review of research into Traveller education are **as** follows:

- Relatively little has been published about Traveller education, in comparison with other **areas** of educational research. This highlights the crucial point that, just **as** itinerant people move ‘across’ physical spaces, their itinerancy has rendered them largely invisible to academic attention and recognition. This invisibility reinforces the related and equally vital point that where itinerancy occurs, marginalisation follows close behind. This thesis is intended to contribute both to redressing that invisibility and to demonstrating that that attribution of marginalisation is neither appropriate nor inevitable.
- Most studies are written with the assumption that itinerancy differs from the ‘norm’ of fixed residence and schooling, thereby creating inherent educational ‘problems’ for travelling students. As I noted above, this might be termed an ‘unproblematic othering’ of itinerant people, by constructing them **as** automatically ‘other’ to ‘normal’ people and hence **as** the cause of the educational ‘problem’ of schooling for Travellers. This thesis is avowedly founded in opposition to this ‘unproblematic othering’, which lies at the heart of the marginalisation of itinerant people and which stands squarely between them and equitable access to educational **services**.

- A small number of more ‘enlightened’ studies either recognises the heterogeneity of itinerancy or values the diversity of experiences and lifestyles that make up itinerancy. As shall become clear, this thesis is conceived as contributing to and extending that valuing, partly by representing itinerancy as the site of potential transformation and positive outcomes for itinerant people.
- At the same time, despite the few excellent studies noted above, there is a possible tendency for some more positive representations of itinerancy to display what might be termed the ‘unproblematic celebration’ of this distinctive lifestyle. This is the logical opposite of ‘unproblematic othering’: by highlighting the exotic ‘difference’ of itinerant people, such studies might suggest that itinerancy is a uniformly easy and enjoyable set of experiences. (In a sense ‘unproblematic celebration’ parallels the Romantic notion of the ‘noble savage’ as ‘unproblematic othering’ parallels the stereotype of the ‘ignoble savage’: both reflect equally distorted and deleterious images of Indigenous peoples or in this case of occupational Travellers.) This thesis takes issue with that kind of construction, which in certain respects is as suspect and dangerous as ‘unproblematic othering’, because it diminishes the struggles routinely faced by itinerant people and ignores the vital point that those struggles arise because itinerancy is devalued in comparison with sedentarism.

The literature on Traveller education – with some noteworthy exceptions – therefore has some major deficiencies. In particular, the correlation of itinerancy with ‘educational deficit’ is likely to replicate the marginalisation of

travelling students that these same studies ostensibly seek to ameliorate. As I have written elsewhere (Danaher, 2000c):

Certainly a major issue of concern is the resilience of the deficit model that constructs itinerancy as different, and deviant, from the norm of settled residence, with the corollary assumption that the education of itinerant people is inherently a problem needing “remediation” or a “solution.” (p. 224)

This “*deficit model*” constructs Traveller education as a ‘problem’ produced from the perspective of those who occupy the official ‘place’ of education (a point that I elaborate in the next chapter).

By contrast, this thesis constructs the itinerancy of the Queensland show people as creating opportunities for distinctive educational experiences for participants, and for the assertion of a powerful cultural identity in educational domains, thereby promoting resistance and transformation and a counternarrative about itinerancy and Traveller education. I regard this as a highly significant contribution to the literature on Traveller education.

2.4 Review of the chapter

This chapter has presented a critical review of two sets of literature:

- Australian shows
- Traveller education.

In each set, the intention was to evaluate the strengths and limitations of selected existing literature and to suggest entry points whereby this thesis could contribute significantly to knowledge.

With regard to Australian shows, the review demonstrated that these cultural forms have a long history and are associated with various experiences of itinerancy. That same itinerancy was identified **as** the source of considerable and enduring ambivalence in the relations between itinerant and local people: a sense of identification and of having a shared purpose in the activities arranged around a show was offset by mutual suspicion and misunderstanding. The ongoing and deleterious effect of that ambivalence was sustained marginalisation of show people and their lifestyle. This thesis analyses that marginalisation **as** it characterises and influences the interactions between the Queensland show people and others with whom they have regular contact, including the staff members of the Brisbane School of Distance Education.

That same marginalisation was held to characterise much of the literature on Traveller education. On the one hand, many studies characterise Traveller education **as** a positive response to the specialised educational needs of occupational Travellers such **as** the Queensland show people. On the other hand, this characterisation often derives from a construction of itinerancy **as** 'deficit', 'different' and 'disabling'. Notable exceptions to this general trend recognised itinerancy **as** a valid lifestyle and **as** a source of resistance and potential transformation of the marginalising dominant discourse. This thesis provides an intensive examination of one site in which itinerancy engages with these three enduring themes of marginalisation, resistance and transformation.

In doing so, it presents a counternarrative to traditional understandings of itinerant people and their education, and it contributes significantly to addressing the gaps and silences identified above in the existing literature.

To elaborate on the significance of that contribution, I return to a point that I made at the end of the previous section of this chapter. There I posited two logical extremes in the literature on Traveller education, which I termed an ‘unproblematic othering’ and an ‘unproblematic celebration’ of itinerancy. The former constructs itinerancy **as** a ‘problem’ and a ‘deviation’ from the ‘norm’ of sedentarism, and accordingly tends to ‘blame the victim’, by suggesting that itinerant people cause the ‘problem’ of lack of educational access by their perverse determination on living an ‘unnatural’ lifestyle. The latter constructs itinerancy as a set of exotic and exciting experiences; it displays a fascination with the ‘difference’ of an ‘unusual’ lifestyle. Yet it is equally deficient in understanding itinerancy, which is still conceived through a frame of ‘difference’ – *albeit* a more positively valued ‘difference’ – from the ‘norm’ of sedentarism. (Clearly the exceptional studies that I identified in the last part of the previous section do not engage in this ‘unproblematic celebration’, and they certainly eschew ‘unproblematic othering’.)

My final point in this chapter is that both these logical extremes are seriously inadequate for achieving a genuine understanding of itinerancy and of Traveller education. In juxtaposition, they suggest an ‘either/or’ dichotomy in the field: ‘either’ itinerant people automatically have negative experiences, ‘or’ they experience uniform and unalloyed excitement and pleasure, on account of their lifestyle (yet both poles of the dichotomy contribute directly to the ongoing marginalisation of itinerant people). This thesis rejects

completely that dichotomy, and posits instead a 'both/and' approach to understanding itinerancy and Traveller education. Such an approach accepts that itinerancy, like any manifestation of the human condition, entails both positive and negative experiences and possibilities. What is important is an acceptance of the dynamism and fluidity of those experiences and possibilities, in keeping with the physical mobility of itinerancy. This approach has the crucial advantage of moving beyond the twin conceptual perils of fixed marginalisation and superficial exoticisation. Instead, the recognition of the deep and enduring links between itinerancy and marginalisation is leavened by an awareness of the possibility of resistance and transformation of that marginalisation. Even more significantly, this approach allows for a fuller appreciation not only of the education of the specific group considered here but also of 'disadvantaged' groups more generally.

I turn in the next chapter to present and justify this thesis's conceptual framework. Through its application to the show children's education program, that framework demonstrates its viability in significantly extending understandings of itinerancy. In the process, a more dynamic and fluid comprehension of Traveller education, informed by this study of 'learning on the run', can be developed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*“‘Reading...seems to constitute the maximal development **of** the passivity assumed to characterize the consumer, who is conceived **of as** a voyeur (whether troglodytic **or** itinerant) in a ‘showbiz society’.”*

*“In reality, the activity **of** reading has on the contrary all the characteristics **of** a silent production: the drift **across** the page, the metamorphosis **of** the text effected by the wandering **eyes of** the reader, **the** improvisation and expectation **of** meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance.”*

de Certeau, 1984, p. xxi

*“In order to understand, it **is** immensely important **for the** person who understands to be located outside the object of his **or** her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. **For** one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it **as** a whole, and no mirrors **or** photographs can help; **our** real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others.”*

Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 7

3.1 Overview of the chapter

To this point, I have identified the problem with which this thesis is concerned as being what the Queensland show children's educational provision reveals about the intersection of education and marginalisation, resistance and transformation, as well as about broader issues in Australian Traveller education. The research questions guiding the analysis of the materials gathered to address this problem focus on three dimensions of the show people's lives arising from their itinerancy: their marginalisation, and their resistance and eventual transformation of that marginalised status. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two centred on two topics: Australian shows; and Traveller education. This study was posited as a counternarrative or 'alternative story' to traditional and debilitating stereotypes about itinerant people, particularly Australian show people, and as thereby contributing significantly to, and in some cases departing radically from, the existing literature.

The function of this chapter is to delineate the main elements in the thesis's conceptual framework, and in the process to suggest ways of conceptualising a reinvigorated Traveller education. In doing so, I seek to move beyond the either/or positions identified in the previous chapter: positions within which show people are commonly constructed as passive 'others' or de Certeauian exotics. The chapter consists of three sections:

- Michel de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption'
- Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'

- a synthesis of the conceptual framework guiding this thesis.

At this point I should emphasise that the selection and synthesis of these conceptual resources is neither accidental nor incidental. On the contrary, I demonstrate throughout this chapter that the conceptual framework has been chosen precisely because of its capacity to frame and inform my responses to the research questions cited above. From this perspective, the conceptual framework is an integral element of a coherent and consistent approach to understanding the educational experiences and opportunities of Queensland show people.

Specifically, I argued at the end of the previous chapter that this study is located directly in the ‘middle ground’ between two equally unhelpful ‘logical extremes’ evident in the literature about itinerant people and Traveller education. Those two extremes were identified **as** an ‘unproblematic othering’ and an ‘unproblematic celebration’ of itinerancy, whereby itinerancy is constructed respectively as inherently ‘deviant’ and ‘lacking’ and as superficially exciting and ‘special’. In eschewing both these constructions, I contended that itinerancy is ‘both/and’: both a valid and valuable lifestyle and subject to marginalisation that still admits of resistance and possible transformation. To support the study’s location in this ‘middle ground’, I need to deploy conceptual resources that in combination enable me to examine and understand three crucial **facets** of itinerant people’s lives:

- their marginalised status
- their capacity for resistance of that marginalisation

- their potential for transformation of that marginalisation and that resistance.

To elaborate this point, what binds the disparate elements of the conceptual framework together is the proposition that itinerancy involves distinctive relationships between people and space. It is this distinctive set of connections that explains the show people's sense of marginalisation, on account of their appearing to have no 'place' of their own. It explains also their efforts to resist and transform that marginalisation, by working to change the 'spaces' of itinerancy into 'places' that they *can* call 'home'.

Specifically, the argument underpinning this chapter – and this thesis – proceeds **as** follows

- The Queensland show people's itinerancy creates opportunities for them to turn the multiple spaces that they enter and leave into the 'spaces' that de Certeau (1984, 1986) envisaged **as** the sites of consumption, and thereby potentially of subversion, of their marginalised status.
- The show people's itinerancy provides opportunities for them to engage the outsideness and extend the creative understanding (Bakhtin, 1986a) of 'outsiders' to the show circuits, thereby maximising the prospect that 'the rules of the game' that marginalise itinerancy can be subverted and transformed.

It is these bonds among the elements of this conceptual framework that justify the selection and application in a single site of these particular and separate conceptual resources, and that support and strengthen the thesis's goal of

presenting a counternarrative about the show people and their education that is theoretically grounded and significant in itself.

3.2 De Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption'

Michel de Certeau's contribution to the conceptual framework framing this thesis is his concept of 'tactics of consumption'. This section of the chapter consists of three subsections:

- *The practice of everyday life (1984)*
- *Heterologies: Discourse on the other (1986)*
- applications and critiques of de Certeau's work.

The section is by no means intended as a comprehensive analysis of de Certeau's ideas, but rather as a selective focus on the 'tactics of consumption' and associated ideas that constitute the first major element of the study's conceptual framework.

Throughout the following discussion, the emphasis will be on how my appropriation of de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' will enable me to explain and theorise the show people's experiences of marginalisation and their efforts to resist and sometimes to transform that marginalisation. This will help to justify my claim that the thesis constitutes a counternarrative to traditional 'stories' about itinerant people and how they should be

educated. At the same time, I shall point out that an important limitation of de Certeau's approach is the inability to change 'the rules of the game' of marginalisation and subversion, which justifies my drawing also on Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

3.2.1 *The practice of everyday life* (1984)

De Certeau's research included forays into history, literary studies, cultural studies and psychoanalysis. Some of these varied disciplines were represented in de Certeau's book *The practice of everyday life* (1984), which was first published in 1974 and which was the key text for his elaboration of the concept of 'tactics of consumption'. Many elements of the argument of this book were packed densely into de Certeau's dedication, which is accordingly worth citing in full.

To the ordinary man [sic passim].

To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents. What are we asking this oracle whose voice is almost indistinguishable from the rumble of history to license us, to authorise us to say, when we dedicate to him the writing that one formerly offered in praise of the gods or the inspiring muses?

*This anonymous hero **is** very ancient. He is the murmuring voice of societies. In all ages, he comes before texts. He does not expect representations. He squats now at the centre of **our** scientific stages. The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons, turning first towards the **chorus** of secondary characters, then settling on the mass of the audience. The increasingly sociological and anthropological perspective of inquiry privileges the anonymous and the everyday in which zoom lenses cut out metonymic details – parts taken **for** the whole. Slowly the representations that formerly symbolised families, groups and orders disappear from the stage they dominated during the epoch of the name. We witness the advent of the number. It comes along with democracy, the large city, administration, cybernetics. It is a flexible and continuous mass, woven tight **like** a fabric with neither rips **nor** darned patches, a multitude of quantified heroes who lose names and faces **as** they become the ciphered river of the streets, a mobile language of computations and rationalities that belong **to no one**. (p. v)*

Despite the excess of masculine pronouns, this passage *can* be read **as** reflecting de Certeau's desire to focus academic attention on 'ordinary people' – the bit players, not the star actors, or those who are continually and routinely positioned at the **margins** rather than in the text itself. In the process, it was the actions and interactions of active social players that concerned him, rather than the operation of artificial forces or deterministic influences. Immediately we have a clear sense of de Certeau's celebration of human

agency on the part of all social participants, regardless of their degree of formal or overt power.¹

Another of de Certeau's contentions, that researchers should concern themselves with the micro more than with the macro level of events, was elaborated in his preface to the English translation of *The practice of everyday life* (1984).

For what I really wish to work out is a science of singularity; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances. And only in the local network of labour and recreation can we grasp how, within a grid of socio-economic constraints, these pursuits unfailingly establish relational tactics (a struggle for life), artistic creations (an aesthetic) and autonomous

¹ Ahearne (1995) expressed "reservation" about **this** dedication to the 'ordinary man' because "it is easy to forget that he does not exist" (p. 187). In a typically 'double edged' comment that contained **both** praise and criticism, Ahearne asserted that de Certeau's

... invocation of this fantasmatic, impossible figure (his other), needs to be read with half an eye on other rhetorical invocations of the term (by the Moral Majority, by the tabloid press, by every kind of politician). Only then could Certeau's arresting re-employment of the term be read less as ballast to his writing than as a powerful perspectival displacement upon the operations of learned analysis. (p. 187)

I discuss below my response to **this** kind of critique of de Certeau, arguing that the degree of human agency implicit in de Certeau's analysis is preferable to the less agential analyses against which he reacted, but that his view of **social** life does not readily account for changing 'the rules of the game' confronting such groups **as** the Queensland show people.

initiatives (an ethic). The characteristically subtle logic of these “ordinary” activities comes to light only in the details. And hence it seems to me that this analysis, as its bond to another culture is rendered more explicit, will only be assisted in leading readers to uncover for themselves, in their own situation, their own tactics, their own creations and their own initiatives. (p. ix)

Here de Certeau linked the idea of human agency that animated his dedication to a single name – “*tactics*” – that encapsulated and operationalised agency, particularly on the part of the less powerful and strong. That is, although all of us possess and deploy our “*owntactics*”, it is in situations where we are subordinate or vulnerable that we need to call on those specific resources.

Much of the “*General introduction*” to the book (pp. xi-xxiv) set out in programmatic form the theoretical framework guiding de Certeau’s empirical studies. He began by eschewing individuality (the elementary unit of the individual to which social groups can always be reduced). He was more interested in the “*modes of operation or schemata of action*” than in “*their authors or vehicles*” (p. xi). He continued:

The purpose of this work is to make explicit the systems of operational combination (les combinatoires d’opérations) which also compose a “culture”, and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term ‘consumers’. Everyday life invents itself by poaching in

countless ways on the property of others. (pp. xi-xii; emphasis in original)

In this passage, de Certeau introduced the terms “users” and “consumers” in the context of “culture”, and his proposition that these groups, despite their status “as the dominated element in society”, are in fact neither “passive” nor “docile”. Instead, they take part in “poaching in countless ways on the property of others”. In certain respects the show people engage in “poaching” on the spaces that they enter as a consequence of their itinerancy, as a prelude to their transformation of those spaces from marginalising to enabling territories for them.

“Consumer production”

Having introduced the argument that human agency is manifested through tactics, particularly by less powerful individuals and groups, and that those tactics are deployed by consumers, who in doing so resist the application of labels such as ‘helpless’ and ‘passive’, de Certeau divided his theoretical framework into two categories: “Consumer production” (p. xii) and “The tactics of practice” (p. xvii). With regard to the first category, he elaborated three “positive determinations” informing his research into “consumer production”. The first was “usage, or consumption” (p. xii): in addition to the representations of a society and its modes of behaviour, he believed that attention should be directed at “the use to which they are put by groups or individuals” (p. xii). He drew on a favourite example to elaborate this notion:

For instance, the ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonisers' 'success' in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were other within the very colonisation that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. The strength of their difference lay in procedures of 'consumption'. (p. xiii; emphasis in original)²

De Certeau's use of the term "*other*" in this passage differed crucially from its usual employment to denote a marginalised and generally powerless deviation from 'the norm'. Here "*other*" contains and nurtures agency, whereby the South American "*Indians*" were enabled to make use of the Spanish invaders' "*rituals, representations and laws*" in ways that gave

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In view of the 'personal note' with which I concluded Chapter One, it is appropriate to point out that elements of de Certeau's argument underpinned an earlier thesis in Australian history (Danaher, 1991), without my being aware of this at the time, in my analysis of how the Darnley Islanders in the Torres Strait 'made use of' and 'consumed' the meanings and values of Christianity, 'civilisation' and colonisation brought to the Strait by the London Missionary Society in 1871.

them meaning and purpose in their own terms, rather than in the conquerors' terms. "'Consumption'" is central to this process by virtue of its association with both subversion of domination and marginalisation and the recognition and enactment of difference. From this perspective, it is clear why de Certeau insisted that consumption is an active, not a passive, performance. For the same reason, I conceive of the show people's consumption of their educational experiences and opportunities **as** avowedly active and **as** being directed at resisting their marginalised status.

De Certeau's second determining concept of "*consumerproduction*" (p. xii) was "*the procedures of everyday creativity*". Here he showed both where he drew on and where he departed from Foucault's book *Discipline and punish* (1979). On the one hand, he concurred that

...the goal is to perceive and analyse the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life. ... (p. xiv)

On the other hand:

...the goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'. (pp. xiv-xv)

Two important attributes of ‘tactics’ are revealed in these two passages. Firstly, ‘tactics’ are pervasive and multifarious, “*a multitude*” that is “*articulated in the details of everyday life*”. Secondly, ‘tactics’ are both “*clandestine*” and immersed in the “*creativity of groups of individuals*”. In other words, a central reason for the success of ‘tactics’ in subverting marginalised status is that they are chameleon-like, evading attention because of the sheer number of their manifestations and working surreptitiously, ‘behind the scenes’, away from the spotlight of official notice.

De Certeau called the third organising principle of “*consumer production*” (p. xii) “*the formal structure of practice*” (p. xv). He contended that, even though they occur in particular contexts and lacked their own “*ideologies or institutions*” (p. xv), ways of usage and procedures of everyday creativity “*conform to certain rules*” based on a particular logic. To discern this logic, he suggested a combination of two techniques: conducting a number of descriptive and empirical investigations; and reading the scientific literature (particularly as it relates to rituals and networks, ordinary language, and formal logics and analytical philosophy). This thesis is conceived as both drawing on a detailed “*descriptive and empirical*” study and contributing to “*the scientific literature*”, in order to delineate “*the formal structure of practice*” in one setting of Traveller education for occupational Travellers.

His elaboration of these three determinants led de Certeau to posit a number of ironical statements about “*the marginality of a majority*”.

Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable and unsymbolised,

*remains the only one possible **for** all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has now become a silent majority.* (p. xvii)

For de Certeau, “a marginal group” was by no means homogeneous. “Social situations and power relationships” (p. xvii) come into play to make its members’ readings of and responses to ideas and images different and complex. Hence:

*...the necessity of differentiating both the ‘actions’ **or** ‘engagements’ (in the military sense) that the system of products effects within the consumer grid, and the various kinds **of** room to manoeuvre left **for** consumers by the situations in which they exercise their ‘art’.* (p. xvii)

The relevance of this passage to the argument being advanced in this thesis is twofold. Firstly, the passage reinforces de Certeau’s depiction of ‘tactics’ as taking many and varied forms, in response to “the system of products” operating “within the consumer grid”. Secondly, the implied reference to ‘tactics’ **as** taking up the “room to manoeuvre left **for** consumers” evokes the proposition that ‘tactics’ are the means by which variously marginalised individuals and groups are enabled to ‘consume’ and ‘make use of’ the spaces in which they are located and/or from which they are denied access. This is signified by de Certeau’s statement that “**our** research has concentrated above all on the uses **of** space, on the ways of frequenting **or** dwelling in a place. . .” (p. xxii).

The culmination of de Certeau's account of "*consumerproduction*" (p. xii) was its overt politicisation. Given the conflicts, tensions and balances inherent in culture, de Certeau asserted baldly: "*The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak **make** use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices*" (p. xvii). This observation was the logical extension of an explanation of social life that highlighted both ways in which power is exercised and – more importantly from the perspective of this thesis – ways in which agency is deployed to resist, subvert and have the potential to transform that power into something more collectively palatable.

To this point, I have examined de Certeau's discussion of "*consumer production*". Rather than being an oxymoron, this term has emerged as depicting and explaining the exercise of human agency by the less powerful through their deployment of 'tactics' of subversion and particularly of consumption, thereby asserting the validity and value of their difference from 'the mainstream' while minimising the deleterious effects of their divergence from 'the norm'. These 'tactics of consumption' are clandestine and creative, and they demonstrate that labels such as 'marginalised group' and 'minority group' are floating signifiers rather than fixed essences. These 'tactics of consumption' therefore reflect a view of social life that is at once politicised and agential. They are also indispensable to my efforts to conceptualise the marginalisation and the resistance that I argued above are equally central elements of the show people's itinerant lifestyle.

“The tactics of practice”

In addition to “*consumerproduction*” (p. xii), de Certeau’s other major category in his conceptual framework was what he termed “*the tactics of practice*” (p. xvii). Significantly, he envisaged the main constituents of “*the tactics of practice*” as representing something of a ‘corrective’ to what he considered “*the rather too neatly dichotomized . . . relations between consumers and the mechanisms of production*” (p. xvii), so that “*the overly schematic character of the general statement can be somewhat nuanced*” (p. xviii). I shall return to this point in a later subsection; here it is sufficient to note that de Certeau himself prefigured some of the criticisms of his conceptual framework as tending to excessive polarisation between more powerful producers and less powerful consumers, and that he sought to counter that tendency in his theorising about “*the tactics of practice*”.

In the process of elaborating the elements of “*a problematics that could articulate the **material** collected*” in his research (p. xvii) – “*a problematics*” that resonates with the ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘celebration’ identified at the end of the previous chapter – de Certeau identified three key concepts: trajectories, tactics (incorporating strategies, place and space) and rhetorics. Firstly, the “*trajectories*” of consumers, who “*move about*” in “*technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space*”, “*form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space*”, and they “*trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop*” (p. xviii).

So trajectories are an analytical tool that assist researchers to identify and examine the effects of individuals' and groups' 'tactics of consumption'. De Certeau's view of trajectories as performing this function was consistent with his argument that tactics are not easily detected, surveyed or measured. For example, he rejected "*statistical investigation*" (such as that which characterised some of the literature critiqued in Chapter Two) as being too detached and generalised to be able to portray consumers' trajectories with sufficient flexibility to record "*the bricolage (the artisan-like inventiveness) and the discursiveness*" (p. xviii) that make up social life. Similarly, de Certeau asserted the importance of avoiding the tendency of trajectories to reduce "acts" to "a tracing", on account of a trajectory's '*plane projection, a flattening out*' (pp. xviii-xix). From this perspective, while I certainly aspire to present "*a tracing*" of the show people's 'tactics of consumption', I equally want to avoid "*a flattening out*" in my account of their itinerant lifestyle, seeking on the contrary to emphasise continually the dynamism, multiplicity and variability of that lifestyle.

For his second conceptual element of "*the tactics of practice*", de Certeau elaborated his construction of 'tactics' by proposing a distinction between them and 'strategies' based on the kind of activity involved, who carries it out and for what purposes.

I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper. . . and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct

from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clienteles', 'targets' or 'objects' of research). Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

I call a 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localisation), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalise on its advantages, prepare its expansions and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. . .

. . . But these tactics. . . also show the extent to which intelligence is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates. Strategies, in contrast, conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own 'proper' place or institution. (pp. xix-xx)

This lengthy pair of definitions **skirts** close to the same tendency to polarisation for which de Certeau theorised "*the tactics of practice*" – although, as I shall discuss later in this subsection, his distinction between 'tactics' and 'strategies' is more dynamic and less rigid than some of his

critics have conceded. For the moment, it is useful to compare the attributes that he assigns to these two terms. Strategies are associated with *“a subject of will and power”*; they are enacted in *“a place that can be circumscribed as proper”* (that is, as officially sanctioned and valued); they are persistent and enduring; they emanate from *“the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own ‘proper’ place or institution”*. By contrast, tactics are associated with *“the weak”*; they have themselves *“no base”*, so they must insinuate themselves *“into the other’s place”*; they are fleeting and temporary; they reveal the *“intelligence”* that *“is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates”*.

This set of comparisons applies and clarifies de Certeau’s earlier account of *“consumer production”*. Thus there is evidence of agency being operationalised by *“the weak”* through their clandestine and creative tactics as ‘users’ or ‘consumers’ of the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’, thereby subverting their marginalised positioning by subjects *“of will and power”*. The clarification derives from de Certeau’s employment of striking images to depict the respective actions and aspirations of those using ‘tactics’ and those using ‘strategies’. From the perspective of this thesis, the introduction of ‘strategies’ into de Certeau’s theoretical framework provides the basis for my response to the first research question in Chapter Five: that is, it equips me to analyse and explain the show people’s experiences of marginalisation arising from the fact of their itinerancy, in a very different way from the ‘deficit model’ that lies at the heart of the ‘unproblematic othering’ of itinerant people cited at the end of the previous chapter.

As well as providing a conceptual basis for addressing the first research question, de Certeau's focus on 'strategies' does three other things: it reminds us that the more powerful also have agency (exercised through 'strategies'); it emphasises the integral dynamism of that framework, with the seemingly eternal interactions between 'tactics' and 'strategies' (thereby strengthening de Certeau's position against charges of excessive polarisation, as I discuss in a later subsection); and it introduces another crucial distinction devised by de Certeau – that between 'place' and 'space'.

*A field (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place). The law of the 'proper' rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside **one** another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.*

*A **space** exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs **or** contractual proximities. On this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualisation, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated **as** the act of a present (**or** of a time), and modified*

by the transformations caused by successive contexts. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a 'proper'. (p. 117)

Earlier de Certeau asserted that a tactic has “*at its disposal no base*” and that it therefore “*insinuates itself into the other's place*” (p. xix). Here his conceptualisation of ‘space’ was as a physical manifestation of that process of ‘insinuation’. That is, the ‘space’ is the outcome of the process whereby a ‘place’ has been entered and occupied – however incompletely and temporarily – by a tactic.

De Certeau elaborated this argument by emphasising the contrasts between ‘place’ and ‘space’. On the one hand, ‘place’ is where “*the law of the 'proper' rules*”; it is “*an instantaneous configuration of positions*” because of the tendency to clarity and order of “*the law of the 'proper'*”; accordingly it “*implies an indication of stability*”. On the other hand, ‘space’ is “*composed of intersections of mobile elements*”, rather than being the site of operation of a single “*law*”; it is “*in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it*”; and it “*has thus none of the univocity or stability of a 'proper' [place]*”. Laws, in other words, seldom if ever exist in their perfect state.

De Certeau crystallised the distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ by asserting: “*In short, space is a practised place*” (p. 117). By this he meant that, just as “*in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken*”, “*the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers*” and “*an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place*”. All these examples have in common the

proposition that officially designated, sanctioned and valued ‘places’ are entered, changed and transformed into ‘spaces’ through tactical consumption of those ‘places’.

The significance of de Certeau’s proposition about ‘place’ and ‘space’ for this thesis’s conceptual framework is profound. Firstly, in contradiction to the prevailing assumption in the distance education literature that distance education students and their teachers are located in separate and fixed spaces, taken literally de Certeau’s understanding of ‘space’ is much closer to the situation experienced by itinerant people who travel through different spaces. Thus his references to the *“intersection of mobile elements”* that constitute space and *“the ensemble of movements deployed within it”* are almost ‘literal metaphors’ for the daily lifestyle of itinerants such as the Queensland show people. Given that de Certeau’s work operated at the level of poetics and metaphors, it is important to explicate this kind of ‘literal metaphor’ or semantic connection with this study.

Secondly, de Certeau argued that ‘space’ is both *“polyvalent”* and unstable. This is because space is, like a spoken word, ambiguous, *“situated”* in present acts and *“modified...by successive contexts”*. This means that the interactions between show people and other people that occur when they cross multiple spaces are complex, influenced by multiple contexts and redolent of multiple meanings and values. So space is the site of intersection among competing discourses about such matters as what a ‘home’ is, the benefits and drawbacks of an itinerant lifestyle and the educational rights and responsibilities of itinerant people – all of which are themes that I explore at length in the data analysis chapters of this thesis.

Thirdly, ‘space’ is *“practised”*. This point recalls that de Certeau’s elaboration of the distinction between ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’, which prompted a discussion of his contrast between ‘place’ and ‘space’, was a key element of his articulation of *“the tactics of practice”*. This point is also a timely reminder that the spaces crossed by itinerants are not elements in a hypothetical discussion or an academic thesis – they are sites of meaning making for real, live, thinking and feeling human beings whose lifestyle deviates from ‘the norm’ of settled residence. This gives purpose and relevance to this study of how one group of itinerants ‘uses’ and ‘consumes’ the ‘places’ that they encounter and thereby transforms them into ‘spaces’ that have significance for them.

So de Certeau’s contribution to my developing conceptualisation of ‘space’ lies in his insistence that space is mobile, polyvalent, practised and unstable, and the site of the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’. De Certeau’s insights support a reading whereby people such as itinerants, through deploying ‘tactics of consumption’, enter and transform the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’ into a ‘space’ that reverts to being the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’ once the tactics are no longer deployed. This conceptualisation is both complex and dynamic – and in the process in keeping with the multiple elements of life on the Queensland show circuits, including marginalisation, resistance and some aspects of transformation.

A brief digression at this point into the contemporary academic and popular obsession of globalisation serves to illustrate my understanding of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’. Terry Evans (1997)

captured both sets of experiences underlying these elements of social life when he noted:

. . . both history and the present show that people view such interchanges [associated with globalisation] across their borders as far from benign, and rather as intrusions, invasions and incursions into their spaces, places and cultures. As I write and you read – events distant in space and time – people will be resisting, protesting and fighting against previous or prospective incursions into their territories and cultures. In this sense, some of the elements which comprise what we call ‘globalisation’ are the sources of battle, and not of ‘development’, or especially pleasure. (p. 7)

De Certeau’s concepts help me to analyse the “sources” and the effects “of battle” engaged in by the show people as they seek to transform “their spaces” into ‘places’ of their own.

De Certeau envisaged as the third conceptual element of “the tactics of practice” “the discipline of rhetoric”, or “the science of the ‘ways of speaking’” (p. xx).

The discipline of rhetoric offers models for differentiating among the types of tactics[;].. rhetoric. . . offers an array of figure-types for the analysis of everyday ways of acting even though such analysis is in theory excluded from scientific discourse. Two logics of action (the one tactical, the other strategic) arise from these two facets of practising language. In the space of a language (as in that of games), a society

makes more explicit the formal rules of action and the operations that differentiate them. (p. xx)

De Certeau's analysis of 'rhetoric' as one of "*the tactics of practice*" reinforced his argument that an artifact of social life – in this *case*, a word or statement – is not inherently either 'tactical' or 'strategic' and is in fact an 'empty signifier'. Its deployment by 'real' people with varied intentions and motivations is what brings it into 'practice', and thereby gives it tactical or strategic effect. This point derives from de Certeau's account of the same territory being transformed from a 'place' to a 'space' through the operation of 'tactics'. (It *can* be argued that a similar point *can* be made about education, that it too is an artifact and is therefore simultaneously the site of marginalisation and potential transformation.) This is a timely reminder of the need to avoid essentialising 'tactics of consumption' as a unidimensional and stable phenomenon. To do so would be to misrepresent de Certeau's understanding of 'tactics of consumption' as complex, fleeting and unstable. This point has also a strong resonance with the argument advanced in the previous chapter: that itinerancy needs to be understood as 'both/and' enabling and challenging, a resonance that highlights the conceptual compatibility between that argument and my selection of 'tactics of consumption' as a major theoretical resource in this study.

The bulk of *The practice of everyday life* was devoted to applying de Certeau's conceptual framework, outlined in this and the previous subsection, to various phenomena of everyday life. Examples included "*ordinary language*" (p. 1), "*popular cultures*" (p. 15), story telling, pedestrians in city

streets, train travel, writing, reading, persuading others of the correctness of one's viewpoint and conventions in dealing with dying people.

De Certeau's elaboration of "*consumerproduction*" and "*the tactics of practice*" in the "*General introduction*" to *The practice of everyday life* constitutes the major source for the theorising about 'tactics of consumption' on which this thesis draws. From this elaboration, 'tactics of consumption' emerge as reflecting human agency, subverting domination and asserting difference, demonstrating the fluidity of terms like 'marginalised group' and 'minority group', occurring in 'trajectories', interacting with strategies, transforming 'places' into 'spaces' and being exemplified in the shifting practices of 'rhetoric'. In combination, these conceptual resources suggest that the spaces through which itinerants travel are politicised, temporary and unstable, and the sites of interaction between tactics and strategies and of the transformation of marginalising places into subverting and enabling spaces. This combined conceptual weight is both consistent with, and central to, the 'both/and' approach to understanding itinerancy being advocated in this thesis.

3.2.2 *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (1986)

Many of the ideas in *The practice of everyday life* were taken up in another of de Certeau's influential books, *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (1986). There he applied notions such as tactics, strategies and rhetorics to particular historical and literary cases. Examples included the development of psycho-analysis (in which the repressed past returned surreptitiously to the present);

Freudian ideas applied to literary analysis; selected texts by Montaigne; mysticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; works by Jules Verne and Alexandre Dumas; a critique of Foucault's books *The order of things* and *Discipline and punish*; and links among history, science and fiction.

The use to which I wish to put *Heterologies* in this thesis is as a single example of a demonstration of the conceptual resources outlined in *The practice of everyday life*. This example is taken from the final chapter of *Heterologies*, entitled "*The politics of silence: The long march of the Indians*". This chapter depicted the continuing resistance to European colonialism by the "*Indians*" of South and Central America, in countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Panama.

De Certeau began the chapter by pondering the intentions that were likely to motivate the Indians, and consequently the activities in which they were likely to engage in order to achieve those intentions.

The actions the Indians take are directed less toward the construction of a common ideology than toward the "organization" (a word-leitmotif) of tactics and operations. In this context, the political relevance of the geo-graphical distinctions between separate places is echoed. . . in the distribution of places of power. . . (p. 227; emphasis in original)

Here de Certeau argued that the Indians' rejection of a common "*ideology*" among their disparate groups – Tan (19%) referred to "*about 200 Indian ethnic groups*" making up the subject of de Certeau's discussion (p. 32) – reflected their desire to avoid adopting practices that were similar to those of the conquerors and that were therefore likely to increase, rather than

subvert, their marginalisation. That is, their selection of specific “*tactics and operations*” was to be based on local contexts and situational analyses, thereby exploiting the transience and flexibility of tactics. Furthermore, the Indians recognised the crucial importance of emphasising, rather than eliding, geographical and political distinctions among “*separate places*”. This reinforced the point that tactics are directed at specific ‘places’ as a prelude to changing those ‘places’ into ‘spaces’.

The relevance of this passage to this thesis lies in ongoing ‘official’ efforts to homogenise the Queensland show people by conceiving of them as a single group with certain predictable features and behaviours (in this context, the difficulties of using the label ‘show people’ in this thesis are considered in Chapter Five). These efforts are opposed by the show people’s recognition and celebration of the difference and multiplicity of their identities and their lifestyle, which create opportunities for them to deploy ‘tactics of consumption’ of such phenomena as official discourses about them and the show children’s educational provision to enter official ‘places’ and make them into ‘spaces’. Thus the show people, like the South and Central American Indians, are more interested in exercising their agency through their own ‘tactics of consumption’ than they are in employing the marginalising strategies of ‘the mainstream’.

This point underscores the importance of less powerful groups identifying and being sustained by one or more sources of meaning and even of inspiration. De Certeau related how

. . *If the survivors' resistance has found political expression, it is because. . . their communities continued to return periodically to the home village, to claim their rights to the land and to maintain, through this collective alliance on a common soil, an anchorage in the particularity of a place.* (p. 229)

Furthermore:

The soil. . . enables the resistance to avoid being disseminated in the occupiers' power grid, to avoid being captured by the dominating, interpretive systems of discourse (or by the simple inversion of those discourses, a tactic which remains prisoner to their logic). It "maintains" a difference rooted in an affiliation that is opaque and inaccessible to both violent appropriation and learned coaptation. It is the unspoken foundation of affirmations that have political meaning to the extent that they are based on a realization of coming from a "different" place (different, not opposite) on the part of those whom the omnipresent conquerors dominate. (p. 229; emphasis in original)

The show people's equivalent of the Indians' "soil" is their proud association with a distinctive contribution to Australian cultural life, centred on their itinerancy. Thus, if 'tactics of consumption' derive from "*the particularity of a place*", and if resistance to domination involves maintaining "*a difference rooted in an affiliation*" and "*a realization of coming from a 'different' place*", that "*place*" is the physical and symbolic spaces on the show circuits. This is a far more dynamic and fluid understanding of itinerancy than the 'either/or' approach that derives from conceiving of

itinerant people in terms of ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’.

De Certeau’s conviction that ‘tactics of consumption’ can be very enduring, and that they *can* also contribute to productive social change, was expressed in the following passage:

It is as though the opportunity for a sociopolitical renewal of Western societies were emerging along its fringes, precisely where it has been the most oppressive. Out of what Western societies have held in contempt, combated and believed they had subjugated, there are arising political alternatives and social models which represent, perhaps, the only hope for reversing the massive acceleration and reproduction of totalitarian, homogenising effects generated by the power structures and technology of the West. (p. 231)

Here the less powerful, through exercising agency and deploying tactics to subvert the marginalising strategies, have survived and endured. Moreover, they have developed viable alternatives to “*the massive acceleration and reproduction of totalitarian, homogenizing effects generated by the power structures and technology of the West*”. That is, the people on ‘the margins’ have been recognised **as** having and experiencing something that is superior to ‘the mainstream’. Again this demonstrates the conceptual superiority of the ‘both/and’ to the ‘either/or’ approaches to understanding itinerancy and how it is enacted in particular sites and contexts.

This capacity of ‘tactics of consumption’, not merely to endure marginalising strategies, but also to constitute productive alternative forms of social life, relates particularly to the show children’s educational provision. Chapter Seven considers in greater detail how that provision encapsulates the possibility of a different, and potentially more enabling, approach to the provision of Traveller education. Here I wish to emphasise de Certeau’s insistence that ‘tactics of consumption’ are not wholly negative or combative, but instead contain the seeds of social transformation.

De Certeau concluded his chapter on “*The politics of silence: The long march of the Indians*” by discussing – appropriately for this thesis – the educational dimension of the Indians’ interactions with the conquerors. De Certeau argued that “*the ‘country schools’ established thus far*” for the Indians were “*‘a catastrophe’*”, because they had rendered the practices of everyday life “*hierarchical, devaluing or crushing difference, and thereby depriving democratic undertakings of cultural landmarks and technical means*” (p. 232). De Certeau proposed instead a form of “*cultural pluralism*” as being “*essential to the self-management perspective*” of Indians (p. 232), operationalised through such initiatives as teaching traditional medicine and herbalism in schools. The outcome of this “*cultural pluralism*” would be the establishment of “*a space of exchange and sharing*” between the Indians and the conquerors (p. 232).

This discussion reinforces two propositions outlined above. Firstly, de Certeau identified education as a site of deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and of the turning of ‘places’ into ‘spaces’. That is, schools function as officially designated centres for publicly approved learning, yet they are also

locations for inserting different kinds of knowledge from that that is officially sanctioned, **as** Chapter Seven will illustrate. Secondly, ‘tactics of consumption’ are not wholly destructive from the viewpoint of ‘the mainstream’, but can in fact create opportunities – otherwise not available – for official knowledge to learn from, and to be informed by, alternative understandings of the world.

So this discussion of *Heterologies* has examined de Certeau’s application to a single empirical study of the complex conceptual resources outlined in *The practice of everyday life*. The discussion has also somewhat extended those resources in three significant respects. Firstly, ‘tactics of consumption’ are used to resist the elision of difference among and within marginalised groups. Secondly, ‘tactics of consumption’ derive from a definite sense of association with a different place, outside the realm of ‘the proper’. Thirdly, ‘tactics of consumption’ can be used to sustain difference, and even to extend that difference into ‘the place’ of ‘the proper’, where it *can* both subvert the marginalising strategies of the more powerful and enrich their own, **as well as** the marginalised groups’, social practices.

De Certeau’s application of these three points to educational contexts recalls this thesis’s focus on the show children’s educational provision **as** the site of the operation of ‘tactics of consumption’ and ‘strategies of marginalisation’, the location of the celebration and the elision of difference, the territory of the ‘spaces’ of itinerancy and ‘the place’ **of** ‘the proper’. All of this serves to justify the selection of ‘tactics of consumption’ and associated ideas in helping to explain the ‘both/and’ approach to understanding itinerancy **as** simultaneously an arena of limitations imposed from outside and

of the possibility of throwing off those restraints. Those concepts assist in moving beyond the ossified and mutually opposed categories of ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’ towards a far more fluid and shifting account of itinerancy. In the process, those concepts are fundamental in contributing to presenting a counternarrative to constructions of Traveller education **as** either ‘deviant’ or ‘special’.

3.2.3 Applications and critiques of de Certeau’s work

Thus far in this section I have outlined some key de Certolian ideas. I have argued for the particular utility of those ideas in prosecuting my preferred ‘both/and’ approach to understanding the multifaceted and shifting nature of itinerancy, thereby avoiding falling into the ‘either/or’ conceptual ‘trap’ of constructing itinerancy **as** inherently disadvantaged or superficially exotic. Now I turn to present **a** necessarily brief overview of, and engagement with, selected applications and critiques of relevant de Certolian concepts. In doing so, I have two **goals** in mind:

- to justify my distinctive deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and associated ideas, through
 - showing how those same ideas have been used by other commentators
 - demonstrating how some criticisms of those ideas have been misconceived from the perspective of the argument presented in this chapter

- to agree with certain other criticisms of de Certeau's concepts and to use that agreement as a 'lead in' to my appropriation of two of Bakhtin's notions.

The emphasis throughout this discussion is on explaining what for me are the crucial triple dimensions of itinerancy: marginalisation, resistance and transformation. Relatedly, I seek to develop the best possible conceptual framework for presenting a counternarrative to traditional understandings of itinerancy and Traveller education. The following disagreement with some criticisms of de Certeau, and agreement with other criticisms, are intended to contribute to and endorse that explanation and that counternarrative.

Within that context, a considerable paradox surrounds the large number of applications and critiques that have been made of de Certeau's work. This paradox is that the 'limitation' for which he has been most consistently criticised – his alleged dependence on reductive binary oppositions – is also the source of the most fruitful interpretations and transpositions to other sites of his ideas. This is because the terms and concepts that appear to be rigid binaries nevertheless generate a great deal of fruitful debate. Thus, while some commentators have agonised over the degrees of conceptual clarity of, and the legitimacy of the distinctions between, such paired categories as 'strategies' – 'tactics' and 'place' – 'space', other writers have happily 'consumed' those same categories by making them the basis of diverse and generally credible analyses of historical and contemporary social life.

This paradox is directly significant for this thesis in three ways. Firstly, given the degree of enduring controversy that de Certeau's conceptual resources have attracted, I feel justified in adopting an approach to those

resources that emphasises their evident relevance and applicability to this thesis but that also concludes by accusing de Certeau of not facilitating a conceptualisation of changing ‘the rules of the game’.

Secondly, my own ‘consumption’ of de Certeau’s work is unashamedly pragmatic: the ‘validity’ of his concepts – and others’ accounts of those concepts – will be asserted to the extent that they appear to advance or retard the research project with which this thesis is concerned. In other words, my method for responding to the divergence between de Certeau’s thought and critiques of that thought is to seek to apply one or the other alternative explanation to the actions of the Queensland show people in relation to the educational provision established for their children. This is one important way in which this thesis can and does contribute to theoretical knowledge, by applying and endorsing, and/or contesting and moving beyond, the writings of de Certeau and his critics.

Thirdly, an abiding sense of ambivalence, which characterises relations between itinerants and non-itinerants and with which the Traveller education literature is replete, also courses through the applications and critiques of de Certeau’s ideas. This ambivalence is due partly to the sheer range of issues on which he commented, a result of which is that a ‘de Certeau position’ is sometimes sought on a matter on which he himself might have preferred not to comment. This ambivalence is also due partly to the fact that de Certeau’s writing style, while generally concise and lucid, sometimes contained nuances and subtleties that did not necessarily ‘survive’ the translation from his native French into English. Consequently, some critiques of de Certeau’s work derive from an uncertainty about whether to ‘read’ that work literally or

metaphorically, and if the latter about which alternative metaphorical ‘reading’ to pursue (hence the notion of ‘literal metaphors’ identified earlier in the chapter).

Briefly, the link between the argument to this point and this element of the conceptual framework is this. Both itinerants and de Certeau travel across spaces that conventionally remain separate and distinct from one another. For itinerants, this crossing of spaces both marginalises them from, and equips them to interact productively with, non-itinerant people. In the case of de Certeau, his thought traversed a very extensive range of interests and issues, and he deployed his own intellectual “*re-employments*” (Ahearne, 1995, pp. 29-33) of previous ideas and projects in his supplementary traverses. Thus it is not coincidental that some commentators (Chambers, 1993, p. 193; Jenluns, 1992, p. 223) have identified ‘the nomad’ as a figure for whom de Certeau’s work is particularly germane, and that his biographer (Ahearne, 1995) has referred to de Certeau as having an “*intellectual itinerary*” and as having engaged in “*untiring textual, cultural and interlocutory ‘travel’*” (p. 2). In the course of his “*intellectual itinerary*”, he both offended some commentators’ sensibilities and informed the supplementary thinking of others.

As I explain below, the most crucial area of ambivalence surrounding de Certeau’s thought is concentrated on the explanatory power, or alternatively the reductionist meaninglessness, of the various paired categories such as ‘strategies’–‘tactics’ and ‘place’–‘space’ that I introduced at the beginning of this section. The key issue in analysing that ambivalence is whether those

categories are **fixed** binary oppositions or fluid conceptual filters.³ I argue that

³ In this context, Docker's (1994, p. 163) rhetorical question and subsequent commentary are worth noting as an example of the flavour of the discussion in this subsection:

Don't binary distinctions always strain to homogenise opposing terms, effacing difference and complexity? Terms like dominant and resistant are altogether too polarising, too bloc-like, too unitary and unifying, too unsupple as categories. Dominant discourses, if they exist in a contestatory world, are themselves not monolithic and single in character, but multifarious and contradictory. What happens in culture, 'high', radical or popular, is too ideologically 'mixed', too discursively messy, to be easily cast into the binary either/or boxes of domination and resistance.

While I agree with Docker that the potential for those binaries to be essentialised or naturalised should be resisted and subverted, it is important to remember that binaries such as madwoman and white/non-white are extremely powerful influences on social behaviour. Stuart Hall's reference to "*the fashionable postmodernist notion of nomadology – the breakdown of everything into everything*" (in a question responding to James Clifford's paper [Clifford, 1992, p. 115]) encapsulated the perhaps equally dangerous potential of following the opposite line of thinking to its logical extreme.

Furthermore, Docker's critique here of "*binary distinctions*", with its implied disagreement with de Certeau's analysis of social life, was actually phrased in terms of his disapproval of Fiske's account of that analysis in his book *Understanding popular culture* (1989). The quotation at the beginning of this footnote was preceded by the following:

A kind of rampant structuralism also pervades in the way oppositions are created. Throughout Understanding Popular Culture we learn that there is in the world a simple binary opposition between two central forces, the dominant ideology and popular culture, the power-bloc and the people, the system and the subordinate, top-down

in most cases – certainly as they apply to this study of Queensland show people – the categories in question are fluid conceptual filters, but that underlying them is a deep seated binary opposition that for me is encapsulated in the phrase ‘the rules of the game’. The point to emphasise here is that the ‘binary opposition’ – ‘conceptual filter’ question derives from the ambivalence caused by de Certeau’s movement across several intellectual spaces. This is perhaps the least immediately apparent, yet possibly the most significant, point of connection between his work and this thesis’s conceptual framework. This reinforces my view that ambivalence, whether in relation to itinerancy or with regard to de Certeau’s theoretical position, can be both marginalising and resistant, and that it can ultimately lead to transformation. It also demonstrates the value – once again – of a dynamic ‘both/and’, rather than a fixed ‘either/or’, construction of itinerancy.

This subsection consists of the following discussion points:

- ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’
- ‘place’ and ‘space’
- marginalisation and resistance
- change and transformation.

power and ‘bottom-uppower’. Are things so limpidly clear? (p. 163)

I have sought to ensure that **both** my understanding and my appropriation **of** de Certeau’s thought are not reducible to **such** crudely conceived binary oppositions.

The first two of these discussion points are the paired categories that have generated so much controversy among de Certeau scholars; the final two are more general issues of concern to both those scholars and myself. In all cases, the discussion points are explicated from the perspective of their contribution to the developing conceptual framework of this thesis. This is achieved by a relatively cursory acknowledgment of the approving applications of de Certeau's ideas and a more extensive engagement with critiques of those ideas. This approach rests on my desire to explain and justify my decision to apply selected de Certeauian concepts, based on 'tactics of consumption', and also to explain my use of the Bakhtinian notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' to augment those concepts in the thesis.

'Strategies' and 'tactics'

In the two preceding subsections, I outlined de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', explained it in relation to its categorical pair 'strategies' and provided a rationale for making it a crucial element of this thesis's conceptual framework. That rationale rested on the assertion that this concept is necessary to explain and justify my interpretation of the Queensland show people's 'consumption' of the educational provision designed for their children. In particular, that interpretation centres on the show people using their 'tactics of consumption' to subvert the marginalised spaces of itinerancy and transform them into more enabling and productive spaces.

From this perspective, it is appropriate to note that several **studies** have made explicit use of de Certeau's 'strategies'–'tactics' paired category, thereby demonstrating the category's utility across a wide range of empirical sites and research agendas. Firstly, Garbutcheon Singh and Miller (1995) applied de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' to extend Homi Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry' in their analysis of the Asia Education Foundation's position statement, "*Studies ~~of~~ Asia: A statement ~~for~~ Australian schools*". Secondly, Blaber (1989) applied de Certeau's (1984) distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' to support his critique of 'the picaresque' as a literary genre. In particular, Blaber's likening of the picaresque to de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' prefigures some of my accounts in the data analysis chapters of the Queensland show people's actions:

*If the picaresque is the story of a figure that operates within enemy territory taking advantage of opportunities **as** they arise but not gaining any real power, and **if** the picaro poaches and makes use of guileful ruses, then the story of the picaresque is also about the art of the weak. It is a narrative emphasising the tactical. (p. 335)*

Below I take up the issue of whether tactics are always and inevitably "*the art ~~of~~ the weak*". For the moment, I want to emphasise the evident transferability of Blaber's analysis here to the Queensland show people, who might therefore be regarded **as** operating "*within enemy territory taking advantage of opportunities **as** they arise*", and malung "*use ~~of~~ guileful ruses*". The analogy is by no means exact, but it is nevertheless a vivid and evocative metaphor for the show people's own emphases "*on the tactical*".

Thirdly, with strong parallels to the empirical site explored in this thesis, Jenkins (1992) linked the image of ‘the nomad’ directly to de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’. Thus he referred to “*De Certeau’s emphasis upon the tactical nature of consumption and the nomadic character of the consumer’s culture*” (p. 223). Jenkins’ description of “*fan culture*” as being “*nomadic, ever-expanding, seeming all-encompassing yet, at the same time, permanent, capable of maintaining strong traditions and creating enduring works*” (p. 223) has some parallels with the show people’s situation, in the sense that the show people are both literally “*nomadic*” and “*capable of maintaining strong traditions and creating enduring works*” (although I dissent from Jenkins’ criticism of de Certeau that led him to construct North American television fans as being “*ever-expanding, seeming all-encompassing*” and “*permanent*”; certainly I do not assign these terms to the show people). This suggests that being a nomad enables one to cross over into others’ territories and to return ‘home’ at will, borrowing from those territories ‘materials’ (both physical and intellectual) that can be added to one’s store of ‘materials’ at ‘home’. This is similar to the argument that itinerants use ‘tactics of consumption’ to take from various ‘places’ what they desire and in the process to transform them into temporary ‘spaces’. It also highlights the dynamism of itinerancy and the folly of reducing itinerancy to the ‘either/or’ fixed binaries identified at the end of the previous chapter.

Fourthly, in another clear parallel with this thesis, Chambers (1993) used the image of ‘the nomad’ engaging in ‘tactics of consumption’ in his application of de Certeau’s ideas in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) to propose a postmodern geography that envisaged “*cities without maps*”

(1993, p. 188). Chambers argued in favour of studies that were “*attentive to the different histories, nuances and narratives that combine in making up our present*” (pp. 192-193). For Chambers, the part played by ‘nomads’ lay in responding to the effects of “*trajectories of interests and desires that are neither necessarily determined **nor** captured by the system in which they develop*” (p. 193).

In this sense, as de Certeau goes on suggestively to underline, we all become nomads, migrating across a system that is too vast to be our own, but in which we are fully involved, translating and transforming bits and elements into local instances of sense. It is this remaking, this transmutation, that makes such texts and languages – the city, cinema, music, culture and the contemporary world – habitable: as though they were a space borrowed for a moment by a transient, an immigrant, a nomad. (p. 193)

For me, the strength of Chambers’ analysis here is twofold. On the one hand, his statement that “*we all become nomads*” suggests points of identification with ‘literal nomads’ such as the Queensland show people, thereby reinforcing the recurring argument in this thesis that itinerancy is a floating signifier rather than a fixed essence, and that accordingly it generates considerable ambivalence among both people **who** are ‘literal nomads’ and people who have fixed residence. On the other hand, his reference to the agency involved in making the “*texts and languages*” of everyday life “*habitable*”, and his likening of that process to “*a space*” being “*borrowed for a moment by a transient, an immigrant, a nomad*”, draw appropriate attention to the proposition that the ‘space’ of itinerancy is fleeting and

transient. Both these points derive from my earlier discussion of de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', and from my insistence on constructing itinerancy as occupying the 'middle ground' between the mutually opposed categories of 'unproblematic othering' and 'unproblematic celebration'.

Fifthly, four separate authors have made use of this paired category in diverse and suggestive ways. Weinstein (1994), in his analysis of constructions of and responses to Robot World, a tourist museum in Wisconsin in the United States, stated that "*Popular cultures are evasions of authority of the kind described by de Certeau (1984)*", whose "*poetic descriptions of the tactics involved in ordinary subterfuges against authority powerfully describe the sensibilities of popular culture. . .*" (p. 3). Fiske, in his somewhat controversial **book** *Understanding popular culture* (1989), lauded de Certeau as "*one of the most sophisticated theorists of the culture and practices of everyday life*" (p. 32), and used de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' as the basis of his analysis of popular culture in late capitalist countries, particularly the **United** States of America (pp. 32-43 *passim*), a representative example was his analysis of "*two secretaries spending their lunch hour browsing through stores with no intention to buy*" as a 'tactic of consumption' of which "*boutique owners*" are aware "*but are helpless before them*" (p. 39).

Similarly, Buchanan (1996a) championed de Certeau's construction of an active subject, based on the "*active components*" of "*both the tactical and the strategic*", which "*are in fact principles of action*" (p. 114). Geoffrey Danaher (1995) provided an insightful and corresponding defence against the charge that de Certeau's 'strategies' – 'tactics' and 'place' – 'space' distinc-

tions were *de facto* binary oppositions and therefore conceptually impoverished accounts of social life. Danaher rejected that claim, arguing instead:

Practice can be understood to be a tactic of the oppressed to the extent that the oppressor–oppressed binary is deconstructable; the very act of practice moves the participant away from the oppressed or coerced position within which a dominant received discourse positions her/him.
(p. 134)

Considered together, these four authors regarded ‘tactics’ as “*powerfully describ[ing] the sensibilities of popular culture*” (Weinstein, 1994, p. 3), as “*principles of action*” (Buchanan, 1996a, p. 114) and as helping to move “*the participant away from the oppressed or coerced position within which a dominant received discourse positions her/him*” (Danaher, 1995, p. 134). For these authors, tactics reflect the exercise of human agency in the face of sometimes seemingly overwhelming dominance or oppression. In this context, it is clearly important to acknowledge that institutional power is experienced all the time by people who do not have access to these institutions. For Danaher in particular, it is this agency that ‘deconstructs’ “*the oppressor–oppressed binary*”, suggesting that this “*binary*” is in fact an analytically useful paired category, not an immutable dichotomy. If it were otherwise, there would be no possibility for resistance or positive social change. Both these points I elaborate below. This is also yet another justification for rejecting the notion of itinerancy as being encapsulated in either of the marginalising extremes of ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’.

Sixthly, Ahearne, in *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and its other* (1995), “*the first full-length study of Certeau’s thought*” (p. 1), made several references to the conceptual versatility of ‘tactics’ that help to justify their inclusion in this thesis’s conceptual framework. For example, he said of tactics that “*There is nothing retarded or quaintly outdated about such practices. They constitute instead for Certeau constantly mutating responses to constantly mutating distributions of power in successive socioeconomic and symbolic formations*” (p. 161). Thus tactics are both completely ‘up to date’ and “*constantly mutating*”.

Another dimension of ‘tactics’ identified by Ahearne was that they “*must operate in an essentially mobile element. Opportunities and ripostes are not offered up as such but must be seized as they pass, set up as moving targets in transit*” (p. 164). The literal mobility of the Queensland show people highlights the particular relevance of this conception of the “*essentially mobile element*” in which ‘tactics’ are deployed. These various characterisations of ‘tactics’, as being ‘up to date’, “*constantly mutating*”, “*transportable*” as a theoretical ‘model’ and operating “*in an essentially mobile element*”, all enhance the relevance of the concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ to this thesis’s conceptual framework.

Seventhly, Leonie Rowan (1991, 1993, 1994), whose considerable influence on my thinking in this thesis has been noted in the list of acknowledgments, has explored several examples of the intersections between strategies of marginalisation and tactics of subversion, particularly in relation to women and to people of colour. In doing so, she has elaborated an understanding of de Certeau’s thinking that I find persuasive and challenging.

For example, in her paper “*Strategies of marginalization: An overview*” (1991), she outlined a number of ways in which members of marginalised groups are routinely effaced from ‘proper’ recognition and their voices are elided from official discourses. The methodological challenges of her analysis in “*Strategies of marginalization: An overview*” for this thesis are profound, particularly as they pertain to the connections between the show people and myself as the author of the thesis, and they are discussed in Chapter Four.

In an article entitled “*The powers of the marginal: Some tactics for subverting the centre*” (1993), Rowan made several points that are germane to this thesis’s conceptual framework. Her first point was to distinguish between ‘conscious’ (which she distinguished from “*intentional*” [p. 70]) and ‘unconscious’ tactics on the part of marginalised people, on the basis that “*to assume that the ‘other’ act only from unconscious motivations is both naive and presumptive. Such an assumption implies that the marginal are not capable of formulating and implementing conscious oppositional tactics*” (p. 69). Indeed, Rowan’s paper concentrated on tactics “*for the women and people of colour*” with whom she was concerned that were “*both conscious and overt*” (p. 70). This distinction reinforces the proposition that ‘tactics’ do not equate with powerlessness, and that marginalised people are able to exercise agency through careful reflection on their current and desired situations. This would certainly seem to be the case with the Queensland show people.

Rowan’s second point was to explain how the tactic of ‘displacement’ can be a particularly effective method of resisting and subverting the marginalising strategies with which women and people of colour, among

others, are routinely confronted. Thus, *“displacement tactics highlight the unnaturalness of discrimination against difference and work. . .to deconstruct and displace the notion that any binary can be justified”* (p. 70). From this perspective, displacement can be both ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’, but it is almost always ‘intentional’, in the sense of deriving from the marginalised group’s self-awareness. For Rowan, this was *“the primary strength of displacement tactics”* (p. 71). That is,

. . .they originate from the place of the ‘other’ – a place in which the centre has no interest. Thus the margins become tactical positions in which the oppressed gain strength, formulate conscious moments of opposition and work against the marginalizing strategies of the centre, particularly the notion that any truth can be taken as ‘real’. (p. 71)

This discussion will be taken up in the data analysis chapters, where I shall demonstrate that a significant intended outcome of the Queensland show people’s ‘tactics of consumption’ is the displacement of the marginalising strategies that construct their itinerancy as ‘abnormal’ and the spaces of itinerancy as ephemeral and devalued.

Rowan’s third point was to highlight the importance of repetition as *“one of the keys”* to assisting *“the marginal [to] work unceasingly to introduce their stories into the places of the centre”* (p. 75). This point helps to explain the show people’s persistence, in the interviews cited in the data analysis chapters, in telling me ‘their side of the story’. Clearly they had a common message to impart about their distinctive lifestyle and its marginalising stereotype, and they employed the tactic of repetition with me – as they did with educational providers and others – to ensure that I heard their ‘voice’.

Rowan's fourth point was to depart from de Certeau's (1984, p. 37) characterisation of 'tactics' as "*an art of the weak*". Rowan argued, on the contrary, that "*I do not see tactics or any group of 'others' as automatically 'weak'*" (p. 160).

Rather, I would suggest that de Certeau's tactical model is a useful means of acknowledging the ability of all groups/individuals to fight back against repressive actions or ideologies, regardless of the degree of repression, by using whatever means are available. More than this, however, the marginal, through diverse and repetitious acts of subversion, can undermine dominant discourse to such an extent that the reductive definitions of 'centre' and 'margin'—which necessitate an awareness of 'strategy' and 'tactic'—become, in themselves, meaningless. (p. 160)

The analysis advanced in this thesis supports Rowan's careful avoidance of equating 'tactics' with "*the weak*". Certainly the show people's confident and assertive dealings with educational providers and university researchers evoke considerable strength of identity and purpose, which enables them to communicate their vision of improved educational experiences for their children and of consequent positive social and educational change. These actions are certainly 'tactics of consumption' because they are directed consciously against 'strategies of subversion', but they are also based on strength rather than weakness. Furthermore, it *can* be argued that it is people who are 'weak' in particular contexts who are most likely to 'need' to operate

tactically.⁴ This understanding resonates with the ‘both/and’ approach to conceptualising itinerancy championed at the end of the previous chapter, whereby itinerancy is understood **as** simultaneously devalued in comparison with sedentarism and equipped to challenge and counteract that devaluing.

The effect of this discussion of other authors’ applications and critiques of de Certeau’s ‘strategies’ – ‘tactics’ paired category has been to justify, and in some cases to extend, my appropriation of ‘tactics of consumption’ **as** a major component of this thesis’s conceptual framework. Generally these authors found this paired category to be analytically and empirically flexible and transferable, rather than disablingly reductionist. Ahearne (1995) expressed this well when he argued:

‘Strategies’ and ‘tactics’ cannot necessarily be set against each other as opposing forces in a clearly defined zone of combat. Rather, as Certeau presents them, they enable us as concepts to discern a number of

4 Ahearne (1995) concurred with the principle underlying Rowan’s (1994) critique of de Certeau’s (1984) depiction of ‘tactics’ as “*an art of the weak*” (p. 37), stating, “*This [depiction] seems mistaken*” (p. 162). By contrast, Fiske (1989) appeared to endorse de Certeau’s depiction when he asserted, “*Guerillatactics are the art of the weak; they never challenge the powerful in open warfare, for that would be to invite defeat, but maintain their own opposition within and against the social order dominated by the powerful*” (p. 19). ~~My~~ following the lead of Rowan (1994) inclines me to agree that ‘tactics of consumption’ *can* indeed be likened to “*guerilla tactics*”, but to add that “*guerillatactics*” generally reflect strength – of purpose and resolve if not of power – rather than weakness.

heterogeneous movements across different distributions of power. (p. 163)

This is certainly the use to which the concept ‘tactics of consumption’ will be put in this thesis: to “discern” the “heterogeneous movements” across both the Queensland show circuits and educational provision for the show children, which from that perspective can be regarded as “different distributions of power”. This very fluid and shifting approach accords closely with the anti-essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy advocated in this thesis.

‘Place’ and ‘space’

‘Place’–‘space’ is another of de Certeau’s paired categories, and its significance for this thesis is twofold. The first point is that this category ‘matches’ the ‘strategies’–‘tactics’ paired category, in the sense that ‘tactics of consumption’ are used to change ‘the place’ of ‘the proper’, however temporarily, into ‘a space’. The second point is that, given that itinerancy consists of movement across conventionally separate and logically distinct spaces, de Certeau’s conception of ‘space’ is salient to understanding ambivalent constructions of the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy.

Having reiterated these two points, I wish to make two additional ones at this juncture. The first is that my reading of *The practice of everyday life* (de Certeau, 1984) and *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (de Certeau, 1986), discussed in the two previous subsections, evoked several productive resonances with my analysis of the show people’s movements through the spaces of the educational provision developed for their children. The second

point is that de Certeau's 'place'–'space' paired category is far more contested and controversial than his distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. I argue here that this is because his conception of 'place' and 'space' generates considerable intellectual ambivalence in a large number of commentators. Again, my purpose here is not to provide a definitive resolution of this ambivalence. Instead, my intention is to relate instances of this ambivalence directly to the conceptual framework underpinning the thesis.

Thus, several authors have both applied and challenged de Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space'. Ahearne was largely complimentary, arguing about de Certeau *"that this intellectual strategy consisted precisely in an endeavour to discern and to make ethical and aesthetic space for particular form of interruption"* (p. 3). For me, Ahearne's construction of de Certeau in this way highlighted de Certeau's desire to recognise, and therefore validate, specific 'tactics of consumption' by variously marginalised groups. I conceive this thesis as having a similar purpose and function in the particular case of the show people; I consider in Chapter Four the ethical implications of this conception.

Rowan (1994) was similarly complimentary about the 'place'–'space' paired category. She emphasised *"the connection between de Certeau's notion of 'proper' places, the corresponding notion of illegitimate spaces, and the marginalising strategy of explanation"* (p. 25). She argued, *"This distinction [between 'places' and 'spaces'] is connected to the strategy's ability to circulate definitions of and discourses about the 'unlocated other' which emphasise the normality of the strategy and the aberrance of virtually everything everyone else"* (p. 26). I discuss the ethical implications for this

thesis of “*themarginalising strategy of explanation*” in Chapter Four. For the moment I wish to emphasise that the show people, on account of their itinerancy, are almost literally “*theunlocated other*”: their regular movement from one ‘place’ to another renders them as having no ‘place’ of their own and therefore as lacking location and hence legitimacy and power. Terry Evans (1998) recognised this crucial point when he noted: “*Showchildren occupy or traverse a territory rather than a place*” (p. xii). This indicates that de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ is analytically powerful for the argument prosecuted in this thesis.

By contrast, Balides (1993) was far more ambivalent about the intellectual value of that distinction. Certainly, in her analysis of constructions of women in American films in the early 1900s, she differentiated between de Certeau’s conception of how ‘place’ is transformed into ‘space’ through the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and the cinema analyst Stephen Heath’s (1981; cited in Balides, 1993, pp. 25-26) argument that “*space. . . becomes place in the movement of narrative*” (Balides, 1993, p. 26) – that is, “*through the continual inscription of the spectator in the diegetic world of the film, which is effected through the spectator’s identification with the camera and with the looks of characters*” (p. 25).

For Balides, the point of drawing on de Certeau’s conception was to “*displace this priority given to vision*” (p. 26) in Heath’s understanding of ‘space’. Thus she endorsed the fact that “*inde Certeau’s analysis space and place are distinct regimes of location*”, and that “*de Certeau delineates a space different from that of perspectival vision*” (p. 26). Furthermore, “*Place. . . is bound up with perspective and a panoptic vision*” (p. 27), which

contributed to “*the perspectival view of de Certeau’s ‘place’*” (p. 28). Balides used this analysis to support her identification of both ‘place’ and ‘space’ in *A windy day on the roof*, a film made in 1904. Balides argued that the plot of the film, in which a house painter *gazed* voyeuristically at a woman hanging out laundry on the roof of her apartment building, “*illustrates a further sense in which space can be understood to take place*” (p. 29). On the one hand, “*In the painter’s look at the woman, the practice of everyday life (space) is subordinated to relations of looking (place)*” (p. 29). On the other hand, “*The film ends with the woman alone in the shot and an assertion of the visibility of this other space – the space of everyday life*” (p. 29). This analysis is similar to those of Ahearne (1995) and Rowan (1994) in emphasising the analytical fluidity of the ‘place’–‘space’ paired category.

However, Balides expressed considerable doubt about other **aspects** of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’. For example, in a passage that read somewhat oddly beside her able application cited above of this distinction to her own work (and also with the fact that she followed the passage with the rather dismissive comment, “*This [accusation of binary oppositions] is not the import of my argument*” [p. 27]”), Balides stated:

In some discussions of de Certeau’s work there is a problematic tendency to construct a binary opposition between place and space in which place is associated with a deterministic and monolithic conception of use and space is understood to mean – somewhat axiomatically – differentiated uses and resistance. (p. 27)

Balides' major concern about this alleged "*problematic tendency to construct a binary opposition*" was what she identified **as** a masculinist bias in de Certeau's work. She argued that for de Certeau "*the threat of the city ('the dark space') is identified with the figure of woman*" (p. 27). Furthermore, "*de Certeau also identifies place with a masculine vision (the distanced view of the voyeur), linking perspective to a sexually implicated looking (the 'lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more')*" (p. 27).

Although it is not 'the place' of this thesis to comment on charges of oppositional masculinism levelled at de Certeau, my response, phrased in terms of the theoretical concerns actuating the thesis, is that Balides' analysis belies the fact that feminist scholars (notably Rowan, 1991, 1993, 1994) have effectively used de Certeau's notion of 'space' (despite Balides' claim that this is an excessively feminised concept) to deconstruct masculinist 'places' such **as** Australian literary texts. Furthermore, McKay (1996) had no doubt that there was a great deal of value for contemporary feminist theorising of de Certeau's work

The value of de Certeau's work for feminist analysis is that it reconceptualises the nature of change so that feminist thought on the everyday is edged beyond the binary of oppression and resistance. This insight combined with the polemological foregrounding of a differentiated analysis of power relations sketches out a framework in which the increasingly complex nature of women's daily existence can be addressed. (p. 77)

From this perspective, Balides' critique here seems to **me** to introduce, prompted by her ambivalence about whether de Certeau should be 'read' as 'pro' or 'anti' marginalised groups, an unhelpful additional binary opposition that elides the human agency that de Certeau insisted was exercised in 'spaces' and that she identified in her own championing of de Certeau's conception of 'space' over that of Heath. The parallel with this thesis is clear: I seek to deploy de Certeau's conception of 'space', in alliance with his concept of 'tactics of consumption', to help to explain how the show people are able to move out of the marginalising spaces of itinerancy and to engage in resistance and transformation – an analysis that would not be possible if I 'read' de Certeau **as** being intellectually opposed to such a movement.

Buchanan (1996a) suggested the application of an additional term – "*heterophenomenological space*" – to de Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space', although he intended this additional term to function **as** extending, rather than correcting, of de Certeau's work. Considering this suggested term provides a partial 'antidote' to the ambivalence towards de Certeau's 'place'–'space' distinction displayed by Balides (1993).

Buchanan's (1996a) account of de Certeau's work concentrated on "*his reconceptualisation of the problem of theorising space*" (p. 111). Buchanan argued that postmodernist constructions of space "*have pushed the subject into the steepest decline*" (p. 113). By contrast, he sought to demonstrate, through his appropriation of de Certeau's thought, "*that subjectivity is not in decline, and that agency is still possible despite the baffling advances of technology, and the resulting incomprehensible futurity of space*" (pp. 111-112).

“Heterophenomenological space” was Buchanan’s own neologism, based on what he argued was the logical extension of de Certeau’s theorising of space. By *“heterophenomenology”* Buchanan meant *“aphenomenology predicated by a heterogeneously constituted subject which does not take for granted the unity of the body”* (p. 112). This notion, derived directly from de Certeau’s work, focussed on the agency of subjectivity in relation to space. Thus, *“It is this agency that heterophenomenology seeks to restore against Jameson, and the trend in cultural studies generally, to place the subject at the mercy of space”* (p. 122). Furthermore, *“Treating space as a perspective cannot put us in touch with space itself, but it can put us in contact with a certain way of constructing space”* (p. 128). In this thesis, I am interested in identifying the Queensland show people’s constructions of the multiple spaces of their itinerancy, which Buchanan’s extension of de Certeau’s conceptualisation indicates derive from their agential subjectivities.

This discussion has indicated that de Certeau’s ‘place’–‘space’ paired category has both champions and detractors, and that the same author sometimes switches from one view to the other. I have argued that this uncertainty about whether de Certeau’s distinction is to be applied or contested derives from ambivalence about his conceptualisation of ‘space’ – an ambivalence that has prompted the insertion of additional terminology of varying degrees of helpfulness. My own response to this discussion is to reassert the direct relevance of de Certeau’s emphasis on ‘space’ as the site of the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ to understanding how the Queensland show people exercise agency in the spaces of their itinerancy. That emphasis is therefore central to the logic of the study’s conceptual framework, because it helps me to move from an ‘either/or’ approach to

conceptualising itinerancy to the ‘middle ground’ of the ‘both/and’ approach to which this thesis aspires.

Marginalisation and resistance

De Certeau did not construct ‘marginalisation’ – ‘resistance’ **as** an explicit paired category. Nevertheless, a number of authors has commented on one or other of these terms **as** they envisaged de Certeau conceptualising those terms. Furthermore, at least some of these authors, in contesting de Certeau’s thought on marginalisation and its resistance, demonstrated ambivalence – which sometimes became operationalised **as** criticism – about where precisely he positioned himself in relation to that issue. The issue, clearly, is crucial to this thesis and the logic of its conceptual framework, **because**, in combination with transformation, marginalisation and resistance constitute the central dimensions of itinerancy explored in my study.

Rowan’s (1994) doctoral thesis made several points that are pertinent to marginalisation **as** it was theorised by de Certeau. At a general level, her thesis, which explored the constructions of gender and race in six Australian literary texts, revealed the fruitfulness of applying de Certeau’s account of marginalisation and resistance to Rowan’s selected site of identity construction and contestation. Specifically, I **am** concerned with three elements of that study that have particular significance for the way that marginalisation is understood in this thesis.

Firstly, Rowan conceptualised both gender and **race** in terms with strong parallels to my interpretation of the dominant discourse in constructions of itinerancy. In a seemingly inexorable set of logical connections, she posited that “*marks of ‘difference’ determine an individual’s position—mainstream or marginal—within society*” (p. 22). For the Queensland show people, their itinerancy is a ‘mark of difference’ that positions them as ‘marginal’ in relation to the ‘mainstream’ ‘norm’ of fixed residence.

Next, Rowan identified “*not only difference, but the connection between difference and a perception of ‘lack’*” (p. 22). Thus the show people are perceived as lacking the physical and symbolic appurtenances of ‘home’, with its concomitant role in clearly giving people a ‘place’ of their own and in saying to the world, ‘This is what I **am** like’.

Then Rowan analysed these ‘marks of difference’ and this perceived ‘lack’ as “*acts of violence which attempt to exclude the voice (and frequently the bodies) of the ‘other’ from legitimate discourse, from the public sphere, and from power*” (p. 23). This relates to my argument in Chapter One, where I positioned this thesis **as** seeking to record the voices of the show people about marginalisation, resistance and transformation. The data analysis chapters contain many instances of the show people’s consciousness of themselves being cut off by their itinerancy from “*legitimatediscourse, from the public sphere, and from power*”. From that perspective, Rowan’s very succinct account of the connections among ‘marks of difference’, ‘lack’ and ‘acts of violence’ encapsulates the marginalising strategies against which the show people deploy their ‘tactics of consumption’.

Secondly, Rowan referred to *“the absence”* in Jessica Anderson’s novel *An ordinary lunacy “of a counternarrative that could be seen as an alternative to masculinist hegemony”* (p. 31). This notion of ‘counternarrative’ is a crucial element of the effective employment of ‘tactics of consumption’. If the show people are ultimately to subvert the marginalising discourses that render them as different, lacking, having no voice and illegitimate, they need to articulate and prosecute an alternative and more positive construction of itinerancy, one that emphasises the social and educational benefits of this lifestyle and the legitimacy of itinerant people to speak about such issues as Australian cultural traditions and educational provision. I argue in this thesis that the show people’s ‘consumption’ of the educational provision designed for their children is an important site for the elaboration of precisely this kind of ‘counternarrative’, whereby their previously silenced voices can be heard by those who reside in ‘proper’ ‘places’. Clearly these conceptions of ‘counternarrative’ and ‘voice’ are predicated on marginalisation’s constituent elements, among them the ‘marks of violence’, ‘lack’ and ‘acts of violence’ discussed above. (The thesis is also considered a ‘counternarrative’ through its contribution to helping those voices to be heard.)

Thirdly, Rowan emphasised *“the disputatious nature of marginalisation; the many different ways of conceiving and responding to otherness;. . .”* (p. 235). My response to *“the disputatious nature of marginalisation”* is to emphasise the shifting and fluid ‘nature’ of itinerancy **as** it is practised by the show people, and to use ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ **as** conceptual resources that in combination explain both how show people are marginalised and how they are able to resist and

transform that marginalisation. (This highlights anew the need for a ‘both /and’, rather than an ‘either/or’, approach to constructing itinerancy.) Furthermore, “*the disputatious nature of marginalisation*” helps to explain the ambivalence that some authors have displayed with regard to de Certeau’s account of marginalisation and resistance.

Some authors have championed de Certeau as giving hope to marginalised groups by assigning to them the possibility of active and effective resistance. From this perspective, Bauman (1991) described de Certeau’s analysis in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) of *la perruque*, which de Certeau called “*the worker’s own work disguised as work for his [sic] employer*” (p. 25), as “*the tool of defence of the self-regulated sphere of autonomy*” (Bauman, 1991, p. 252, n. 19). Similarly, Stavropoulos (1995) relied heavily on de Certeau’s analysis in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) of consumption as the exercise of agency to support her call for postcolonialist theories of ‘representation’ to take proper and sufficient account of resistance, which “*has to be central to any approach which is serious about the revising of power relations*” (p. 52).

Furthermore, Goodall (1995) drew on de Certeau’s work, particularly in *The practice of everyday life* (1984), to support his argument that popular culture is not simply the ‘poor relation’ of high culture, but rather is the site of considerable and productive resistance:

The work of de Certeau seeks. . .to identify the ways in which the people and their culture are not simply suppressed, or made into unwilling recipients of values and discourses they neither want nor understand, but actively resist and expropriate the dominant culture. (p. 75)

Appropriately for this thesis's conceptual framework, Goodall pointed to significant parallels between the ideas of de Certeau and Mikhail Bakhtin, parallels to which I shall return in the next section of this chapter.

Writing in a similar vein, Jenkins (1992) stated that “*De Certeau gives us terms for discussing ways that the subordinate classes elude or escape institutional control, for analyzing locations where popular meanings are produced outside of official interpretive practice*” (p. 26). For Jenkins, de Certeau's conceptualisation of marginalisation and resistance was analytically relevant and enabling – just **as** this thesis **finds** that same conceptualisation.

Schirato (1993) used his largely approving summary of de Certeau's ideas about popular culture to highlight the centrality to those ideas of marginalisation and resistance:

*The thesis de Certeau puts forward. . . is that popular culture is unswervingly subversive of official culture, and the interests official culture serves, including capitalists, the state, power élites – those Bourdieu calls the dominant. Popular culture is subversive, for de Certeau, because it **is** constituted by a heterogeneity which is oppositional to, and a denial of, homogeneity, community and, eventually, hegemony. Popular culture, however, not only carries the traces of its own difference; even more importantly, it carries the marks of violence of its own exclusion **from** that hegemonic community; that is to say it tells the stories that hegemonic ideology works to erase. (p. 283)*

In contrast to these largely laudatory accounts of de Certeau's conception of resistance in relation to marginalisation, other authors argued that that conception was excessively 'celebratory' of resistance. Thus, although Weinstein (1994) conceded that de Certeau's account of resistance was influential, and that he had used that account "*because of the powerful reading that it generates of the Robot World text*" (p. 6), he noted that "*the oppositional model had traditionally used a series of binary distinctions to describe the relation and difference between the popular and the official*" (p. 3), a practice followed by de Certeau in his work. Weinstein considered that "*These dichotomous distinctions are often inadequate to capture the overall complexity that is involved in popular cultures*" (p. 4), suggesting that there ~~was~~ more resistance than de Certeau's thought was able to conceive.

Precisely the opposite charge – that de Certeau constructed more resistance than ~~was~~ actually possible – ~~was~~ laid by a couple of other authors. McKay (1990) criticised de Certeau's allegedly excessive celebration of popular resistance of marginalisation by claiming that it implied "*fetishising the resistant status of everyday practices*" (p. 67). For McKay, "*The emergence of resistance becomes a cyclical, quasi-natural phenomenon rather than a potentiality whose realisation is contingent upon a particular configuration of power relations*" (p. 68).

Similarly, Ahearne (1995) argued that, "*in his concern to uncover a kind of polymorphous flexibility*", "*Certeau's analyses run the risk of lapsing intermittently into an unqualified apologetics for ordinary practices*" (p. 151). He further charged de Certeau with exaggerating the capacity of people to resist marginalising situations, using "*an extreme example*" to do so:

. . . he tends to assume that there will always be a given quota of inventiveness to ensure that people can 'get round' whatever mechanisms seek to organize and inform them. One misses in Certeau's account a note of threat, the sense that what he is analysing can never be guaranteed but can undeniably be stamped out in specific cases (an extreme example would be the behaviour of the popular majorities in Nazi or totalitarian states). (p. 185)

So Weinstein (1994) apparently thought that de Certeau downplayed the level of available resistance, while McKay (1996) and Ahearne (1995) accused him of exaggerating that level. Faced with this kind of evident contradiction, my response is to pursue a cautious and self-reflexive middle ground. In particular, I assert that the data analysis chapters of this thesis will demonstrate how the show people's 'tactics of consumption' enable them to engage in resistance of their marginalised itinerancy and in the process to turn the 'place' of their children's educational provision into a 'space' for a more enabling conception of itinerancy to be operationalised. Certainly this level of resistance does not 'go with the territory' of itinerancy, but instead derives from the show people's self-conscious constructions of their and others' identities and their formulation of various 'tactics of consumption' and their efforts to promote 'creative understanding'. The point is that, aided by these resources and techniques, the show people are able to carry out 'just enough' resistance for their purposes.

This suggests that hypothetical debates about 'not enough' or 'too much' resistance in de Certeau's thought need to be replaced by appropriate applications of his ideas to empirical sites of marginalisation and resistance.

Otherwise, the ambivalence about whether he conceived of ‘not enough’ or ‘too much’ resistance is likely to preclude productive analyses of ‘real life’ situations. After all, in the final analysis it is the outcomes of resistance that are most important. This point also articulates with my determination to eschew the twin poles of itinerancy as ‘unproblematic othering’ and as ‘unproblematic celebration’ identified at the end of the previous chapter: **as** with the ultimately futile argument about ‘not enough’/‘too much’ resistance, the ‘either/or’ approach to understanding itinerancy that they encapsulate must give way to a much more fluid set of conceptual categories contained in the ‘bothland’ approach championed here.

Justification for my position on this issue was provided by Buchanan’s (1996b) review of Ahearne’s (1995) biography of de Certeau. While Buchanan’s review was as largely complimentary of the biography **as** the biography was of de Certeau (despite possible appearances to the contrary in this subsection), Buchanan departed from Ahearne in the latter’s conviction that de Certeau emphasised resistance and subversion beyond a point where they could realistically pertain in such extreme situations **as** Nazi concentration camps during World War Two. On the contrary, Buchanan’s citation of literature by survivors from such situations led him to proclaim “*that de Certeau is entirely correct*” (p. 152). This was because

...de Certeau does not assume ‘resilience’, he posits it. One does not fall back on ‘inventiveness’ in order to find an inner resource of ‘resilience’, rather one is ‘resilient’ because one is ‘inventive’. This ‘resilience’ is possible because ‘inventiveness’ is a practice, not a specific outcome. This ‘inventiveness’, [sic] is, for de Certeau, a matter

of turning existing materials to alternative ends. A matter of ‘making with’ (‘faire avec’) not ‘making do’. Thus, de Certeau does not ‘valorise resistance’. . . he formalises it. (p. 152)

Buchanan’s interpretation of de Certeau’s construction of human inventiveness and resilience strongly evokes the show people’s own claims about how they negotiate their way through the multiple spaces of their itinerant lifestyle. This interpretation also provides a more agential and enabling view of social life than *“existing criticisms of de Certeau”* that *“conform to a doctrinal view of his work”* (p. 154). I seek in this thesis to favour the agential and enabling over the *“doctrinal”*, and thereby to record my interpretation of the show people’s itinerant spaces – particularly in situations where the *“doctrinal”* rests on unconscious ambivalences about de Certeau’s thought (or else on the false dichotomy of itinerancy as either ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’).

Not that I seek to champion de Certeau against all criticisms by other authors. As I explicate below, I am particularly concerned by the evident incapacity of ‘tactics of consumption’ to lead to a change in ‘the rules of the game’. With regard to marginalisation and resistance, which are my focus here, I take heed of some timely reminders and warning notes by some authors about the theoretical risk of homogenising resistance. Thus, although I disagree with Weinstein’s (1994) comment, in reference to de Certeau, that *“he overly celebrates. . . resistance”* (p. 3), I concur with his supplementary assertion that *“the celebratory attitude tends to overlook the ways that the resistance embodied in popular culture comes cluttered with racist and sexist contradictions”* (p. 3).

Similarly, I have noted Jenhns' (1992) cautious warning

. . .against absolute statements of the type that appear all too frequently within the polemical rhetoric of cultural studies. Readers are not always resistant; all resistant readings are not necessarily progressive readings; the 'people' do not always recognize their conditions of alienation and subordination. (p. 34)

Moreover, Ahearne (1995) asserted that de Certeau's "writing is not entirely immune from the dangers inherent in advocating on principle the worth of the 'popular' (despite the displacement effected by the critical dissection of this term)" (p. 185). By this, Ahearne meant that "Certeau tends to valorize resistance **as** such, whereas this may constitute in some cases a damaging problem which has to be addressed" (p. 186). This contention recalls Frow's (1991) criticism that de Certeau's construction of 'the people' assumes both the homogeneity of such a group and that this group "necessarily operates in a progressive way" (p. 58). In other words, celebrating and championing resistance tends to downplay the potential for resisters to engage in equally repressive and marginalising strategies when they gain power themselves.

My response to these diverse warnings is to identify their **two** separate but related elements. One element is the abjuration to avoid homogenising resistance. This is a crucial point, to which I shall return in Chapter Four and the **data** analysis chapters. I acknowledge the importance of seeking to refrain from eliding differences within the show circuits and among the population that for ethical appropriateness and linguistic convenience I designate **as** 'the show people'. (Such an approach, indeed, would lead me back to the hnd of

literature identified in the previous chapter that rested on the romanticising of the itinerant lifestyle.) This is significant not only because such elisions have the potential to achieve the obverse of my objective in this thesis (by portraying show people **as** a single, passive group), but also because a major thrust of my argument in the second data analysis chapter is that the shifts in meaning and understanding between ‘showie’ and ‘non-showie’, and among different kinds of ‘showies’, are a principal component of the show people’s resistance of their marginalising experiences.

The other element of the warnings posed by various commentators on de Certeau’s work is the analytical risk of rendering marginalised people **as** folk heroes who, with ‘right on their side’, battle against evil and powerful enemies. Again, I seek consciously to avoid this potential tendency in this thesis, both because such a tendency would be patronising, even insulting, to a group of people with considerable pride and articulateness, and also because this portrayal would contradict my understanding of the educational providers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education **as** well-intentioned and hard working professionals seeking to enhance educational access for one of their client groups.

The effect of this discussion has been to confirm that many commentators find – as I do – de Certeau’s theorisation of marginalisation and resistance fruitful and compelling. Furthermore, rather than being constituted **as** binary opposites, these terms emerge **as** floating signifiers. That is, like the show people whose lives are described in this thesis, ‘marginalisation’ and ‘resistance’ are fluid and mobile and need to be analysed in context as contingent and provisional. It is this theoretical fluidity and mobility that

attracts me to de Certeau's ideas, because they are precisely the necessary features of a conceptual framework geared to explaining the show people's interactions among themselves and with 'outsiders'. More specifically, they are vital characteristics of my efforts to explain the marginalisation, resistance and transformation of the show people's lifeworlds, and to prosecute a fluid and shifting understanding of itinerancy that can help to sponsor a counternarrative about it and about Traveller education.

Change and transformation

At this point it is appropriate to synthesise my response to the various critiques of de Certeau's distinctions between such paired categories as 'strategies'–'tactics' and 'place'–'space' (and to some extent between 'marginalisation' and 'resistance') – a response that goes to the heart of my justification for deploying de Certeau's ideas in this thesis. The charge that de Certeau's thinking is excessively polarised, because it is reducible to a rigid set of binary oppositions, is misplaced for three crucial reasons. Firstly, this criticism downplayed the extent to which individuals and groups are in fact routinely positioned **as** being relatively powerless or marginalised. In other words, many people perceive themselves **as** being passive consumers of social life rather than as exercising a decisive influence over the unfolding of events to which they have to respond. To ignore or downplay this fact seeks – consciously or otherwise – to replace what is to me de Certeau's very accurate and knowledgeable politicised analysis of social life that identifies something of the real scale of marginalisation of many disparate groups at the beginning

of the twenty-first century with a far less satisfactory utopian view of that social life.

Secondly, the criticism of de Certeau's work as being too polarised ignores what to me is a great strength of de Certeau's thought: his explicit recognition, and valuing, of the human agency of the less powerful. *The practice of everyday life* (1984) and *Heterologies* (1986), and the applications of these books by other scholars, are replete with examples of people engaging in tactics of various kinds that make a material and psychological difference to their situations. So the implication that de Certeau's work is reducible to binary oppositions and therefore positions the less powerful as having no control over their lives ignores this evidence of marginalised people having a capacity to change important **aspects** of their lives. Ironically, this criticism also forgets that a major motivation for de Certeau's work was a similar criticism by him of Foucault's thought, which indicates that he was particularly keen to 'redress the balance' in favour of the agency of the marginalised.

Thirdly, this criticism ignores the fact that de Certeau did not portray marginalised people as only engaging in tactics of subversion. On the contrary, he eschewed a homogenised view of 'the powerful' and 'the powerless' (which lies at the heart of the criticism about binary oppositions) in favour of a much more heterogeneous analysis of social life. This prompted him to argue that within marginalised groups relatively powerful individuals sometimes engage in strategies that at least potentially can perpetuate the marginalisation of their peers. This might happen, for example, with tokenism, when 'the centre' coopts, and thereby 'buys the silence', of particularly

articulate and therefore potentially troublesome members of a marginalised group. For these reasons, then, de Certeau's distinctions between 'strategies' and 'tactics', and between 'place' and 'space', far from being excessively polarised and therefore static, are actually dynamic and fluid and therefore very well suited to informing my response to these questions. This suitability in turn underscores the appropriateness of de Certeau's ideas in highlighting the multifaceted dimensions of itinerancy and its incapacity of reduction to the twin poles of 'unproblematic othering' and 'unproblematic celebration'.

My criticism of critiques of de Certeau's alleged 'binary oppositions', then, is prompted by my assertion that the 'litmus test' for such critiques is the extent of change and transformation in the show people's situation. That is, if the show people are able to change their marginalised status by using both overt political action and conscious and unconscious resistance, that will be an indication that the critiques were overstated.

I turn now to another reason for discussing transformation at this juncture (apart from the fact that the latter is one of the three key concepts guiding this thesis). This reason is that such a discussion introduces my own area of greatest ambivalence about de Certeau's thought. This ambivalence is encapsulated in my concern that, relating this argument to the show people, the impact of de Certeau's theory is such that the show people can engage in a number of 'tactics of consumption', and they can fleetingly make 'the place' of 'the proper' into 'a space' of their own, but in the end 'the rules of the games' remain precisely the same as at the beginning of the contest.

To elaborate this argument: demonstrating that the show people ‘consume’ the educational provision established for their children in ways that resist and subvert the marginalising strategies of ‘the centre’, and that turn ‘the place’ of the educational norms associated with fixed residence into ‘the space’ of itinerancy, although it is significant, is inadequate in one crucial respect. This is that it fails to explain fully how and why the show people are able to contribute positively and substantially to social and educational change and transformation, encapsulated in the greater recognition and valuing of their distinctive lifestyle and educational needs: they are positioned always **as** ‘making do’ and never as re-making or reconstructing. **As** the next section of this chapter explains, this point is my justification for combining the theoretical resources of de Certeau’s ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtin’s ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, because it is through exercising such practices that show people are enabled to transform ‘the rules of the game’ and to make more enduring positive changes to the spaces of itinerancy.

My ambivalence about this crucial element of de Certeau’s thought is reflected in **my** endorsement of **two** seemingly contradictory views of that thought **as** it pertained to change and transformation. On the one hand, as Aheame (1995) pointed out, *“Questions of historical rupture and transition are central to Certeau’s work. How do social orders (and the human subjects who live within them) cease to be organized in certain ways and come to be organized in others?”* (p. 27).

Similarly, for Rowan (1994), the ‘binary oppositions’ charge that several commentators levelled at de Certeau’s work “*can be met by the constancy of displacement*” (p. 76), by which she meant that “*to seek the reversal of binaries instead of their displacement is to perpetuate inequalities and injustice*” (p. 77). Drawing on the work of Audré Lorde, she used a vivid metaphor to illustrate her argument about the transformative potential of repetition leading to displacement

. . .to constantly and ceaselessly introduce difference into repetition is to weaken the master’s control over his house and his tools and to allow for a new understanding of what the house is, how it was built and who[m] it shelters. (p. 77)

From the same perspective, I dissent from the claim by Budd, Entman and Steinman (1990; cited in Jenkins, 1992, p. 27) that nomadic readers “*may actually be powerless and dependent*” rather than “*uncontainable, restless and free*”, and that “*People who are nomads cannot settle down; they are at the mercy of natural forces they cannot control*”. This seems to replicate the conceptualisation of itinerancy as a ‘deficit’ (and therefore as an ‘unproblematic othering’) that courses through much of the Traveller education literature, a construction that de Certeau’s concepts of ‘tactics of consumption’ and ‘space’ are well suited to assisting me to resist and change.

However, despite my endorsement of Ahearne’s (1995) and Rowan’s (1994) comments as encouraging my dissension from Budd *et alia* (1990), I also concur with Jenkins’ (1992) elaboration of the comments by Budd *et alia*: “*As these writers are quick to note, controlling the means of cultural reception, while an important step, does not provide an adequate substitute*

for access to the means of cultural production and distribution" (p. 27). This encapsulates my conviction that 'the rules of the game' do not change sufficiently to transform multiple forms of consumption into privileged sites of production. This is precisely why, in short, I have identified the need to link de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' with Bakhtin's 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

I began this subsection by asserting that I would navigate a path through selected applications and critiques of de Certeau's ideas, informed by my commitment to eschewing an 'either/or' approach to conceptualising itinerancy in favour of a 'both/and' approach. At the same time, I posited a paradox in the reception accorded to de Certeau's thought, centred on the fact that many commentators who used his ideas fruitfully in applications to their respective research interests also criticised him for relying on one or more reductive binary oppositions. Furthermore, I argued that that paradox was explicable in terms of the commentators' ambivalence about how to 'read' de Certeau in relation to various paired categories: 'strategies' – 'tactics', 'place' – 'space' and marginalisation – resistance. In addition, I contended that the ambivalence surrounding de Certeau's work reflected his refusal to remain confined to positions or issues within one or other of the terms of these categories, but rather traversed the boundaries keeping them separate.

This proposition combined ambivalence with the itinerancy of the figure of 'the nomad', and therefore provided an explicit link with my earlier critique of the literature on Traveller education. Moreover, some of these ambivalent accounts of de Certeau's paired categories revealed contradictions, such as

Balides' (1993) and McKay's (19%) efforts to render the 'place'–'space' categories **as** excessively masculinist.

Not that I regard ambivalence **as** a phenomenon to be avoided at all costs. On the contrary, I acknowledge and celebrate my own ambivalence about de Certeau's work, an ambivalence that I contend can be theoretically and empirically productive. On the one hand, I regard the paired categories discussed in this subsection, not **as** reductive binary oppositions, but instead **as** shifting and fluid conceptual filters that *can* assist my interpretation of the dynamism and flexibility of the show people's interactions with educational providers. This is particularly true of de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' and 'space', which I therefore feel justified in making integral to this thesis's conceptual framework. This practice accords with my argument that itinerancy *can* be properly understood only from an anti-essentialist approach that avoids the conceptual traps identified in the literature review in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, I argue that the accumulation of paired categories in de Certeau's work, while not in themselves binary oppositions, leads paradoxically to an incapacity to analyse the possibility of a change to 'the rules of the game'. This incapacity allows the show people to be understood **as** perennially engaging in 'tactics of consumption' and making the 'spaces' of itinerancy closer to their vision of 'home' but still not accessing or transforming 'the place' of 'the proper'. In other words, there are vital issues that this framework cannot identify and attend to. It is this ultimate analytical weakness that provides a cue for my move to the next section, where I outline how Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' enable just such a transformation to be envisaged. At the same time, I

should emphasise the need to combine both sets of conceptual resources if I am to pursue the goal of a ‘both/and’ approach to understanding itinerancy and of contributing to a counternarrative of both it and Traveller education. My goal in the next section of the chapter is to locate – by using Bakhtin – analytical resources that allow the identification, not just of marginality and resistance, but also of transformation.

3.3 Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’

As with Michel de Certeau, Mikhail Bakhtin’s contribution to this thesis’s conceptual framework is intimately connected to my desire to deploy the strongest available theoretical resources to advance the cause of an anti-essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s contribution is related also to what is effectively a *leitmotif* of the thesis: the ambivalence arising from the spaces of itinerancy. In Bakhtin’s case, not only **has** his thought generated considerable ambivalence among commentators (for example, and again in similarity to de Certeau, in relation to possible feminist appropriations of his ideas), but he also highlighted on many occasions the ambivalence that was fundamental to his conception of social life. This assertion will be demonstrated below, partly in my account of Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’. **As** I indicated earlier, in the discussion that follows I construct these two concepts **as** leavening elements that potentially transform ‘the rules of the game’ so that the

marginalised spaces of itinerancy can become meaningful and productive ‘places’ on more than a temporary basis.

In discussing de Certeau’s thought, I moved from his conceptualisation of ‘tactics of consumption’ in two of his works (1984, 1986) to an account of various commentators’ applications and critiques of his thought. With Bakhtin, I have elected to move in the reverse direction, beginning by putting his thought in the perspective of a comparison with that of de Certeau, then proceeding to focus on two of his principal notions – ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ (1986a). The reason for this approach lies in my desire to demonstrate the broad similarities and dissonances between the two theorists’ thinking as a means of explaining and justifying my juxtaposition of certain of their ideas in the conceptual framework of this thesis. This demonstration is likely to be most effective by exploring the broader dimensions of Bakhtin’s thought before concentrating on the two notions selected for deployment in this study.

Accordingly, I shall discuss the following aspects of Bakhtin’s thought in this section of the chapter:

- Bakhtin and de Certeau
- ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’.

3.3.1 Bakhtin and de Certeau

There are several points of implicit comparison between Bakhtin and de Certeau, even though to my knowledge they remained unaware of each other's work. In tracing these points of comparison, I demonstrate that Bakhtin and de Certeau are not conceptually incompatible but can logically be linked without misrepresenting either thinker's body of work. In the next subsection of the chapter I outline and justify my focus on 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' as conceptual resources capable of explaining how 'the rules of the game', within which de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' ultimately reside, can be challenged and transformed.

Firstly, I draw on Morson and Emerson's extensive biography *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a prosaics* (1990). In that text, the authors identified three "*global concepts*", which they argued underpinned all Bakhtin's work and gave an enduring coherence to writings that were published more than fifty years apart. One of those "*global concepts*" was "*prosaics*". This was a term that Bakhtin never used and that Morson and Emerson coined as a neologism to encompass a major theme in Bakhtin's work. According to Morson and Emerson, prosaics in its broader sense "*is a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the 'prosaic'*" (p. 16). They argued that in its more restricted sense, as "*a theory of literature that privileges prose in general and the novel in particular over the poetic genres*", prosaics "*is, so far as we know, Bakhtin's unique and original creation*" (p. 15).

The concept of “*prosaics*” would appear to resonate with de Certeau’s continuing interest in daily life, as the title of his book *The practice of everyday life* (1984) most obviously exemplified. There were also echoes of de Certeau’s ideas (although his name was not mentioned) in Morson and Emerson’s account of Bakhtin’s understanding of *prosaics*, such as in the sections “*Prosaics and everyday language*” (pp. 21-23), “*Prosaics as a philosophy of the ordinary*” (pp. 23-25), “*Prosaics and ethics*” (pp. 25-27) and “*Prosaics and systems*” (pp. 27-32). The significance of what at first appears to be a somewhat tenuous connection lies in highlighting the fact that, although both Bakhtin and de Certeau were primarily interested in language and literature, their respective ideas had profoundly material and practical implications. That is, Bakhtin and de Certeau understood that the issues to which their concepts related extended far beyond the intellectual sphere and were inextricably linked with the daily lives of ‘ordinary’ people. This is another point of justification for applying selected **aspects** of those ideas in juxtaposition to the empirical site with which this thesis is concerned.

Furthermore, the assertion that Bakhtin, like de Certeau, was deeply concerned with the empirical contexts in which his ideas were grounded was supported by Jones (1993). For example, Jones argued that Bakhtin questioned the capacity of theoretical systems

...to account satisfactorily for the experience of everyday life, or to provide an adequate basis for understanding linguistic communication, interpersonal relations, moral choice, aesthetic judgement, literary texts or indeed any sphere of action or enquiry which takes the experience of everyday life as its chosen field. (p. 244)

Jones' (1993) argument evokes de Certeau's similar interest in the ethical dimensions of 'everyday life'. Furthermore, Jones implicitly approved of Morson and Emerson's (1990) neologism 'prosaics', which he described as "*a form of thinking (or style of enquiry) that presumes the overriding importance of the everyday, the prosaic, in language as in experience in general*" (p. 250). This summary resonates with de Certeau's account of the importance of everyday life **as** the site of the exercise of agency, rather than **as** the setting for wholly meaningless and trivial concerns. Furthermore, it underscores the crucial point that both Bakhtin and de Certeau would be likely to have endorsed an analysis of an empirical site of 'everyday life' from the perspective of marginalisation, resistance and transformation – the foci of this study's research questions. Like de Certeau and Bakhtin, I conceive of everyday life as manifesting the interplay of much deeper and more fundamental forces and processes – in this case, marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to itinerancy **and** Traveller education.

Secondly, Morson and Emerson (1990) articulated what they identified **as** Bakhtin's aversion to binary oppositions:

*As we have seen, Bakhtin rejected the Hobson's choices of modern thought: either there is a system **or** there is nothing; either there are comprehensive closed structures **or** there is chaos; either there is in principle an all-encompassing explanatory system **or** there is total relativism (**or** perhaps: either God exists, **or** all is permitted). The assumption that these are the only alternatives has blinded critics to the possibility of radically different **kinds** of truth, unity, and perspective. (p. 233)*

This critique of commentators who have mistakenly constructed Bakhtin's ideas as being excessively polarised, whereas he actually argued strongly against binary oppositions, is very similar to my earlier argument that many of the charges of binary oppositions directed against de Certeau have resulted from ambivalence about, and misunderstandings of, his work. The same kind of ambivalence is evident in several of the following points of comparison between Bakhtin and de Certeau. Certainly the assertion that Bakhtin's thought was consciously anti-binaristic in structure helps to justify my deployment of two of his concepts to explain how it is possible to alter fundamentally the supposedly fixed and immutable 'rules of the game'. This resonates with my earlier, repeated statement of preference to eschew the polarised 'either/or' for the more dynamic and mobile 'both/and' approach to conceptualising itinerancy.

Thirdly, Roderick (1995) contended that Bakhtin, through his articulation of the concept of carnival to denote the reversal of 'normal' social rules, aligned himself explicitly with the 'consumers' rather than the 'producers' of society:

*Bakhtin removes the complexity of...[a] spatial model of class society, making the body politic divisible into only two stratum [sic]. Those lowly topics associated with the **lower** classes are to be championed by Bakhtin, while higher topics associated with upper classes are to be disparaged. The ascendancy of the higher canons of official life is to be resisted through celebrations **or** rather unleashings of the material bodily principle within everyday life. (p. 122)*

Roderick's interpretation of Bakhtin's approach to theorising carnival is to me far too polarised. On the other hand, that interpretation has the merit of identifying Bakhtin's and de Certeau's common interest in highlighting evidence of resistance of the marginalising strategies directed at less powerful groups, and their delight in portraying the rich heterogeneity of social life. This similarity helps also to justify my focus on consumption as an active process of challenging and potentially transforming provision of services that consumers consider insufficient or inappropriate.

Fourthly, a crucial similarity between Bakhtin and de Certeau was their common interest in 'boundaries' or 'margins'. Bakhtin (1975) insisted that cultural entities are effective boundaries:

One must not, however, imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory. The realm of culture has no internal territory; it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect. . . Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and significance; abstracted from boundaries it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies. (Cited in Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 51)

This resonates with the extract from *The practice of everyday life* (1984) that I cited earlier:

Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable and unsymbolised,

*remains the only one possible **for** all those who nevertheless buy and pay **for** the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has **now** become a silent majority.* (p. xvii)

There are three principal points of similarity between these two statements. The first, which follows from my second point above, is that a rigid dichotomy between ‘centre’ and ‘margins’ is eschewed in favour of an acknowledgment that the dividing line is fluid and shifting. Additionally, margins are constructed **as** agential and productive, the sites of creativity for Bakhtin and of consumption for de Certeau. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s refusal to depict “*the realm of culture as **some** sort ~~of~~ spatial whole*” is in some ways evocative of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’, in that he rejected a view of space **as** sequestered from the forces of everyday life. These three points of similarity have a three-fold significance for this thesis. The first significance **is** that they highlight Bakhtin’s and de Certeau’s agreement with each other on issues that are crucial for the thesis’s conceptual framework. The second significance is that they refocus attention on the ambivalent spaces of itinerancy, by suggesting that such spaces are dynamically and productively marginal. The third significance **is** to reassert the value of understanding itinerancy as dynamic and shifting, not as fixedly polarised between ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’.

A fifth point of commonality is highlighted by Holquist (1981), who identified in Bakhtin a tendency that **was** also characteristic of de Certeau, and that followed their common conviction that marginality **can** be creative and even powerful. This was the fact that Bakhtin “*is preoccupied by centuries*

usually ignored by others; and within these, he has great affection for figures who are even more obscure” (p. xvi). Holquist’s examples of this tendency in Bakhtin included his study of *“a peculiar school of grammarians at Toulouse in the seventh century A.D.”*, and his recurrent interest in *“the Carolingian Revival or the interstitial periods between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”* (p. xvi). In de Certeau’s case, equivalent instances included his lifelong enthusiasm for the ideas of Jean-Joseph Sdrin, whom Ahearne (1995) described as *“a strange seventeenth-century mystic”* (p. 2), and de Certeau’s detailed account of a case of multiple diabolic possession in the French city of Loudon in 1632 (Ahearne, 1995, p. 76). This similarity of tendency underscores both Bakhtin’s and de Certeau’s greater interest in less well known individuals and groups than those with greater financial and cultural capital, a point that highlights the general applicability of their ideas to this study of a ‘marginalised’ group within Australian society.

Sixthly, Roderick’s (1995) depiction of Bakhtin’s account of the body contrasted strongly with Fiske’s (1989) construction of de Certeau’s account of the same topic. Roderick chastised Bakhtin for privileging the collective body of the public space – closely associated with carnival – over the individual body of the private sphere. For Bakhtin (1984), the grotesque public body is enormously productive and resilient, largely because of its direct link to the *“ancestral body of the people”* (p. 29).

By contrast, according to Fiske (1989), de Certeau believed *“that juridical law can be effective only if people have bodies upon which it can be imposed”* (p. 91). In Fiske’s analysis of de Certeau’s position on the body, *“This incarnation of the law and intextuation of the body. . . are also at work*

in ordinary everyday practices” such as “*clothing, cosmetics, slimming, [and] jogging*” (p. 91). What interests me in this analysis is the proposition that Bakhtin presented a more agential ‘reading’ of the body than that propounded by de Certeau. While ‘tactics of consumption’ are explicitly agential, my selection of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as accompanying conceptual resources derives from my argument that they provide an ultimately more productive interpretation of social life than ‘tactics of consumption’ considered in isolation from efforts to change and transform ‘the rules of the game’.

Seventhly and finally, Roderick (1995) levelled a similar feminist critique against Bakhtin to the criticism directed by Balides (1993) and McKay (1996) at de Certeau. Roderick’s attack was two-pronged. The first prong was his charge that Bakhtin’s study of carnival focussed largely on the construction of space from a masculinist perspective. Roderick summarised these two points in his acerbic comment: “*Bringing men into public space where they operate as competent speakers is hardly a radical new project*” (p. 132). The second prong was Roderick’s contention that Bakhtinian agency was also masculinist. This point related to Roderick’s assertion that “*Bakhtin is unable to recognise*” that the agency that he championed as being exercised by ‘the people’ was actually based on “*a sexed subject*” (p. 132). Again, I disagree with Roderick’s ‘reading’ of Bakhtin as excessively masculinist, on the basis that several successful feminist appropriations of Bakhtin’s ideas have been made (see for example Pearce [1994], who nevertheless also attacked Bakhtin as potentially masculinist).

This admittedly selective comparison of the thought of Bakhtin and de Certeau has revealed three main findings that are relevant to this thesis's conceptual framework. Firstly, a number of commentators revealed considerable ambivalence about certain ideas of both thinkers, an ambivalence that in some cases obscured or misrepresented their work. Secondly, Bakhtin and de Certeau's thought has several points of coincidence, particularly the recognition that they gave to human agency among 'marginalised' groups and the power of that agency in both contributing to, and resisting, that marginalisation. Thirdly, in relation to topics as varied as binary oppositions and the body, Bakhtin showed a willingness to consider how 'the rules of the game' separating groups with varying degrees of financial and cultural capital might be changed and transformed that was not so consistently displayed by de Certeau. In combination, these three findings endorse the 'rightness of fit' between my synthesis of these two thinkers' ideas and the logic of the study's conceptual framework, conceived as it is as simultaneously demonstrating that itinerancy is associated with marginalisation at the same time that it presents the possibilities of resistance and transformation.

3.3.2 'Outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'

Having traced some of the main lines of similarity and divergence between the thinking of Bakhtin and de Certeau, I ~~turn~~ now to examine the two Bakhtinian notions that I apply to the analysis of the study's data. My intention in this subsection is to outline the concepts as conceived by Bakhtin and understood by commentators on his work. I seek also to make a strong case that juxtaposing these concepts with de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' is

necessary to explain how the show people can go beyond resisting marginalisation to transforming the origins and consequences of that marginalisation.

My inclusion of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ in this study’s conceptual framework is neither accidental nor incidental. On the contrary, they have been included because they allow me to answer the third research question framing this thesis, the one relating to transformation, in ways that depending exclusively on de Certeau’s ‘tactics of consumption’ would not enable me to do. Such an exclusive dependence would create an intellectual problem, by not allowing the study to conceive of the possibility of the show people’s moving outside the marginalisation–resistance ‘loop’. Bakhtin’s notions are crucial to solving that intellectual problem, by conceptualising the potential for transformation and the creation of new ways of understanding itinerant people and Traveller education.

To elaborate this argument, in the next chapter I demonstrate how ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ are central to my methodological approach to the research design of the study. In this subsection of this chapter my task is to explain how those same notions contribute conceptually as well as methodologically. They do this by allowing me to identify and articulate those actions of the show people that cannot be explained by the broad concept of ‘tactics of consumption’. In other words, if I restricted the study’s conceptual framework to that broad concept, there are certain political moves and other actions that I would be unable to name and hence analyse, because ‘tactics of consumption’ cannot conceive of the kind of transformative practice that this thesis posits. Thus Bakhtin’s notions are indispensable

because they give me that naming power, and they allow me not only to focus on, highlight and identify, but also to acknowledge and analyse the political significance of, particular practices and moves.

Against the backdrop of this argument about the crucial analytical utility of the two Bakhtinian concepts of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, then, those two concepts are logically related. By this I mean that the processes entailed in ‘creative understanding’ are predicated on a preceding recognition of the ‘outsidedness’ of other people. In the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters, I shall demonstrate the ways that the show people display creative understanding **as** they contribute to the transformation of their educational opportunities. Here I need to explicate precisely what these terms mean.

Morson and Emerson (1990) explained ‘outsidedness’ in this way: *“When one person faces another, his [sic passim] experience **is** conditioned by his ‘outsidedness’. Even in the physical sense, one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself. I can see the world behind your back. . .”* (p. 53). Although the bases of ‘outsidedness’ could vary considerably, including *“personal, spatial, temporal, national, **or** any other”* (p. 56), *“outsidedness creates the possibility **of** dialogue, and dialogue helps to understand a culture in a profound way”* (p. 55).

Pechey (1997) referred to *“the early Bakhtin, who builds the whole house of value on the foundation **of our** ‘outsidedness’ to one another, my authorship of you **as** ‘hero’ and your answering authorship **of me**”* (p. 37). Pechey used that analysis to assert, *“We are each **of us** a margin and each **of us** a centre”* (p. 37), which recalls my earlier discussion of the similarities

between Bakhtin and de Certeau in their respective views of the ‘centre’–‘margins’ dichotomy. It recalls also Ferguson’s (1990) persuasive reference to ‘the invisible centre’, and his statement that “*When we say marginal, we must always ask marginal to, what?*” (p. 9). This link between ‘outsidedness’ and the idea of marginalisation as a floating signifier is important in suggesting ‘outsidedness’ as part of a process of destabilising the foundations of marginalisation. Again this highlights the analytical power of ‘outsidedness’: its contribution to that process of destabilisation is vital in identifying and interrogating actions by the show people that help to transport them to a new terrain that moves beyond the marginalisation–resistance interplay so ably theorised by de Certeau.

Morson and Emerson (1990) used a linguistic example to explain the operation of ‘outsidedness’:

To realize and develop the potential of a language, ‘outsidedness’–the outsidedness of another language–is required. That outsidedness may lead to an exchange in which each language reveals to the other what it did not know about itself, and in which new insights are produced that neither wholly contained before. (p. 310)

In addition, Bakhtin (1986a) articulated the crucial role that ‘outsidedness’ played in enabling and promoting ‘creative understanding’:

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding–in time, in space,

in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (p. 7; emphasis in original)

Furthermore, "*Creative understanding continues creativity, and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity*" (Bakhtin, 1986b, p. 142).

Morson and Emerson (1990) traced the elaboration of the Bakhtinian concept of 'creative understanding', which they argued was based on a "*profoundly non-Platonic conviction about human thought*" (p. 99):

Revising the Kantian triad of his earliest period, Bakhtin now claims that understanding is in fact a four-tiered process: first, the physical perception, then its recognition, then a grasping of its significance in context, and finally—and this is the crucial step—'active-dialogic understanding.' This fourth step is more than an acknowledgment of existing context; it is implicitly creative, and presumes ever-new, and surprisingly new, contexts. (p. 99)

The concept of 'creative understanding' is useful not only methodologically (as I elaborate in the next chapter) but also analytically, because it allows me to identify instances of the show people engaging in this kind of understanding. This in turn enables me to argue that these are fundamentally transformative acts that move the show people beyond their traditional marginalised status. Creative understanding, understood in this sense, is

something that one does, rather than something that one has or to which one aspires.

My proposition that ‘outsidedness’ is a prerequisite of ‘creative understanding’ is made despite my awareness that Morson and Emerson (1990) located ‘outsidedness’ as a new concept in what they identified as Bakhtin’s first period of intellectual development, and ‘creative understanding’ in his fourth and final period (p. 66). I am aware also that they argued that “*When he discovered dialogue, Bakhtin largely abandoned this model*” (p. 54) of social life that included ‘outsidedness’, on the basis that

...the abstractness of the formulation, its sense of self and other as irreducibly counterposed starting points gave way to a richer sense of dialogue as the starting point. He arrived at more profound and integrated conceptions of self and society—two categories that were derivative, reified, and partially misleading when opposed to each other. (p. 54)

Nevertheless, for me a less abstract and rigid conceptualisation of ‘outsidedness’ is helpful both in constructing my interactions with the Queensland show people and in interpreting their constructions of other people, as a prelude to engaging in dialogue as an expression of ‘creative understanding’. This argument is partly justified by the fact that Morson and Emerson asserted that “*Bakhtin tends to stress the importance of boundaries and of unmerged horizons, which provide the outsidedness that ultimately makes all dialogue and all creativity possible*” (p. 166), and by their subsequent statement that “*the differences of culture—the outsidedness—... makes [sic] a real dialogue among cultures and periods possible*” (p. 429;

emphasis in original). Even more explicitly, they claimed that Bakhtin's "*understanding of creative understanding*" contained four elements: "*outsidedness, live entering, confusion, and active dialogue*" (p. 99).

Perhaps the 'solution' to this apparent contradiction – at the very least an example of ambivalence by Morson and Emerson (1990) towards these two Bakhtinian concepts – lies in Emerson's (1984) contention, "*That one aspect of Bakhtin's style most inseparable from his personality is the developing idea. Its subtle shifts, redundancies, self-quotations – ultimately, its open-endedness – is [sic] the genre in which, and with which, he worked*" (p. xxxix).

In other words, rather than seeing 'outsidedness' from Bakhtin's first period and 'creative understanding' from his fourth period as mutually exclusive, it is more appropriate and productive to regard the latter as the considerably elaborated amplification of the former, with important continuities with, as well as crucial divergences from, the earlier concept. This approach echoes Docker's (1994) assertion that

...there is no essential Bakhtin to be appropriated, that Bakhtin himself disliked any attention that tried to seek true or single identity for his writings, that he was embarrassed by agreement, and welcomed disagreement. Inevitably I have used "Bakhtin", my own interpretation of his writing, for my own arguments about cultural history. (p. 183)

In a corresponding way, I am using two of Bakhtin's notions to support my argument about the show people's resistance and transformation of their marginalised situation.

So Morson and Emerson's (1990) ambivalence about the connections between Bakhtin's concepts of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' has given way in my account to the argument that 'outsidedness' is a prerequisite of 'creative understanding', which in turn is a means of moving beyond the fixed conceptual binaries that constitute 'the rules of the game' through its contestation and destabilisation of the basis of those rules and its demonstration of the possibility of new and different rules being established in their place. Certainly if more equitable and less marginalising approaches to Traveller education are to be achieved, creatively and imaginatively comprehending the basis of the other's circumstances and positions is vital to communicating what each group expects such education to accomplish. Furthermore, as I relate in Chapter Four, these two concepts are crucial to justifying how it is possible for a non-itinerant person to write a thesis focussed on the lives of itinerant people, by employing and exploiting the principle of 'outsidedness', and also how such a thesis can itself reflect and promote 'creative understanding' between show people and non-show people.

Both these points – challenging conceptual binaries and helping to frame the study's research design – reinforce the argument pursued in this section of the chapter. That argument has been that a focus on de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' is helpful in explaining how the show people experience and resist marginalisation, but that such a focus is insufficient to explain how such marginalisation can be and is transformed into more positive experiences and meanings associated with itinerancy. 'Outsidedness' emphasises the contingency and provisionality of the mutually opposed positions attached to marginalisation and resistance. Similarly, 'creative understanding', understood in an active and agential way to denote a conscious process and effort of will,

provides a means of moving beyond those mutually opposed positions to a comprehension of the other's point of view and a realisation that 'things don't always have to be like this'. This is the sense in which I conceive these two Bakhtinian concepts as underpinning a shift from marginalisation and resistance to transformation and a fundamental change to 'the rules of the game' according to which itinerancy is 'played' or enacted. That same shift is crucial to prosecuting a move beyond conceiving itinerancy as either 'unproblematic othering' or 'unproblematic celebration' towards a far more mobile, realistic and respectful understanding of itinerant people.

3.4 Synthesis of the conceptual framework

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to synthesise the main elements of the study's conceptual framework, thereby summarising the argument outlined so far in this thesis and providing a 'bridge' to the research design and data analysis chapters that follow. Figure 3.1 portrays the thesis's conceptual framework in diagrammatic form.


ITEMS	ELEMENTS
Focus	The spaces of itinerancy
Key concepts	‘Tactics of consumption’ ↔ ‘Outsidedness’ ↔ ‘Creative understanding’ 
Research questions	Marginal-isation ↔ Resist-ance ↔ Trans-formation
Literature	Australian shows ↔ Traveller education

Figure 3.1: The conceptual framework of the study

The starting point of the conceptual framework, which as I noted at the outset of the chapter is integrally associated with the need to pursue an anti-essentialist construction of itinerancy, is the study’s focus: the spaces of itinerancy. I explained earlier that ‘spaces’ in this context refers to the physical and symbolic spaces through which itinerants travel, which are therefore recognisably different from the spaces in which non-itinerants conduct their daily lives.

The thesis’s focus on the spaces of itinerancy has prompted my selection of the three key concepts informing this study. Firstly, de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ is crucial to explaining how and why the show people resist and subvert their marginalised status, as a means of maximising

their children's educational access and in the process of turning the often uncomprehending and sometimes hostile 'spaces' through which they travel into 'places' of their own. On the other hand, my ambivalence about de Certeau's concept led me to argue that, although I found many of the binary oppositions ascribed to him by other writers (and about which they expressed their own ambivalence) misconceived, that concept did not enable an analysis of a situation in which 'the rules of the game' that construct people like the 'showies' as marginalised can actually change.

Accordingly, I selected Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' as a means of understanding how 'the rules of the game' can and do change, thereby capitalising on the potential resistance and transformation of the spaces of itinerancy and therefore refusing to privilege marginalisation as the single most influential consequence of itinerancy. 'Outsidedness' as a prerequisite of 'creative understanding', in my 'reading', explains how the show people's interactions with others, including educational providers, can enable a mutually respectful comprehension to develop. This growing comprehension would have the effect of making the 'spaces' of itinerancy 'places' for both groups, rather than a territory that the itinerants would occupy only when the non-itinerants were not looking.

In combination, the focus on the spaces of itinerancy and the key concepts of 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' explain, inform and refine the three research questions underpinning this thesis. Firstly, the show people's experiences of marginalisation result directly from the constructions of the spaces of itinerancy as 'unstable' and even 'dangerous' places where the established order is turned upside down.

In consequence, ‘strategies of marginalisation’ are experienced by the show people, who epitomise these perceived ‘threats’ to that order. This situation is clearly the antithesis of the exercise of ‘outsidedness’ in order to reach mutual ‘creative understanding’.

Secondly, that same instability and fluidity of the spaces of itinerancy give the show people opportunities to take subversive action and engage in several and varied ‘tactics of consumption’ in order to resist their marginalisation. Here the focus is on ‘outsidedness’ rather than ‘creative understanding’, as the show people draw strength for their resistant tactics from what makes them different from, or ‘outside’, the established order. So ‘outsidedness’ becomes transformative and an explicitly political move.

Thirdly, in an attempt to move beyond ‘the rules of the game’ that position ‘tactics of consumption’ in opposition to ‘strategies of marginalisation’, the show people also engage in actions designed to capitalise on their ‘outsidedness’ in relation to non-itinerant people, and to enhance and maximise mutual ‘creative understanding’, which thereby and also becomes a political move against those who set ‘the rules of the game’. They see these actions as the most likely to enable them to move beyond marginalisation and resistance to transformation, and to make the often hostile ‘spaces’ of itinerancy into meaningful and welcoming ‘places’ of their own.

Finally, it is intended that the data analysis chapters of this thesis, having explored marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to the Queensland show people, will contribute significantly to extending the existing literature about Australian shows and Traveller education. In particular, it is intended that the thesis function as a counternarrative to the

negative stereotypes still prevalent in that literature, and instead contribute to circulating more accurate and productive understandings of show people and their educational experiences and opportunities.

To reiterate and summarise, then, the synthesised conceptual framework underpinning this thesis uses ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as analytical lenses to interpret the Queensland show people’s experiences of marginalisation, resistance and transformation as they move through the spaces of their itinerancy. Those experiences can either inhibit the ‘spaces’ of itinerancy from becoming mutually valued ‘places’ of living and learning, or else they can facilitate that process of transformative becoming. Examples of such facilitation can contribute significantly to making the literatures on Australian shows and Traveller education **more** rather than less meaningful and productive for educational providers and their varied clients – and of course show people themselves. Equally significantly, these analytical tools are central to the goal of pursuing a counternarrative to the traditional and limited understandings of itinerancy and Traveller education evident in much of the current literature.

3.5 Review of the chapter

In his essay “*Travelling cultures*” (1992), the anthropologist James Clifford referred to

. . .the evident fact that travellers move about under strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions and that certain travellers are materially privileged, others oppressed. . . .Travel, in this view, denotes a range of material, spatial practices that produce knowledge, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries, and other cultural expressions. (p. 108)

Clifford also outlined the concept of “*dwelling-in-travel*”(p. 102), whereby travellers develop routines and rhythms of tradition and culture that appear to belie the transience stereotypically associated with the status of traveller.

Clifford’s identification of the “*strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions*” motivating travellers and the “*range of material, spatial practices*” associated with travel, and his reference to “*dwelling-in-travel*”, are a convenient way of reviewing this chapter by returning to its starting point. I began the chapter by proposing, on the basis of the preceding literature review, the need to avoid the twin conceptual ‘dead ends’ of ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’, and also that itinerancy involves distinctive relationships between people and space, a unifying theme that linked the disparate sections of which this chapter is composed.

I began by outlining my justification for applying de Certeau’s (1984, 1986) concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ to this study. In particular, I asserted the potential value of analysing the show people’s actions as examples of their exercise of agency in the form of ‘tactics of consumption’ intended to make the marginalised ‘spaces’ of itinerancy into ‘places’ that they would find meaningful and productive. At the same time, I noted the

considerable ambivalence with which commentators have responded to one or other of his so-called ‘binary oppositions’, arguing that many of these critiques are misconceived on the basis of appealing to the empirical setting of the show people. On the other hand, I expressed my own ambivalence about de Certeau, particularly my concern about the evident incapacity of ‘tactics of consumption’ to turn ‘spaces’ into ‘places’ on other than a temporary basis.

This apparent inability to change ‘the rules of the game’ justified my adoption of elements of Bakhtin’s thought into the study’s conceptual framework. Specifically, I contended that ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ (Bakhtin, 1986a) provide a way of theorising how the show people move beyond marginalisation and resistance into transformation of their experiences of itinerancy, making possible more enduring – although no less contingent and provisional – ‘places’ for them to occupy as their ***"dwelling-in-travel"*** (Clifford, 1992, p. 102).

Finally, I essayed a synthesis of this thesis’s conceptual framework. I reiterated my focus on the spaces of itinerancy, and my interest in the consequent marginalisation, resistance and transformation of those spaces. I proposed that ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, reflecting different **aspects** of that marginalisation, resistance and transformation, were appropriate lenses for analysing the show people’s educational experiences. Analysing the show people’s lives in this way, I argued, would have significant implications for extending, and for functioning as a counternarrative to, the existing literature on Australian shows and Traveller education.

This chapter has therefore used the preceding literature review as the basis for elaborating a conceptual framework to analyse the data collected in this study, a framework whose logic is framed and nurtured by avoiding an essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy. I turn now to consider the research design underpinning the collection and analysis of those data, which are centred on communicating my understanding of ‘learning on the run’ for the Queensland show children and their families.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

"The ethics and politics of qualitative research. . .[are] a swamp and. . .I have provided no map. Each individual will have to trace his or her own path. This is because there is no consensus or unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm, and what the benefits of knowledge are."

Punch, 1994, p. 94

"Every focus excludes; there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation."

Clifford, 1992, p. 97

4.1 Overview of the chapter

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I demonstrated that the literature on Traveller education is the site of interactions among marginalisation, resistance and transformation, and that those interactions can be traced to a general devaluing of the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy. I also sought to position the thesis as occupying the ‘middle ground’ between the two equally unhelpful and disabling constructions of itinerant people as either an ‘unproblematic othering’ and an ‘unproblematic celebration’. In Chapter Three, I argued that conceptualising itinerancy as involving complex and distinctive relationships between people and spaces provided the foundation of a potentially instructive conceptual framework that combines de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’. These terms in combination explain how it is possible for the show people both to resist and ultimately to transform the marginalisation associated with itinerancy, by moving the old ‘rules of the game’ to the new terrain of a counternarrative about itinerancy and Traveller education. All these concepts have implications for how the study was designed and conducted.

The function of this chapter, therefore, is to outline and justify the study’s research design, by making explicit the relationship between theory and methodology. In it I explore my relationship with the participants in the study, viewed through the lenses of my research focus and conceptual framework. The chapter consists of the following sections:

- marginalisation, resistance and transformation and researching Traveller education

- ‘tactics of consumption’ and researching Traveller education
- ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ and researching Traveller education
- the ethical and political dimensions of the study
- the research design of the study
- the data gathering techniques of the study
- the delimitations and limitations of the study.

I begin in Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 by highlighting the central methodological issues that arise when considering the key theoretical concepts employed throughout the thesis. In other words, while I have emphasised in the previous chapter the way that de Certeau and Bakhtin inform my ‘head work’ or view of the world and research, in this chapter I explore the practical ‘field work’ implications of this ‘head work’. Although theory and practice cannot be separated, while Chapter Three emphasised the kind of analysis to expect, Chapter Four explains how the data for the thesis were collected in a de Certolian and Bakhtinian style. I follow this with an explicit discussion of how the research was designed.

4.2 Marginalisation, resistance and transformation and researching Traveller education

If show people are routinely marginalised from ‘mainstream’ society on account of their itinerancy, it follows that a research project about Traveller education – about the education of itinerant people – has the potential to perpetuate that marginalisation. This is because the focus of the research is on what makes the people ‘different’ from, and therefore often ‘inferior’ to, others. It is also tied to the unavoidable fact that university research is generally more closely aligned with ‘mainstream’ than with ‘marginal’ education. That such an outcome is unlikely to be the researcher’s explicit intention does nothing to nullify the point that at several points in the research the itinerant people’s difference will be highlighted and emphasised (even though itinerancy is only one of the multiple markers of their identities from which they derive meaning and purpose).

A likely response to this marginalising situation is resistance. Firstly, it is to be expected that show people who are routinely marginalised are liable to approach a research project emanating from an institution that might be construed as complicit in their ongoing discrimination with scepticism, even hostility. Furthermore, it would be understandable if those show people engaged in resistance at the first sign that the project was contributing to their further marginalisation, by ‘closing down’ the range of their responses and even by refusing to continue their participation in the project. Secondly and conversely, the project might be seen as an opportunity to enlist the researcher’s assistance in resisting the show people’s marginalisation. If this

occurred, the project might be considered to be discharging a useful social responsibility; on the other hand, some would argue that the researcher would need to ensure that her or his detachment was retained.

The potential mediator between marginalisation and resistance in the context of the ‘researcher’–‘researched’ relationships is transformation. This point recalls Anyanwu’s (1998) definition of ‘transformative research’:

Transformative research is a systematic enquiry into the real conditions which create oppression or hinder self-determination. It produces reflective knowledge which helps people to identify their situation and in doing so, to change such [a] situation for the better. In this regard, transformative research plays the important role of supporting the reflective process that promote positive change. (p. 45)

Just as transformation is conceived in this thesis as breaking down the oppositional binary of marginalisation and resistance, thereby allowing ‘the rules of the game’ to be challenged and overturned, so transformative research can be seen as moving the ‘researcher’–‘researched’ relationship out of a formalised set of conventional and routinised interactions into something much more positive and unpredictable, whereby people are genuinely understood as individuals outside the enactments of their ‘roles’. Furthermore, this is a significant element of what I mean when I state that I seek to make the thesis a ‘counternarrative’. By circulating images and understandings of show people gleaned from intensive interactions with them, I hope to contribute to a process of counteracting the negative and inaccurate stereotypes about them already circulating. The transformative dimension of this study therefore assists in the vital process of investigating “the real

conditions which create oppression or hinder self determination”, and “in doing so” helps “to change such [a] situation for the better” (Anyanwu, 1998, p. 45) .

As I elaborate in Chapter Eight, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990) captured something of this ‘forward lookingness’ of transformation when she observed:

*Inevitably, a work is always a **form of** tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning **as** ongoing passages to an elsewhere (-within-here). (p. 329)*

That is, provided that the researcher is attentive to these possible “*doors opening onto other closures*”, the transformative potential of a research project can promote productive understandings that might otherwise never have come to fruition.

I contend that, regardless of the research design involved, any study of Traveller education will encounter the eddies and flows around marginalisation, resistance and transformation. These eddies and flows move constantly through the spaces of itinerancy, and will always do so as long as an itinerant lifestyle is inherently devalued in contrast to its more socially acceptable ‘other’. The challenge for the researcher into Traveller education is to explain and justify how her or his research project engages with the connections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation, how the project communicates in a ‘trustworthy’ way the selected aspects of the Travellers’ lives, and how the project proceeds in an ethically responsible and politically responsive manner. My response to this challenge is inextricably linked with

my combination of ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ in the study’s conceptual framework, as I discuss below.

4.3 ‘Tactics of consumption’ and researching Traveller education’

In Chapter Three I noted that commentators have reduced a number of de Certeau’s paired concepts to binary categories. I challenged that reduction, which I argued reflected those commentators’ ambivalence about de Certeau’s conceptualisation of the links between marginalisation and agency. On the other hand, I also asserted that the difficulty of de Certeau’s thinking in changing ‘the rules of the game’ justified my deployment of Bakhtinian ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ beside de Certeau’s notion of ‘tactics of consumption’.

This reminder of de Certeau’s paired concepts is important in this account of the implications of ‘tactics of consumption’ for the design, conduct and reporting of this study. Specifically, de Certeau’s juxtaposition of ‘writing’ and ‘reading’ as a paired category forms the framework for that account. For de Certeau, reading constitutes a set of tactics of consumption that enables readers to resist the marginalising and totalising strategies of textual production – that is, of writing (1984, p. xxi). I interpret this argument as applying to this study in two respects: the ways in which the show people have ‘consumed’/‘read’ the research project; and the ways in which I have ‘produced’/‘written’ that project.

Turning first to ‘consumption’/‘reading’, and following de Certeau’s proposition that “*Reading thus introduces an ‘art’ which is anything but passive*” (1984, p. xxii), I assert that the multiple individuals making up my term ‘the show people’ (itself a textual practice with significant implications for consumption/production) have engaged in several kinds of ‘reading’ in regard to the research project on which this thesis reports. They have ‘read’ my initial contact, usually through a ‘third party’ such as one of the teachers involved in the education program, a member of the Showmen’s Guild of Australasia or another person on the show circuits. They have ‘read’ the information sheet and the request to sign the consent form with which I furnished them. They have ‘read’ my verbal explanation of why I was conducting the project and why I wished to tape record the requested interviews. They have ‘read’ the questions that I posed to them during the interviews. They have ‘read’ such nonverbal indicators as my appearance, my tone of voice, my facial expression and my handshake. They have ‘read’ the subsequent reports on my research findings, and the associated publications, sent to the Showmen’s Guild. They have also ‘read’ one another’s responses to those same activities and events.

I indicated above my understanding of how ‘tactics of consumption’ (including ‘reading’) relate to the intersections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to the spaces of itinerancy. What I wish to emphasise here is that these acts of ‘reading’ by the show people have in turn consciously and unconsciously influenced my continuing conduct of the research project. That is, the study’s ‘production’/‘writing’ has taken account in several ways of how the show people have ‘consumed’/‘read’ it. I elaborate this crucial point below as I seek both to acknowledge the potential

charges against 'production'/'writing' as replicating marginalisation and to demonstrate how I have attempted to avoid those practices and outcomes.

In contrastfopposition to the show people's 'consumption'/'reading' of the research project, the relevance of de Certeau's work to the study is that my 'production'/'writing' is potentially the site of marginalisation of the show people's agency. De Certeau (1988) referred to the writing of history contributing to "*replacingthe obscurity of the lived body with the expression of 'will to know' or a 'will to dominate' the body*" (p. 6), or to becoming "writing that conquers" because "*Itwill transform the space of the other into afield of expansion for a system of production*" (de Certeau, 1988, pp. xxv-xxvi). Relatedly, de Certeau (1984) referred to "*thescriptural economy*" (p. 131) and to the "*textualpractices*" (p. 80) associated with scholarship. Conley (1988), the English translator of de Certeau's work *The writing of history* (1988), argued that both rhetoric and history "*evincea 'strategy' that wills to efface, marginalize, or even repress more complicated and ambivalent designs*" than those that they produce (p. x).

Similarly, Rowan (1991) identified universities as being "*inextricably bound up with western society's desire to maintain power over those who are different*" (p. 11); this is a Qrect warning to a university doctoral candidate and researcher. Furthermore, Rowan (1991) has analysed 'explanation', based as it is "*on a distinction between those who explain and those who are explained*" (p. 6), as a major 'strategy of marginalisation' in de Certeau's terms, on account of its imbrication in efforts to 'capture' (and thereby potentially to essentialise and naturalise) the 'difference' of the objects of study. This is particularly so if that 'difference' becomes equated with 'lack'

(Rowan, 1991, p. 4), as though the people who are 'different' would be 'all right' and no longer 'deviant' if only they could have whatever it is that separates them from the majority or the 'mainstream'. Correspondingly, Spivak (1990) has highlighted explanation's complicity as a marginalising strategy, such as in her observation, "*My explanation cannot remain outside the structure of production of what I criticise*" (p. 384).

My response to these potentials for marginalisation is initially to acknowledge that this thesis and the project on which it reports are textual practices, and are certainly not "*being written out of any objective/scientific perspective*" (Schirato, 1993, p. 283). A corollary of this acknowledgment is that I claim neither to 'speak on behalf' of Queensland show people nor to have created an opportunity for them to 'speak for themselves'. I am fully imbricated in the process of producing this text, in editing the interview transcripts, in selecting quotations to present in this thesis and in presenting my analysis of those quotations. In doing so, however, I have sought to highlight what I have perceived as evidence of the show people's 'tactics of consumption', this intention being the opposite in my view of efforts to 'efface' or 'marginalise' the show people. I have also sought to minimise the prospect of the charge levelled at academic discourses by Rowan (1994) – "*...the strategy, in order to better secure its own authority, must explain 'other' groups in terms which emphasise the strength of the centre*" (p. 26) – being 'brought home' to this study. On the contrary, I have emphasised "*the strength*" of the show people in contesting and changing the power of "*the centre*".

A related strategy, according to Rowan (1991, pp. 8, 11), derives from the tendency to 'exoticise' the 'difference' of the objects of study. In the case of the show people, this could happen relatively easily: the stereotypes surrounding occupational Travellers identified in Chapter Two are centred on show people's constructions as 'strange' and 'exotic' as they travel from town to town. My response is to design the research project in such a way that it will facilitate my capacity to discern and document, rather than cover up and ignore, the show people's multiple signifiers of identity. This requires me to interact with the show people in a variety of settings, to meet and speak with **as** many of them **as** possible and to design and conduct interviews in ways that will allow these multiple signifiers to become apparent and explicit.

A crucial issue for the research design of this study is the interpretation of 'tactics of consumption' being metaphorical rather than empirical (Danaher, 1995, p. 138) and therefore **as** not being amenable to analysis in a thesis such **as** this. I respond to this issue by stating my conviction of the utility of the deployment to several empirical sites of de Certeau's notion of 'tactics of consumption' by several commentators (Balides, 1993; Rowan, 1994; Weinstein, 1994) to justify my claim that de Certeau's restriction of 'tactics' to the metaphorical realm does not invalidate my application of his concept to the empirical site of the Queensland show people's engagement with the education authorities. Not to do so would be to agree with the critics who say that de Certeau's analysis is ultimately static because it cannot accommodate change. For me, the important aspect of 'tactics' is their effects: how the show people *can* use 'tactics' to resist and subvert marginalisation.

My justification for this approach is twofold. Firstly, I concur with Rowan's (1994) assertion that

...it is problematic for a narrative to criticise various political practices if it goes on to suggest the complete and abject failure of any attempt by a marginalised individual or group to challenge the system that produces those practices. (p. 155)

In other words, what is the 'point' of a conceptualisation of 'tactics' that is unable to point to productive change in the material circumstances of the marginalised? Secondly, I cite Danaher's (1995) rationale for his appropriation of Foucault's ideas to his account of Australian histories:

...my intention has been to reconstitute Foucault's project in the interests of constructing a theoretical position which might productively engage in a critique of Australian historiography. I have not attempted to produce a 'faithful' account of Foucault's work, but rather one that has sought to emphasise its utility in analysing the making of a modern community out of its original status as a convict colony, and the historiographic treatment of this process. (p. 229)

For me, my extension of 'tactics of consumption' to an empirical site remains "faithful" to de Certeau's commitment to understanding how marginalising and totalising strategies can be and are resisted.

A related issue is the research design implications of the sheer number and scale of possible 'tactics'. That is, recognising that 'tactics' can be as diverse as reading 'against the grain' of a text and actively campaigning for change requires me to allow space in the ways in which I plan and conduct the

research to identify the multiple kinds of responses that are potentially ‘tactics’. Furthermore, in creating that space I must avoid hierarchising and thereby privileging one response over another, for to do so would be to deny the agency of the research participants and construct them as passive objects of study. A vital benefit of this approach to research design is that it allows me to foreground resistance and transformation in my analysis.

Finally, some commentators have highlighted de Certeau’s analysis of ‘stories’ as “*political tactics*” and as “*an ideological move in a long-running political game*” (Schirato, 1993, p. 288), and as “*the stones by which we define ourselves, and what it means to be who we are*” (Buchanan, 1996b, p. 150; see also Ahearne, 1995, p. 25). In this context, de Certeau asked the highly pertinent question about quoting voices in more recent approaches to writing history: “...*who is speaking? to whom?*” (1984, p. 157). Rowan (1991) provided a provocative answer to this rhetorical question:

The explanations [contained in academic discourses] and those who produce them work constantly to ensure that the voice of the ‘other’ is heard by only two groups: those who...are also marginal and those who will not be affected; and in most cases this second group is composed of the people who formulate the explanations in the first place. (pp. 10-11)

When I extrapolate de Certeau’s question (and Rowan’s response to that question) to this study, it means that the show people’s interview transcripts should be understood, not as deliberate efforts to mislead me, but instead as further examples of ‘tactics of consumption’ of the research project. My response needs to be, not oppositional ‘strategies of marginalisation’, but rather efforts to analyse the show people’s understandings of the study and

what those understandings reflect about the show people's resistance and transformation of marginalisation in the spaces of itinerancy. My response needs also to use the interview transcripts as the basis for 'outsidedness' with and 'creative understanding' of the show people, as I elaborate in the next section of this chapter.

I argue, therefore, that de Certeau's notion of 'tactics of consumption' has crucial implications for both the research design of this study and the conduct of research into Traveller education more broadly. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge, not deny the possibility and potential of, the binary categories 'consumption'/'reading' and 'production'/'writing'. Secondly, this acknowledgment means that I need to pay conscious attention to both how the show people 'read' the research project and how I 'write' that project, deliberately eschewing, for example, strategies of explanation and exoticisation in favour of less marginalising and more self-conscious textual practices. Thirdly, my claim that 'tactics of consumption' can function at empirical as well as metaphorical levels needs to find its way explicitly into the data analysis chapters of this thesis. Fourthly, I need to understand the show people's interview transcripts as 'moves in the game' and as efforts at 'self-definition', and crucially as prompting the question "*who is speaking? to whom?*" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 157) to which I must respond. My intended contribution to methodological knowledge consists partly of relating these indispensable implications to the broader conduct of Traveller education research, which in turn involves partly an understanding of relations between 'researcher' and 'researched' in terms of, and as framed by, 'tactics of consumption'.

4.4 ‘Outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ and researching Traveller education

In comparison and in complementarity with de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’, the Bakhtinian notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ are intended in the research design of this study to heighten my identification of the show people’s consumption of the research project while minimising their marginalisation from it. ‘Outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ require that I identify, record and respond to the multiple voices of the research participants, and that I ensure that the study changes as a consequence of what those voices say. This approach requires attending to the show people’s resistance and prospective transformation of their marginalisation as itinerant people occupying several spaces. This approach is also in keeping with my argument in the previous chapter that these analytical resources are indispensable both conceptually and methodologically in the study, by highlighting the political significance of the show people’s actions that make such transformation possible.

For Bakhtin, the utterance can be considered the basic unit of communication (Jones, 1993, p. 252; Schirato & Yell, 1996, pp. 76-79). Utterances, which can be parts of sentences, complete sentences or much larger pieces of text, are distinguished from sentences by their ‘living’ social or interactive dimension: *“An utterance always evaluates; every utterance has ethical import”* (Jones, 1993, p. 252). The methodological significance of the

utterance for this thesis is that it rightly focusses attention on the centrality of what people say and write in the context of with whom, how and why they are communicating. In practical terms, this means that I have not undertaken a formalised discourse analysis of the interview transcripts for this study, but instead I have analysed what the interviewees have said in relation to the study's research questions and focus (marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy) and its organising concepts ('tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding').

Or to put it another way, if de Certeau prompts me to design my study to identify and document, rather than cover up and ignore, the multiple signifiers of identity among Queensland show people, Bakhtin leads me to look for those signifiers specifically in the realm of language – both my own and that of the people whom I interviewed. To that end, the following data analysis chapters report my efforts to explicate the show people's complex and subtle understandings of themselves and others, mediated and revealed through their interactions with me as researcher.

A crucial corollary **of** this emphasis on language as the site of identity construction and contestation is the related concept of 'voice'. According to the writers of the glossary to Bakhtin's book *The dialogic imagination: **Four** essays* (1981), voice "...is the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice always has a will or desire behind it" (p. **434**). Under de Certeau's scheme, the voices that are most commonly heard are those associated with 'strategies of marginalisation'; voices linked with 'tactics of consumption' are almost always silent, lacking as they do a normalised 'speaking position' from which to communicate with authority. This definite

and explicit hierarchy is the antithesis of Bakhtin's vision of utterances, of which a deliberate non-hierarchisation of voices is a non-negotiable prerequisite.

Clearly Bakhtin's vision behoves me to use every methodological means at my disposal to achieve a non-hierarchisation of voices in my design and reporting of this study. Yet he – and I – recognise(d) the methodological difficulties in attaining this vision. One example must suffice. According to Bakhtin (1981):

...the speech of another, once enclosed in a context, is – no matter how accurately transmitted – always subject to certain semantic changes. The context embracing another's word is responsible for its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great. Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another's utterance accurately quoted. Any sly and ill-disposed polemicist knows very well which dialogizing backdrop he [sic passim] should bring to bear on the accurately quoted words of his opponent, in order to distort their sense. (p. 340)

While I do not consider myself a “sly and ill-disposed polemicist”, nevertheless I concur that striving for communication with the show people at a conceptual level does not necessarily translate automatically into communication at a methodological level. This point helps to justify the ‘place’ of ambivalence in this study: in this case, my own ambivalence about the methodologies of academic research projects. In practical terms, this requires me to evaluate every utterance – both the interview data and my analytical

statements about those data – to ensure, to the extent that I can do so, that the show people’s voices and my voice are heard together.

As part of that process, and as I indicated in Chapter Three and reiterated at the beginning of this chapter, ‘outsidedness’ is a Bakhtinian concept that has great relevance for this study’s conceptual and methodological dimensions. As I noted in Chapter Three, Morson and Emerson (1990), Bakhtin’s first biographers, explained outsidedness in this way: “*When one person faces another, his [sic passim] experience is conditioned by his ‘outsidedness.’ Even in the physical sense, one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself: I can see the world behind your back...*” (p. 53). Although the bases of ‘outsidedness’ could vary considerably, including “*personal, spatial, temporal, national, or any other*” (p. 56), “*outsidedness creates the possibility of dialogue, and dialogue helps to understand a culture in a profound way*” (p. 55).

As a further illustration of outsidedness, a philosopher colleague (Ezra Heymann, personal communication, 23 April 1999) listened carefully to my synthesis of Morson and Emerson’s (1990) explanation of this concept as the ability to see the back of someone else’s head (something that one cannot do oneself, and that highlights the other person’s outsidedness from one), then he responded that a former fiancée used to tell him when he was putting on his ‘winter face’. This statement, which referred to how his countenance looked to others (presumably denoting some combination of introspection, discouragement and pessimism), was one of the philosopher’s chief grounds for sadness at the end of the relationship: that another person would no longer be there to tell him when he was wearing his ‘winter face’.

Thus outsidedness evokes two attributes simultaneously: a certain amount and kind of separation from the other person; and sufficient interest to pay attention to the other person. Methodologically, outsidedness constitutes the basis of my response to a hypothetical objection that a non-show person, who has never himself lived an itinerant lifestyle, cannot possibly attain sufficiently ‘trustworthy’ understanding of an itinerant people for that understanding to be considered ‘reliable’ and ‘valid’. On the contrary, I argue that – provided that I have the sufficient interest referred to above – my separation from the show people enables me to perceive and identify elements of their multiple signifiers of identity of which they are themselves unaware.

This most emphatically does not denote the voyeuristic look of the omniscient ‘expert’, gazing with scientific detachment at human specimens, nor lay any claim to objectivity or neutrality. One reason that it does not do so is that my ‘interested separateness’ is ‘a means to an end’, not an end to itself. That is, my analysis of the show people’s signifiers of identity of which they are unconscious becomes ‘meaningful’ and ‘truthful’ only when I use that analysis to augment my growing comprehension of their situation. In other words, outsidedness is a means to the end of creative understanding (both the show people’s and my own); in this way, I strive to give equal attention and value to the show people’s and my voices.

Similarly, it is helpful to note the evident link between outsidedness and ambivalence, which is a recurring theme in this thesis. I have discerned implicit ambivalence on the show people’s part in their perceptions of the research project – or perhaps more accurately in their status as ‘research subjects’. Our interactions have been irregular and intensive, with months without any contact

being interspersed with data gathering over two or three days. Now that the data gathering has been completed, I have heard indirectly from the show people, such as when someone seeking information about Traveller education contacts me with the words, “The show people suggested that I call you”. I interpret this situation as manifesting the show people’s ambivalence, in the sense that progressively as the show people got to know and trust me they were prepared to identify me to others as someone who would discuss their experiences and aspirations sympathetically – that is, who would respect their agency without adding to their marginalisation. Given that they see themselves as being accustomed to marginalisation, this ambivalence, or willingness to ‘suspend judgment’ until they knew more about my intentions, was a crucial pre-requisite to the conduct of the study. It was also an example of how outsiderness can lead to creative understanding.

In that context, it was helpful that, as I noted in Chapter Three, Bakhtin (1986a) provided the following overview of the links between outsiderness and creative understanding:

*Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important **for** the person who understands to be located outside the object ~~of~~ his **or** her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. **For** one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors **or** photographs can help; **our** real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (p. 7; emphasis in original)*

In the previous chapter, I outlined the analytical utility of creative understanding in helping me to identify the ways in which show people engage in such understanding as a basis of the transformation of their marginalised status. Here it is appropriate to emphasise the methodological significance of creative understanding defined in this way for my enactment of the responsibilities and roles of researcher. That methodological significance is the crucial importance of making the study a genuine exchange of information and ideas. By this I mean that, in addition to requesting show people to respond to my developing analysis of their marginalisation, resistance and transformation, I need to listen and respond to their outsideness and creative understanding in relation to the research project. If I am to participate in practices of mutual comprehension with the show people, I must be open to their explicit and implicit comments on the purposes and conduct of the research project, and I must recognise that they, as much as I, have constructed and carried out the study. This means, for example, that I must seek to hear the show people's voices about topics other than those about which they are ostensibly speaking in the interviews, and strive to relate those voices to my developing answers to the study's research questions.

So the methodological implications of Bakhtinian outsideness and creative understanding for researching Traveller education can be synthesised as follows. Interested outsideness and creative understanding can function as an 'antidote' to a reductionist rendering of de Certeauian marginalising 'strategies' and resistant 'tactics'. It can operate in this way through productive use of the ambivalence attending the spaces of itinerancy and my own ambivalence about Traveller education research that prompts my openness to the multiple signifiers of the show people's identities manifested

through language, specifically the Bakhtinian notion of the utterance. In these ways, the interview transcripts that are this study's principal data gathering technique can become the basis of ongoing and mutual comprehension between 'the researcher' and 'the researched', and in the process can become the site in which 'strategies' and 'tactics' 'speak' to one another and thereby lead to transformation. A crucial 'sign' whether this possibility is being actualised is the extent to which multiple voices are heard and responded to mutually and non-hierarchically in both this thesis and the study on which it is based. Another, equally vital 'sign' is whether an analysis framed by 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' enables a conception of itinerant people that moves beyond the 'unproblematic othering' and the 'unproblematic celebration' of itinerancy identified in Chapter Two.

4.5 The ethical and political dimensions of the study

The location of the study's research design in the intersections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy, and the design's foundation in de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' and Bakhtin's 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding', posit several crucial issues pertaining to the study's ethical and political dimensions. Rather than emphasising an artificial separateness between these dimensions, I have elected to consider them as related aspects of the considerations and constraints informing and framing my conscious and unconscious decisions about the collection and analysis of the research data. In particular, I argue that the research involves the exercise of ethical responsibilities for both the

interviewer and the interviewees, and that the research is politically charged rather than value neutral. In that context, manoeuvring through and around these potential ethical and political minefields brings to life the three dimensions of itinerancy outlined above, as well as the other participants' and my 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

Despite their emphasis on philosophical and textual, rather than empirical and practical, forms of interaction, both de Certeau and Bakhtin were very well aware of the ethical and political dimensions of their respective studies, and were equally conscious of the complexities and subtleties attending those dimensions. For example, Smith (1996) contended that de Certeau's work, *"like the thought of Michel Foucault, is of the epistemological/ethical orientation"* (p. 19) in philosophical thinking, and that one clear manifestation of that orientation was the *"meticulously conscientious attention to difference"* (p. 20) characteristic of his writing. Similarly, and again by way of illustration, commentators have generally rejected charges that Bakhtin was amoral or unethical on account of his studies of carnival, and have emphasised the ethical responsibility on which several of his concepts were based. For example, according to Emerson (1997):

*(It is worth noting that Bakhtin's vision of outsidedness is wonderfully nonelitist, nonjudgmental, and open to all, whatever **our** gifts or inclination. He does not stipulate that we do the other party any positive good, only that we assume an outside position towards that party. Even the laziest and most passive outsider can always help me out by letting me **know** what is happening behind my head; in my laziest, most passive, most testy and unengaged moods I can render outsiders at least that much of a service.) (p. 210)*

The foregoing account suggests that the research practices of de Certeau and Bakhtin are compatible with the tradition identified by Jenkins (1992) as the “*newer conception of ethnographic authority*”, encapsulated in “*a shift from totalizing accounts of social and cultural processes toward partial, particularized, and contingent accounts of specific encounters within and between cultures*” (p. 4). At the same time, I recognise and, given my focus on the ambivalence of itinerant spaces, applaud the ambiguity that this approach to conducting and writing research prompts. In other words, the replacement of an objective, neutral, even omniscient researcher with a human being whose values and cultural capital are fully inscribed in the research process constitutes the beginning, not the end, of the ethical and political issues surrounding research. Thus I can empathise with the feminist poststructuralist writer Patti Lather’s (1994) reference to being/feeling “*Situated, partial, perplexed*” (p. 41). I also endorse Punch’s (1994) vivid metaphor:

The ethics and politics of qualitative research...[are] a swamp and...I have provided no map. Each individual will have to trace his or her own path. This is because there is no consensus or unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm, and what the benefits of knowledge are. (p. 94)

The fact that I am engaged in this study reflects my conviction that these methodological difficulties need to be acknowledged but that they should not lead to inaction or paralysis. “*Situated, partial, perplexed*” I most certainly am, but I am guided and encouraged in the design of this study by my selection of the reference points of my “*map*”: ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ interacting with one another and

with the show people's and my marginalisation, resistance and transformation as I proceed along my "ownpath" through the spaces of itinerancy.

I turn now to illustrate this argument by reference to some of the methodological issues confronting the design of this study, and particularly to their ethical and political dimensions. Several of these issues relate to the risks attendant on planning and conducting research, and demonstrate once more the integral and intricate connections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in research design. I have referred elsewhere (Danaher, 1998b) to three among several hypothetical interactions between myself and the show people: advocacy (which is also identified by Lather [1992, p. 91]); appropriation; and complicity in perpetuating the show people's purported marginalisation. While I acknowledged the possibility of each interaction and sought to 'defend' myself against each 'charge', the point to emphasise is my recognition of the contingency and fluidity, rather than the finalisability (in Bakhtin's words), of this kind of methodological 'settlement'. That is, the spaces of itinerancy contain the shifting flows and multiple signifiers of the 'researcher'–'researched' relationship, and each new encounter has to be approached anew from this perspective. (Relatedly, Ahearne [1995] explained how, in de Certeau's analysis of the writings of French mediaeval mystics:

*Certeau shows how the writings of the mystics both exacerbate and seek to overcome the gap which separates the human subject **from** the language he or she speaks. This gap was not effaced by their texts. They were always compelled to begin again. [p. 115])*

Some of these flows and signifiers of the 'researcher'–'researched' relationship are manifested in the practices and procedures commonly associated with obtaining ethical clearance to conduct research. According to

Punch (1994), *"In essence, most concern revolves around issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data"* (p. 89). Evans and Jakupiec (1996) helpfully elaborated these concerns into six *"key issues"* (p. 79) attending the ethical conduct of research in open and distance learning:

...(i) concern and moral obligation of the researcher to respect privacy and integrity of individuals, (ii) power and empowerment of researcher and researched, (iii) covertness, (iv) using secondary data, (v) resolving the conflict between the right of individuals and the right of society to know and (vi) informed consent. (p. 79)

In relation to these *"key issues"*, I have done my utmost to respect the show people's *"privacy and integrity"* through my textual practice of not ascribing data to individual respondents, and my avoidance of writing about them in ways that could be construed as denigrating or disrespectful. Given my reservations about the emancipatory connotations of the term *"empowerment"*, I prefer to emphasise my recognition of the agency of the show people, while certainly responding to the need to assist research participants *"to give free and informed consent"* (p. 82) to the research project. I have not engaged in *"covert and secret participant observations"* (p. 82), the research participants at all times being aware of my status as a university researcher, and I have collected the data reported in this thesis myself, rather than drawing on other researchers' data collections. While I acknowledge that there is an enduring tension between the rights of individuals to privacy and the public's right to know, I draw only on data gleaned from the semi-structured interviews that I conducted and from publicly available documents; if I must state a preference for one or other of these 'rights', it is to endorse the research participants' right for matters that they consider 'private' to remain so.

Finally, while I understand that definitions of “*informed consent*” can be “*complicated, problematic and difficult to implement*” (p. 86), I have done my utmost to ensure that the research participants have understood, as comprehensively as possible, the purposes and intended uses of the research project, and that their agreement to participate derives from a tactical and/or creatively understanding perspective.

Evans and Jakupiec (1996) summarised their six “*key issues*” by claiming that

...the two basic principles researchers in open and distance education should follow are: (i) research in open and distance education should not expose individuals to risks of or cause unjustified political, personal, economic, physical, emotional, moral or psychological harm; (ii) researchers in open and distance education ought not to undertake research which violates principles of free informed consent. (p. 91)

I applaud the authors’ efforts to synthesise a field of such patently shifting sands, and I attest that, to the best of my partial and situated knowledge, I have not infringed either of these “*basic principles*” in this study. Furthermore, although, as I signalled above, I **am** uneasy about claiming that my research is necessarily ‘emancipatory’ or ‘empowering’ of the participants, nevertheless I contend that some more limited benefits, ethically grounded and politically understood, might be regarded as accruing to the participants in the study. Specifically, I hope that the research project will give the participants information about the spaces of itinerancy, and how others perceive the show people, that they might find helpful in transforming their ‘tactics of consumption’ into more enduringly productive social change. Similarly, I hope that non-itinerant people’s understandings of show people

will be considerably enhanced through the information presented in this thesis.

Another element of conducting this study, already referred to in the preceding section of this chapter, needs to be considered here for its ethical and political aspects. This element pertains to my position as a non-itinerant person writing a thesis about itinerant people. Earlier I justified this position by drawing on Bakhtin's notion of 'outsidedness', which I argued was a prerequisite to 'creative understanding'. In the context of this discussion of ethics and politics, I feel obliged to point out that I do not infer from that justification that I have greater understanding of show people than an itinerant researcher would have. That is, I agree with Jenkins' (1992) assertion that the "*danger*" of potentially conflating one's perceptions with those of the research participants "*is not substantially lessened by adopting a more traditionally 'objective' stance*" (p. 6). It should be clear that I claim no lund of 'objectivity' in my role as non-itinerant researcher, and that my ambivalent tentativeness about making claims for the 'truthfulness' of my findings is increased rather than decreased by that role. This suggests that being 'reflective' is preferable to claiming to be 'objective', and furthermore that it is appropriate to augment Lather's (1994) reference to researchers feeling "*Situated, partial, perplexed*" (p. 41) cited earlier to read "*Situated, partial, perplexed and self-reflective*".

One further issue in conducting the research for this study needs to be mentioned at this stage. This is the distinctive ethical and political aspects of interviewing children. In total I interviewed eighteen children, varying in age from seven to fourteen. All interviews were conducted with the written consent of the children's parents; most interviews were conducted at the local school

where the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers were working with the children during that week. As the data analysis chapters indicate, I was ambivalent about recording and reporting the children's voices except as background noises to their parents' comments. This was not intended to deny or diminish the authenticity of their views or their right to have those views heard (Danaher, Hallinan & Rose, 1998; Kiddle, 1999). On the other hand, the circumstances attending data gathering meant that I had a very limited time to establish rapport with children in order to encourage them to move beyond monosyllabic or brief responses, and in many cases I was unable to achieve this. I was conscious of my ethical responsibilities towards these interviewees, as well as of my political position as an adult and a stranger speaking with them in a formal and potentially threatening situation. However, in this matter I was heartened by the fact that many of their parents were by contrast extremely forthcoming and even voluble.

Having dealt with the ethical **and** political dimensions of some features of conducting research into itinerancy, I turn now to analyse the same dimensions of selected practices associated with writing about such research. Here I found Denzin's (1994) identification of four "*Writing Issues:*" "*...the interpretation, or sense-making, representation, legitimation, and desiring phases of moving from field to text to reader*" (p. 503) helpful. "*Sense Making*" refers to "*making decisions about what will be written about, what will be included, how it will be presented, and so on*" (p. 503). I have been guided in this decision making by the deployment of the concepts underpinning the thesis, **as** well as by my developing observations and understandings underpinning the production of related publications.

In relation to “*Representation*”, I acknowledge Denzin’s (1994) points that “*Representation, of course, is always self-presentation*” and that “*The Other who is presented in the text is always a version of the researcher’s self*” (p. 503). Among other things, I take this to refer to my having a much greater interest in resistance and transformation than in marginalisation (although clearly these phenomena are dialectically related), and to my enduring awareness of the ambivalence underlying my relations with others and theirs with me. More broadly, I also endorse Denzin’s awareness that “...even when ‘we’ allow the Other to speak, where we talk about or *for* them, we are taking over their voice”, and his recommendation, supported by a reference to Bakhtin (1986a), that “*A multivoiced as opposed to single-voiced text can partially overcome this issue....*” (p. 503).

With regard to “*Legitimation*”, and to the “*Traditionalfoundationalist topics such as reliability, validity, and generalizability*” (p. 503), I prefer the term ‘trustworthiness’ as a criterion for evaluating the study’s contribution to methodological knowledge. That is, given the ethical and political issues to which I have referred, I understand that a different researcher conducting a similar investigation would collect and analyse data in very different ways, with different outcomes and effects from those of this research project. My expectation is that judgments about the ‘soundness’ and ‘appropriateness’ of this project will focus on the extent to which my applications of ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as my key concepts to the data that I have collected and analysed to answer the study’s research questions ‘make sense’ and are ‘legitimate’ in terms of my research goals, and in terms of whether those research goals afford opportunities to

generate responsive and useful understandings about the show people's educational experiences and opportunities.

Of the four "*Writing Issues*" identified by Denzin (1994), I am most ambivalent about "*Desire*", which "*refers to the writing practices that field-workers deploy*" and that constitute "*The topic...[of] the pleasure of the text*" (p. 504). I agree that "*A vital text is not boring*", that "*It grips the reader (and the writer)*" and that "*A vital text invites readers to engage the author's subject matter*" (p. 504). However, I disagree with the implicit reduction of "*The postmodern sensibility [that] encourages writers to put themselves into their texts*" (p. 504) to whether the writer writes engaging or boring text. Surely "*desire*" transcends this rather banal indicator to go to the heart of the writer's and the reader's subjectivities as informed and stimulated by the text's subject matter. This is why attending to the ethics and politics of conducting and reporting research is so vitally important: to use the juxtaposition of pronouns that I seek to disrupt, this study is intended to engage with how 'I', 'YOU' and 'they' understand the world, our respective places in it and our aspirations for strengthening and/or changing those places.

If the primary impressions conveyed by my discussion of the issues associated with writing about my research project are ambivalence and tentativeness, I shall have succeeded in my aim of emphasising the ethical and political dimensions of this crucial element of the study. In this I take heart from Lather's (1992) rejection of a research methodology that aspires to omniscient objectivity in favour of

...the creation of a more humble scholarship capable of helping us to tell better stories about a world marked by the elusiveness with which it greets our efforts to know it. (p. 95)

For me, awareness of and engagement with this “*elusiveness*”, which reflects ambivalence, de Certollian ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtinian ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, are both pre-requisites and consequences of dealing with the ethical and political dimensions of conducting and writing research into the spaces of itinerancy. At the same time, these principles underpinning the design of this study clearly resonate with broader issues in contemporary theorising around the conduct of research, as well as with more traditional debates in educational research.

4.6 The research design of the study

Bearing in mind all the issues explored to this point and the need to ensure a tight articulation between theory and methodology, I turn now to outline explicitly the major elements of the study’s research design. That design was consciously focussed on integrating the literature review, conceptual framework, data collection and data analysis explicated in this thesis. The design consisted of the following five phases identified in Figure 4.1:

PHASE	ACTIVITY
One	Identification of research problem; phrasing of research questions; review of literature
Two	Data collection (involving interviews with forty-two people as outlined in Figure 4.2 below and document collection)
Three	Preliminary analysis (identification of major themes evident in interviews and documents)
Four	Final analysis (guided by the study's analytical concepts: 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding')
Five	Thesis writing

Figure 4.1: Phases in the study's research design

Inevitably presenting the study's research design in this way suggests that it was far more linear, sequential and straightforward than it actually was. Such a presentation also elides much of the messiness, tentativeness and sheer unease that for me is inextricably involved in designing and conducting educational research. To acknowledge that I encountered some 'false starts', or that I did not approach the thesis writing with maximum efficiency, for example, emphasises that like all human endeavours this study was as much

an emotional journey – with attendant exhilaration, frustration and hope in equal measure – **as** it was an intellectual exercise. More importantly, these acknowledgments underscore the crucial dynamic nature of the project: rather than conforming to the scientific paradigm of the application, modification or rejection of a prescribed hypothesis, the study grew and changed shape in response to the participants’ responses and suggestions, and **as** a result of the application of the theoretical resources outlined in the previous chapter.

4.7 The data gathering techniques of the study

I used two techniques for gathering data in this study: semi-structured interviews and document collection. In keeping with the study’s conceptual framework, those data gathering techniques are conceived **as** sites that the show people can ‘consume’ and use **as** opportunities for ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ with the researcher, in the process revealing their engagements with marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy. That is, like the other elements of the research design explicated in the previous section, the data gathering techniques are fully integrated with the study’s analytical concepts in their goal of collecting information whereby the study’s research questions can be addressed.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The principal data gathering technique used in the study was the semi-structured interview, whereby I used a fairly general interview schedule (which appears **as** Appendix A to this thesis) to guide questions but encouraged respondents to talk at length about other issues as they wished to do so

(thereby distinguishing the technique from both a fully structured interview and an unstructured interview). The preference was for researcher and respondent to engage in an informal conversation, rather than to follow rigidly a prescribed interview format. In that context, Appendix A reflects my particular assumptions, foci and interests, and is not intended to be applicable beyond the confines of this study. Most interviews were carried out at the local school used by the itinerant teachers and their students during show week; a few took place at the local showgrounds. Ethically appropriate procedures were adopted throughout the research, including obtaining formal cooperation from the Queensland Department of Education (subsequently renamed Education Queensland) and the Brisbane School of Distance Education, which initially administered the program studied by the show children, and distributing explanatory information sheets, as well as consent forms to be signed by interviewees.

Figure 4.2 represents the distribution of interviews conducted for the study. In keeping with the ethical considerations canvassed in this chapter, names of interviewees have not been included.

YEAR	LOC- ATION	INTER- VIEWS WITH CHILD- REN	INTER- VIEWS WITH PAR- ENTS	INTER- VIEWS WITH HOME TUT- ORS	INTER- VIEWS WITH TEACH -ERS	INTER- VIEWS WITH ADMIN -IST -RAT -ORS	TOT- AL
1992	Mackay	8	2	1	0	0	11
1993	Bun- daberg	5	5	0	1	0	11
1994	Bun- daberg	2	1	2	0	0	5
1995	Emerald	3	6	0	2	0	11
1995	Brisbane	0	3	0	0	2	2
1996	Rock- hampton	0	3	1	0	0	1
2000	Yep- poon	0	3	0	0	1	1
TOT- AL	-	18	14	4	3	3	<u>42</u>

Figure 4.2: Interviews conducted for the study

The semi-structured interviews were not longitudinal, in that I did not set out deliberately to speak to the same people each year to identify a developmental dimension of their responses to my questions. However, I did note a

definite change in attitude among many parents to the program provided by the Brisbane School of Distance Education, as I elaborate in Chapter Seven.

With regard to linking this data gathering technique with the study's conceptual framework, it was crucial that interviews were conducted in ways that facilitated the exercise of the participants' resistance and transformation rather than replicated their marginalisation through restricting their 'voices' to passive responses to questions in which I was interested but that had no relevance to them. So interviewees had to feel sufficiently comfortable in talking to me that they would discuss issues of genuine concern and moment to them. Those issues in turn 'fed into' my developing focus on the show people's marginalisation, resistance and transformation as research questions of direct significance to their lives, rather than as *apriori* impositions on the study's research design.

4.7.2 Document collection

Although interviews were the major technique of data collection employed in the study, use was made also of a small number of background policy documents and relevant literature. These documents related mainly to the Brisbane School of Distance Education's organisational structure and the particular program investigated in the present study, as well as some information about the proposed separate school for the show children. These documents were collected with the permission of the participants at appropriate times during the study.

Again relating this data gathering technique to the study's conceptual framework, I worked hard to respect the confidentiality and where appropriate preserve the anonymity of sources in cases where show people and educators

provided me with copies of documents. This approach to data gathering enabled me to collect sufficient information while being ‘true’ to the ethical and political principles outlined in this chapter and being consistent with the study’s conceptual framework, the aim being to make the project ‘true’ to the principle of ‘transformative research’ (Anyanwu, 1998) rather than the source of further marginalisation of the participants.

4.8 The delimitations and limitations of the study

This study is a number of things; it is not a number of other things. In particular, it is delimited in two crucial respects. Firstly, it is not a formal evaluation of the educational program selected for study. The intention is not to provide policy makers and program planners with detailed or systematic feedback about the initiative that they have created. Rather, the focus is on the show people’s ‘consumption’ of the program and their ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ with the individuals responsible for its implementation on the Queensland show circuits. This does not deny, of course, that the research might well have important implications for educators’ reflections on the merit or otherwise of particular educational initiatives as a consequence of the study’s highlighting of significant aspects of the subjectivity of the categories ‘student’, ‘parent’ and ‘teacher’.

Secondly, the study makes no claims about the replicability of its techniques or the generalisability of its findings. Although the final chapter suggests possible future avenues of research that might confirm, refine or disconfirm emerging theories, the researcher acknowledges the pervasive and

enduring influence of context and circumstance, and cautions against policy makers, program planners or others who would seek to use the findings to support their claims about other, unrelated educational initiatives. Nevertheless, the framework that I have developed, and the kind of analysis that I have undertaken, could potentially be taken into other educational contexts, suggesting that the framework might be transferable even if the research is not replicable.

The study is limited as well as delimited in a number of ways. Firstly, as I acknowledged in Chapter Two, the literature review has concentrated on Australian shows but not on British fairs or American carnivals. Similarly, it has dwelt on the Australian and European literature on Traveller education, to the exclusion of North American studies of ‘migrant’ education (Mexican fruit pickers in southern states) and other occupational Travellers on that continent.

Secondly, the number of interviews able to be conducted during the study is lower than I would otherwise have desired. The mitigating circumstances were the necessity to adjust to the show people’s busy schedule during show week, and the fact that the interviews that were conducted yielded a large number of productive data.

Thirdly, I do not presume that any method – including the one used in this study – can ever be totally inclusive and representative of the ‘realities’ of social life. As the anthropologist James Clifford (1992, p. 97) has pointed out: *“Every focus excludes; there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation”*. Given the communication strategies operating on the show circuits, it was considerably easier for me to meet and interview people from the ‘upper echelons’ of the coastal and western Queensland

show circuits. Another undoubted factor was my status as a university researcher; while many of my interviewees were highly articulate, it is probable that I was never introduced to others with less familiarity with formal education. For these reasons, I acknowledge that this study reports the views of members of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia far more readily than those of 'workers', 'itinerants' and 'horsey people'. This does not mean that the findings are invalidated; it does suggest that the range of voices heard in this thesis is smaller than I would like to be the case.

4.9 Review of the chapter

My intention in this chapter has been to outline the research design of the study, and in the process to explicate and justify the link between the study's conceptual framework and that design. This process has served to focus attention on the connections among the marginalising, resistant and transformative dimensions of the spaces of itinerancy and the sequence of propositions that links de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' and Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

The chapter began with an account of the conceptual and methodological links among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to researching Traveller education. I highlighted my own ambivalence about any research project's potential capacity to perpetuate itinerant people's marginalisation and deny their resistance and transformation, even while a researcher might seek to contribute to transforming that marginalisation and celebrating their resistance. I used that ambivalence as a justification for focussing on de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', which I argued was significant for drawing attention to two binary categories:

‘consumption’/‘reading’ and ‘production’/‘writing’. I contended that these binary categories have crucial implications for my relations with the show people and for the ‘trustworthiness’ of my analysis of their words in the interview transcripts. This led to a discussion of Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as a useful framework for analysing both my interactions with the show people and their relationships with the staff members of the Brisbane School of Distance Education. The point here is that ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ help to make the ambivalence of the spaces of itinerancy potentially productive and transformative, rather than automatically replicating the marginalisation associated with itinerancy, by highlighting the political significance of the show people’s actions and moves, including their interactions with me.

The next section of the chapter was my consideration of the ethical and political dimensions of the study’s research design. I asserted the ethical responsibility and the political situatedness of the study, and portrayed my traversing of the “*swamp*” that makes up “*The ethics and politics of qualitative research*” (Punch, 1994, p. 94) as confirming my ongoing ambivalence and my use of the study’s conceptual framework as the ‘map’ guiding my actions in both conducting the interviews and writing about the interview data.

I reported the data gathering techniques of the study, which included semi-structured interviews with forty-two people and an analysis of documents associated with the show children’s education program. Finally, I explained how the study is delimited and limited in particular ways beyond my control.

Having explained how the study's research design both derives from and feeds into its conceptual framework, I have set the scene for reporting my understanding of 'learning on the run' for the Queensland show children. That understanding will be communicated through my responses to the study's three research questions, beginning with the show people's experiences of marginalisation.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: THE SHOW PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALISATION

*“Well, see, because of our itinerant nature – here today and gone tomorrow
– . . . [people are] less likely to trust you.”*

Y3P1

*“.. .sometimes they don't understand that we're more or less like them but
just travel on.”*

Y1C4

5.1 Overview of the chapter

I indicated in Chapter One that the three key concepts guiding this thesis are marginalisation, resistance and transformation. The interplay among these concepts was highlighted in the literature review and the conceptual framework, and also in the study's research design. These concepts also underpin the three data analysis chapters, beginning with this chapter's focus on marginalisation.

In responding to the study's first research question, "*How do the show people experience marginalisation?*", I seek in this chapter to demonstrate that the Queensland show people experience marginalisation in complex and diverse forms. Moreover, these forms are frequently invisible to the gaze of non-itinerant people. It is generally only the experience of moving from one town to another every week or so that makes apparent the myriad ways in which show people are routinely and often unconsciously denied access to services that non-itinerants take for granted. At the same time, the elements of the itinerant lifestyle are habitually invested by 'locals' with negative meanings and devalued.

It is vital to trace the multiple dimensions of the show people's marginalisation for two main reasons. Firstly, it is important in itself to establish the reasons for the show people's awareness that their lifestyle and livelihood marginalise them in the eyes of the 'mainstream' community. This awareness stretches back for generations, and is not far below the surface of a show person's interactions with a 'local'. Secondly, marginalisation is far from being the end of the story, but instead forms the precursor and the impetus to the show people's acts of resistance and transformation, which are canvassed

in the next two chapters. If we are to understand how the show people have succeeded in turning distance education into Traveller education – a ‘place’ of their own – we have first to comprehend their consciousness of being regularly denied access to ‘mainstream’ educational and other services.

The chapter therefore consists of four sections:

- a review of de Certeau’s (1984) concept of ‘strategies of marginalisation’, which provides the chapter’s conceptual framework
- an account of how the show people experience an absence of place as a consequence of their itinerancy
- an analysis of how the show people experience otherness arising from their definition as foreign
- an examination of the show people’s past educational experiences as exemplifying the conversion of power over them into forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about schooling.

The overarching intention is to establish that these stereotypes and educational experiences combine to mark show people as ‘different’ and ‘deviant’ within mainstream strategic contexts and thus as people who cannot take for granted equitable access to social goods.

Although the people I call ‘the show people’ use different terminology from mine to identify and construct themselves and other people (including myself in the role of researcher), the data below demonstrate both the existence and the strength of those constructions. Moreover, these data go some way towards capturing the heterogeneity of construction and experience

that is implicit in the respondents' tendency to construct themselves as belonging to particular families and occupational groups, and that is belied by the necessarily homogeneous term 'the show people'. The broader issue to which this point relates is that the processes of naming reflect a dual role. On the one hand, naming displays the heterogeneity of identity construction and the resistance of a homogeneous, marginalised identity being imposed on a particular group. On the other hand, naming presents an opportunity for the reinscription of that marginalised identity, and it behoves researchers to avoid as far as possible becoming complicit in that reinscription (which, as I outlined in the preceding chapter, is one of the underlying principles of the study's research design).

Furthermore, although the focus in the data analysis chapters is mostly on the interview responses of 'the show people' (the show children and their families), each chapter, particularly the third, contains some observations by the home tutors; when this is done, it relates to the tutors who come from 'outside' the show circuits, rather than the family members who are already familiar with show life and accordingly might be considered to be 'show people' in any case. In addition, each data analysis chapter, but again particularly the third, draws on comments by the teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education. This practice is used as a form of indirect reflection of the show people's effectiveness at transforming their marginalised status, by recording the perceptions of some of those 'others' who have had intensive contact with the show people.

5.2 Strategies of marginalisation

My purpose in this section of the chapter is to present a brief review of de Certeau's (1984) concept of 'strategies of marginalisation'. I have already, in Chapter Three, placed this concept in the broader context of de Certeau's theory of social life and critiqued it from the perspective of several commentaries by other scholars. Here my intention is to remind the reader of the salient features of the concept, as a prelude to applying the concept to the show people's several experiences of marginalisation recorded in the remainder of the chapter.

De Certeau's emphasis in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) was squarely on "users" (p. xi) or consumers of social processes, rather than on the producers of those processes. This emphasis reflected his far greater interest in the multifarious and "ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong" (p. xvii) than in the massified forces of marginalisation that construct such a fundamental dichotomy between "the weak" and "the strong". However, he was fully aware of the need to delineate some of the features of the forces of marginalisation, against which the actions of resistance outlined in the rest of his book were directed. As I indicated in Chapter Three, he conceptualised two sets of binaries to depict this struggle: 'strategy'/'tactic' and 'place'/'space'. In reviewing these terms in this section, I shall limit my remarks to 'strategy' and 'place'.

With regard to 'strategy', as I noted in Chapter Three, de Certeau provided in the "General Introduction" to the book a definition of the term that he elaborated in a later chapter:

I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clientèles,” “targets,” or “objects of research”). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (1984, p. xix)

From the outset, then, de Certeau conceptualised strategies in terms of three elements that are integral to the understanding of marginalisation underpinning this chapter. Firstly, marginalisation proceeds from “a subject of will and power”, and by definition that same power is denied to the objects of marginalisation. Secondly, marginalisation proceeds from “a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre)”, underscoring the vital link between ‘strategy’ and ‘place’. Thirdly, marginalisation derives from and depends on the construction of ‘otherness’, as occurs in the process of “generating relations with an exterior distinct from” the source of the marginalising strategies. I argue in this chapter that power, ‘place’ and ‘otherness’ are all clearly manifest in the show people’s experiences of marginalisation.

De Certeau elaborated this synthesised overview of strategies in Chapter Three of *The practice of everyday life* (1984):

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base

from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every “strategic” rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its “own” place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an “environment.” A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one’s own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy. (pp. 35-36)

Again we see de Certeau’s emphasis on strategies as being imbricated within the exercise of power; as being located in “a place that can be delimited as its own” – and that it seeks to defend from external and internal attack; and as being the more valued half of a binary relationship “with an exteriority” and with “the invisible powers of the Other”. The range of examples has been maintained from the earlier to the later conceptualisation, although it has been extended to include “the country surrounding the city” and “military strategy”. The repetition of de Certeau’s emphasis on power, ‘place’ and ‘otherness’ was deliberate and underscores their centrality to his understanding of strategies and to the construction of marginalisation deployed in this chapter.

Having established the central role of these three elements of marginalisation, de Certeau delineated three key attributes of strategies of marginalisation. Firstly:

The “proper” is a triumph of place over time. It allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances. It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place. (p. 36)

This means that ‘the centre’s’ strategies of marginalisation exploit the advantages of stable territory that it has seized. These advantages include being accepted by others as occupying ‘centre ground’ or ‘the mainstream’, from which derives the power to define itself as ‘normal’ and others as ‘deviant’.

Secondly:

It is also a mastery of places through sight. The division of space makes possible a panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and “include” them within its scope of vision. To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space. (p. 36)

This capacity to “transform foreign forces into objects. . . , and thus control and ‘include’ them within its scope of vision” is vital to ‘the centre’s’ maintenance of its power base. It also means that it has the power to define others in its own terms, and furthermore to insist that such a definition is the sole authorised and accepted construction of others.

Thirdly:

It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize in these “strategies” a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one’s own place. Thus military or scientific strategies have always been inaugurated through the constitution of their “own” areas (autonomous cities, “neutral” or “independent” institutions, laboratories pursuing “disinterested” research, etc.). In other words, a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge and not merely its effect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge. (p. 36)

Here the emphasis is on a crucial element in the success of the power of the forces of marginalisation – that such power is ‘invisible’ through being channelled into supposedly “neutral” and objective forms of “knowledge”. This can take the appearance of stereotypes – both positive and negative – expressed along the lines that ‘Everyone knows that a particular marginalised groups has these particular desirable or undesirable characteristics’. The repetition of these stereotypes, circulated time and again through discursive practices emanating from the ‘invisible centre’ (Ferguson, 1990), turns them into forms of unproblematic knowledge that cannot easily be questioned but that are indissolubly linked to the exercise of power.

I should point out here that I am well aware that these three attributes of strategies of marginalisation – of being “a triumph of place over time”, of permitting the conversion of “foreign forces into objects” and of helping to

turn power into forms of unproblematic knowledge – can be related directly to educational research projects of the kind undertaken in this study. I sought in Chapter Four to communicate my concerns about the ethics and the politics of the study, and my efforts to engage with those concerns. My emphasis in this chapter is on how the same analysis of strategies of marginalisation can be applied to the show people's experiences.

Finally, de Certeau provided a useful summary of his conceptions of strategies and 'place':

In sum, strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical pieces (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed. They combine these three types of places and seek to master each by means of the others. They thus privilege spatial relationships. At the very least they attempt to reduce temporal relations to spatial ones through the analytical attribution of a proper place to each particular element and through the combinatory organization of the movements specific to units or groups of units. The model was military before it became "scientific." (p. 38)

From this perspective, the fact that the show people routinely move through space renders them at a disadvantage in relation to the forces of marginalisation. This is because the space through which they move is actually the 'place' of 'a proper' – it is 'owned' by 'the centre' and their itineraries are tolerated rather than accepted. It is this 'ownership', with its associated capacity to define and enforce where the show people are 'allowed' to go, that goes to the heart of explaining how strategies of marginalisation can exercise

can exercise such a powerful and enduring effect on the experiences and the lives of show people.

5.3 Absence of place

In the previous section, I referred to de Certeau's (1984) identification of three key attributes of strategies of marginalisation: I use those three attributes as the chapter's organising framework for analysing the show people's complex and diverse experiences of marginalisation. In this section, I examine how the show people's itinerancy means that they have an absence of place, with the result that they must find multiple ways of traversing the place(s) owned by others. In the next section, I consider how the show people are defined **as** foreign, an indispensable ally of the process of constructing and reinforcing their otherness in relation to mainstream society. Finally I identify the show people's past educational experiences **as** exemplifying the conversion of power over them into forms of unproblematic knowledge, including assumptions about 'normal' schooling. In each section, the focus is on how these respective attributes of marginalising strategies operate – sometimes obviously, far more often invisibly and insidiously – to render the show people **as** marginal **to**, and deviant from, the community to which they regard themselves **as** belonging.

The show people's absence of place underscores the strategic importance of a fixed location. **As** I noted in the previous section of this chapter, this crucial point was expressed succinctly by de Certeau (1984):

The “proper” is a triumph of place over time. It allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances. It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place. (p. 36)

When the show ‘comes to town’, what does this actually entail? It involves a group of itinerant people moving into a settled community’s boundaries for a predetermined period. It involves those people residing and working in an allotted territory in a public place – generally the local showgrounds. It involves their conformity to the local rules and regulations concerning a host of matters from parking vehicles to water supply to ownership of pet animals. In other words, it means an official acceptance of the show people’s ‘coming to town’ provided that they adhere to the local community’s policies and *mores*. They are there ‘on sufferance’, ‘on the terms’ of the official representatives of the townspeople. These are the various techniques that underpin “*the foundation of an autonomous place*”.

This fundamental and integral link between place and power, and between the absence of place and powerlessness, was synthesised starkly by historian Richard Broome and show person Alick Jackomos (1998):

Showpeople represented potential disorder. Like wanderers everywhere, they were perceived to be beyond the moral and social controls of the local community, or at least a threat to that control. (p. 29)

Hence the practice of local police forces maintaining “*a close watch on the Showies*”, with a Queensland detective being assigned to follow them up the Queensland coast each year until 1987 (p. 29). It is the show people’s absence of place, and the concomitant lack of an authorised speaking position, that lead to this kind of marginalising and even discriminatory behaviour against them.

Generally the show people were more interested in discussing the positive dimensions of their lifestyle than in focussing explicitly on their marginalised status (an emphasis that also reflected the tenor of the interview questions). Consequently very few respondents referred directly to themselves as marginalised, and they certainly eschewed the ascription of a ‘victim status’. Nevertheless evidence of the deleterious effects of their absence of place can be found in a number of their utterances.

Awareness of absence of place and its consequences for show people was strongly evident in one show parent’s extended comments about the concept of ‘home’. She identified herself as a member of the Showmen’s Guild of Australasia, and she explained that “*I was born in the show business, my father was in the show business*”, and that her grandfather “*started in show business by actually importing and selling toys to showmen, . . . and then the family’s continued on from there*” (Y4P5)¹. Later in the interview she clarified

1

For the purposes of preserving the anonymity of respondents, while indicating to the reader which statements were made by particular respondents, I have adopted the procedure, common in qualitative educational research, of identifying interviewees’ quotations with codes. In the codes, ‘Y’ refers to the year of the project in which the interview was conducted, while ‘A’, ‘C’, ‘HT’, ‘P’ and ‘T’ denotes the number of the interviews conducted respectively with

this situation, saying with considerable pride that “*my husband’s a six generation showman*”, and outlining how “. . . *he really has a show, [but] my family are more carnivals, not so much showgrounds*” (Y4P5). Subsequently she stated that “*we’re operating in the itinerant side [of the show], but we live in the Guild side, because we grew up there and that’s where we come from*” (Y4P5) (a distinction that is elaborated in the next chapter).

This family background is significant for explaining the personal context in which this show person’s discussion of ‘home’ was located. That is, by positioning herself as a member of the Showmen’s Guild and as the wife of “*a six generation showman*”, the respondent was constructing herself as someone with considerable cultural capital on the show circuits and as occupying a strong spealung position in relation to ‘outsiders’ such as the interviewer. This in turn framed her particularly revealing account of ‘home’, in which she speculated at greater length than any other of my respondents on the relationship between ‘home’ and show people’s ascribed absence of place.

I conducted two interviews with this respondent. The first was a lengthy, audiotaped interview in which she and I were the only people present in a temporarily vacant classroom. The second was a much briefer, videotaped interview in which she and I stood on the school oval with the videographer and the sound recordist standing close to us. The respondent used both these interviews to communicate a confident and articulate construction of show people and other people through the multiple understandings and meanings of

administrators, children, home tutors, parents and teachers.

'home'. In the process, she demonstrated that show people use those understandings and meanings to talk 'otherwise' about their situation, rather than accepting unproblematically their marginalised status.

In response to the explicit question "*Where is home?*" in the audiotaped interview, the respondent expressed mild irritation at the recurrence of this question being asked by 'outsiders' such as the interviewer: "*Everybody asks where is home*" (Y4P5). In her view the question implied an assumption that 'home' necessarily had to refer to a house, whereas for her the concept was more closely related to the extent and the strength of family and community relationships: "*I'm at home. My family, my children, my home is in the place [where] I live*" (Y4P5). For this show person, a perceived obsession with living in a fixed residence was one of the clearest indications that the interlocutor was not a 'showie'. In the process, she rejected implicitly a perception that the shifts between 'home' as the show circuits, her parents' house and her caravan identified above were necessarily contradictory. Her extended response to the question took up this theme:

Wherever I am, I'm at home. My mum and dad now have a house in Melbourne, and that's my home because my parents live there. But that's not my home because it's in the one place. Do you know what I mean? People have this thing that we're disjointed from what we should belong to. Do you know what I mean? If it's got wheels, and it's not earth, we belong to it. And that's where our roots are and that's what we do. (Y4P5)

The repetition of the question "*Do you know what I mean?*" reflected the respondent's strong desire to communicate her construction of the show

people as having a very deeply felt attachment to one another and to show life, and of 'home' as encapsulating and incorporating this attachment into practical living arrangements. The respondent also sought to construct other people as failing to understand the show people's enduring attachment to one another and to show life, thereby marking themselves as non-show people by means of this lack of comprehension. Importantly, this same lack of comprehension in turn marks the show people as 'different', 'lacking' and 'deviant' according to the perspective of local people. This last point demonstrates how the show people's absence of place is not simply a minor inconvenience, but instead goes to the centre and the heart of their experiences of marginalisation.

This discussion provided the basis for the respondent's exposition of these ideas in the more public videotaped interview. Again she sought to distinguish between show people and non-show people on the basis of their comprehension of living an itinerant lifestyle.

People don't have a conception of what it is to have a mobile home. People always – the main thing they ask me is, "Where is home?". Like it isn't where I'm at. My home is in my caravan, that's where all my things are, all my everything. My heart is in travelling, and my home is mobile. It has wheels on it, but I have roots in that home. And that's where it is. My parents have a house in Melbourne, but that isn't my home. That's my home because my mum and dad are there, but my home is on the showgrounds travelling, doing what I'm doing. And because it moves and it's not in the one town and it doesn't have a name doesn't mean it's not my home. (Y4P5)

This powerful assertion of identity and cultural pride and of an identification of 'home' as the respondent's caravan was followed by a statement of a perceived benefit of show life not available to most Australian families: "*We love what we're doing, we spend time with our family, because our business is a work at home business, more or less*" (Y4P5). Here 'home' is the show circuits, with the family living and working together in overall harmony.

Three comments need to be made about this show person's account of the multiple meanings of 'home' for show people. Firstly, the speaker was acutely aware that her itinerant lifestyle constructed her as suffering from an absence of place in the eyes of 'the centre'. This awareness was reflected in her devoting considerable time in both interviews to discussing this issue, which for permanent residents rarely becomes a topic of conversation (although certainly I was keen to pursue the point in both fora). Secondly, the speaker's awareness of this ascribed absence of place prompted her to explain in considerable detail that the show people do in fact experience and benefit from alternative understandings of 'home'. This willingness to explain was evident in her determination to ensure that I – and other locals – accepted the presence of these alternative understandings, through repetition and example. Thirdly, the speaker's focus on the presence of these understandings was a direct response to the presumed absence of place of show people, highlighting the crucial role played by this absence as a strategy of marginalisation.

In addition to negative assumptions about the show people's lack of 'home' as it is conventionally understood, their absence of place was also responsible for the reduction of their multiple signifiers of identity and meaning to a single homogenised label: 'the showies'. Although Broome with Jackomos (1998) traced this appellation to the mid twentieth century, and argued that the term was developed by the people who specialised in operating sideshows to refer to themselves (p. 28), the point to emphasise here is that that same term has been used by locals against show people. The show people's absence of place has also denied them a speaking position and a voice by means of which they can tell non-show people who they are and see themselves as becoming in their own terms. So outsiders' use of the term 'showies' functions much more than as a mere descriptor: it is also a naming device by which negative stereotypes can be uncritically circulated. The ultimate effect of this circulation is the continued marginalisation of the show people, and the closure of opportunities for them to tell their own stories about themselves. (As I demonstrate in the next chapter, show people strive consciously to tell those stories, in the process appropriating and using 'against' non-show people the very descriptors used to marginalise the show people.)

The extent of the show people's consciousness of the negative impact of the term 'showies', when used by others to perpetuate negative stereotypes, was encapsulated in the following interaction with a twelve year old girl on the show circuits:

[You know the local kids – did you talk to them much?]

*No. They always say, “**Look**, they’re show kids”. (Y2C4)*

The bald statement, “*Look, they’re show kids*”, is highly evocative of the ease with which show people become objects of the other’s gaze, and in the process undergo essentialisation and exoticisation as ‘strange’ and ‘unnatural’ beings whose occupations require them to disrupt the norm of fixed residence. This ease illustrates the integral links between naming and power, or its lack, and between the show people’s lack of place and their marginalised status.

The combined effects of stereotypically having no ‘home’ and being subject to homogenised naming practices are to highlight again and again to show people and those who work with them the ongoing and enduring experience of marginalisation that they undergo. A representative example of this consciousness of the negative impact of having an absence of place was a number of statements by a home tutor, who had travelled on the show circuits for six months. A recurring theme in this home tutor’s discourse was the assertion that show people have traditionally been poorly treated by the wider society, and that that poor treatment has caused them to retreat into a separate existence on the show circuits.

. . .no other outsiders would be welcome. . .inside [the show circuits]. They would not. Well, . . .the world wasn’t interested in them, . . .the communities. . .didn’t know them, all they thought of them was – scum, really. (Y5HT1)

Shortly after this statement, the home tutor reinforced this view.

Everything that the showmen are is a product of the way we treat them – the way their pride is, the way they work, the way they are – is a product of years and years, centuries of our treatment of them. And that is the basic line. (Y5HT1)

This thesis focusses on the show people's agency in contesting and transforming their marginalisation, rather than on constructing their status as passive 'victims' as this home tutor appeared to do. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that her perspective helps to confirm the extent of their marginalisation as seen from her perspective. Later in the interview, the speaker elaborated this view.

Like I said, the way they are, and the way they act, it's years and years of our treatment of them. That's the basic line. . .because of the way we. . .have treated them. Their own respect has come from the way they put us down,. . .the way the people outside have put them down. (Y5HT1)

For this reason, the speaker claimed, the 'showies' generally confine their interest in the world to the events of show life: ". . .why should they go out ~~of~~ their way. . .~~for~~ the outer community, when the outer community have never treated them anything but. . .[poorly]?" (Y5HT1).

The vehemence of the speaker's references to the show people's "years and years" of neglect and mistreatment by "the outer community" derived from the sharp intensity of her observations of those experiences as she lived and worked with the show people 'on the run'. Her position – as an 'informed outsider' or 'participant observer' – provided a distinctive perspective on a situation that many show people acknowledged but that they

were likely to assign to ‘the back of their minds’ as they engaged in the daily battles of earning a livelihood. All of this derives, I argue, from de Certeau’s insight that “*The ‘proper’ is a triumph of place over time*”, and that “*It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place*” (1984, p. 36). In other words, the strategic importance of a fixed location lies in its inverse ratio to the marginalising impact of the show people’s absence of place.

5.4 Constructions of otherness

In the previous section, I demonstrated that a principal element of the show people’s marginalisation relates to the first of de Certeau’s (1984) three attributes of the strategies of marginalisation: their absence of place. Here I argue that another element of their marginalised status derives from the second of de Certeau’s three attributes: their definition as foreign objects, and how that definition operates to construct their otherness.

According to de Certeau (1984):

It [the “proper”] is also a mastery of places through sight. The division of space makes possible a panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and “include” them within its scope of vision. To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space. (p. 36)

This analysis demonstrates how the strategic importance of a fixed location shades into the treatment of all those ‘others’ who do not inhabit that fixed location. These ‘others’ become ‘*yoreign. . . objects that can be observed and measured*’, by means of which ‘the centre’ can “*control and ‘include’ them within its scope of vision*”. This situation is the opposite of the unpoliticised relativism of the adage that ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’. On the contrary, ‘beauty’ or other values such as ‘goodness’, ‘providence’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘trustworthiness’ are held to exist only in the narrow frames envisaged by ‘the centre’. Alternative understandings of these values are silenced and negated – although not completely.

For the show people, this means that their absence of place, arising from their itinerancy, renders them outside ‘the centre’ and therefore ripe for the operation of the “panoptic practice” that turns a searchlight unblinkingly on them. They become the object of the gaze, unable to speak and communicate their own meanings and values, but instead required to endure their conversion into foreign objects and the construction of their otherness. This process leads to the circulation and repetition of negative stereotypes based not on the show people as active individuals but rather on their status as an objectified and homogenised entity: ‘the showies’. This process is an integral element of the show people’s marginalisation.

An initial manifestation of the construction of the show people’s otherness is perceptions by locals of show people as ‘strange’. A show person recalled the local incomprehension of the show people’s need to have equipment serviced quickly:

See, I'll come in with a broken TV on Monday and say, "Excuse me, I need it by Friday". They look at you, because people put them in ~~for~~ a month. They can't understand that way. See, I'm moving onto another town, but they don't understand that part. . . . They might think it's a bit weird, but we've only got so long in here, and we've got to do the best we can in those few days. (Y4P6)

This reference to local people thinking that "it's a bit weird" resonated with another show person's reflection on the show people's interactions with government officials:

And sometimes when we're talking to government bodies and that, they can't understand that it's urgent ~~for~~ us. It's always urgent, because that is the way that our business functions. (Y4P5)

Similarly, another show person stated in a videotaped interview with me, "Because our lives – it's a very sort of strange life to somebody like you" (Y4P1).

These references to perceptions of the show people as "weird" and "strange" reflected their awareness that their itinerancy marks them as 'different'. The result is that they are subject to the gaze of surveillance while they are 'in town'. For each group of local people, this process of objectification rarely occurs more often than once a year. For the show people, however, it takes place every time that they enter a new community. The regularity and the repetition of enduring this kind of interested and objectifying gaze are marginalising in their cumulative effect. This consciousness of the marginalisation that arises from being seen as "weird" and

“strange” certainly underlay a ten year old girl’s comment about local children: *“...sometimes they don’t understand that we’re more or less like them but just travel on”* (Y1C4).

An extension of regarding the show people as *“weird”* and *“strange”* is to perceive them as objects of pity, as a consequence of being forced to live a ‘second class existence’. A seven year old boy referred to this perception when he identified some of the difficulties in getting to know local children:

No, not easy at all. It’s hard to find a friend because [locals think that] all of us [are] so stupid, don’t get anything done, but we do get things done. (Y1C5)

Similarly, a show parent stated, *“So I think we have a better lifestyle than most people when they say, ‘How could you do it?’, like it’s so terrible”* (Y4P5). Another show parent expressed this perception as amounting to *“a stigma”*: *“Like a lot of people are ignorant to our lifestyle and to the way things work, and they think that things aren’t right, and that can cause a stigma”* (Y1P2).

It is important not to underestimate the deleterious effects of this construction of show people as objects of pity. This process represents an insidious devaluing of the show people’s lifestyle, and a refusal to concede their right to attach their own values to the way that they live and work. It therefore marks them out as ‘different’ and ‘deviant’, and accordingly as warranting the intrusive attention and surveillance of ‘the centre’. Objectified pity brings with it less, not more, understanding of the show people, and it therefore contributes directly to their experiences of marginalisation.

Another manifestation of the show people being defined as foreign, and of the construction of their otherness, but with a harder edge to it than pity, is animosity. This takes the response to the perception that the show people are 'strange' from ambivalence to hostility. This situation was encapsulated in a show parent's observation that *"kids still do tend to serve a little bit of animosity to show children when they come into the school"* (Y1P2). The connection between the show people and the feelings of hostility derive from negative stereotypes based on their 'foreignness', rather than from direct interactions between the two groups. In other words, this is a situation in which prejudice feeds marginalisation.

This link between animosity and the construction of the show people's outsiderness was confirmed by two 'outsiders' who had a close knowledge of the show people's working lives. Firstly, a home tutor recalled a set of graphic incidents that for her encapsulated many of the perceived tensions between 'showies' and 'locals':

. . . I was at school with him [the show child whom she tutored] and all the other kids were staring at us through the window – about thirty children were staring at us, and so naturally they put on this big show at lunch time. We were just sitting eating lunch, . . . we were just sitting quietly eating lunch, and this teacher walked up, we were sitting on top of these port racks [used for storing students' school bags], didn't even speak to us, just pointed at us, "Get off the port racks." And I thought, "I'm an adult, not a child." And then someone left a paper on top of the port rack and she must have been standing half a metre away from me. Instead of saying, "Excuse me, could you get one of the girls to put it in

the rubbish bin?”, she just stood there and put this horrid look on her face and just pointed at me and pointed at the paper. So I just chose to ignore it, like I hadn’t seen it. That’s totally rude. Just a few things [like] going and ordering your lunch at the tuckshop, sometimes the ladies get a bit funny for the first few days. . . . So you’re really well spoken with your best manners so they sort of say to each other, “Oh, she’s not so bad after all.” (Y1HT1)

The speaker’s references to “*about thirty children. . .staring at us through the window*”, and to “*sometimes the [tuckshop] ladies. . .[being] a bit funny for the first few days*”, underscored her direct experience of how being defined in deficit terms and **as** ‘foreign’ shades seemingly inexorably into outright animosity and hostility. The same home tutor noted further:

*A lot of the time our kids have learnt to stick **up for** themselves. They’re like that – they stick together and they might fight with the other kids, but I don’t think that I’ve ever seen our children go and actually pick it first.*
(Y1HT1)

Here the clear impression is that physical fights by local children directed at show children are an overt expression of more tightly controlled – but nevertheless real and powerful – feelings of hostility held by older community members towards the show people.

Similarly, one of the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers confirmed the persistence of this animosity towards show children:

They [show children] tend to stick to themselves when they come into school normally, because the school kids perceive them to be something different. . . (Y2T1)

The teacher identified the show children's responses to this situation:

So they get a bit of a rough time at school sometimes, and they're made to feel different, and they react. Some of them react; some of them are just so used to it that they're very nonplussed about the whole thing but don't do anything anyway. (Y2T1)

Here a wealth of attitudes and actions is conveyed by the deceptively simple statement that "*they're made to feel different*". The other noteworthy reference is to the fact that "*some of them are just so used to it*": being labelled as 'different', and this 'difference' leading to hostility and sometimes to physical conflict, is habitual for many show children – as well as for their parents. This habituation of 'difference' and animosity is a striking illustration of the construction of the show people's otherness.

A highly evocative dimension of the show people's otherness is the stereotypical view of them as 'dirty'. This is a visible sign of a presupposition that their itinerancy reduces their access to running water and washing facilities. More fundamentally, it evokes a notion of 'impurity' and the suspicion that their unwanted presence might defile the 'purity' of the 'normal' people living in the community. This association between being 'dirty' and threatening the host community's 'purity' has strong parallels with two other historically or habitually itinerant groups who are also

subjected to negative stereotypes: Gypsies (Liégeois, 1996, 1998) – whom I discuss below – and Jews (Rose, 1990, 1992).

One of the show parents commented on this stereotypical association with 'dirt':

. . .we get our reputation, which we're not very pleased with, from the people who work for us. Because they're the louder ones down the street; they're usually the ones that didn't have a [shower] before they went, and people say, "The showies are back in town", and they just recognise the people who work for us as being us. But usually they're the ones that wanted a move around lifestyle. . .but we're here in a business and we're here to stay. So that's not our reputation. (Y4P5)

The workers' claimed habit of not showering before they go into town marks them out in a visible way for inspection by, and disapproval of, the townspeople, thereby reinforcing a negative stereotype based on rendering the show people as objects to be surveyed and thus controlled. This situation reflects the centre's configuration as a site cleansed of the 'impurity' of disorder (see also McVeigh's [1997] assertion that the "very existence" of nomadic people "threatens, undermines, 'invades' sedentary identity", and that consequently those same people "receive immediate and oppressive policing by the state in the interest of all sedentary people" [p.22]).

One of the home tutors also commented on this tendency of local people to attach negative valences to superficial appearances. He estimated that workers constitute

*. . .probably. . .fifty per cent **or** sixty per cent of what makes up the travelling show. . ., and that's the outside that you see. And I suppose you'd see the tattoos and hair and pony tails and think, "Well!". (Y3HT1)*

Another home tutor also demonstrated her awareness of the deeper significance of looking 'dirty' and 'unwashed':

*. . .in the morning I'd wake up, have a shower, put makeup on, iron my clothes **or** anything, and I'd be standing there **for** – maybe if it was a busy show from eight o'clock in the morning and I'd have half an hour **for** lunch and by the time we'd hit seven o'clock when all the people started to arrive, I'd been standing **up off** the ground, I was lucky, I didn't have to stand right in the dust, but I looked absolutely filthy. You'd **look** horrible, you would, your clothes would be just full of dust, and the thing [the joint that she had been tending] might have broken down and you'd have grease all over you, . . .and all these local people, when they go to the show, they dress up really well, so they come out all neatly showered in their best clothes and they'd think that you're like a dirty scumbag **or** something. But you just can't do anything about it, and by the time it hits eleven o'clock you're just – you just look dreadful. It's funny. (Y1HT1)*

Again the link between the show people's appearance and deeply seated and irrational beliefs by local people about show people is clear and direct. The show people's appearance is thus an index of their definition as 'foreign', and their construction **as** 'other', to the mainstream community through which they are passing.

The perception that show people are 'dirty' is closely associated with the feeling that they cannot be trusted, and particularly that they are thieves. According to Broome with Jackomos (1998):

The initial ambivalence towards sideshows reflected the mixed feelings many had about show people themselves. Because they travelled from place to place and were not a settled people, they were distrusted. (p. 28)

They noted that "There was an old country saying, only half in jest, 'lock up your daughters and your chooks [chickens], the showies are coming'" (p. 29). They contrasted this with the more likely cause of theft at this time: "Certainly crimes did occur at show time because ~~of~~ the large number ~~of~~ strangers in town" (p. 29), with most of these crimes being attributable to professional criminals who saw the show as 'good cover' for their activities.

This stereotype of the show people as likely to engage in theft was recalled by Frank Foster, member of one of Australia's oldest show families:

You've got to remember that we show people get a lot of bad publicity. In days gone by when the show came into town people used to say, 'Pull your washing in and lock your daughters up'.

I remember on one occasion in this particular town where the showgrounds was close to a lot of houses, this young boy was over at the tap washing out his shirt when he saw a young girl in the garden next door and after they exchanged greetings he asked her if she would like to go to the pictures that night, and she told him she would have to ask her mother and the conversation went something like this, 'Mum there's one of these show blokes out here and he wants to take me to the

pictures', the reply was quick and final, 'You come inside and bring the cow with you!'. (Morgan, 1995, pp. 128-129)

This 'untrustworthy criminal' dimension of the show people's constructed otherness was evident in a show parent's claim that local people "see what they want to see", and that "because *oſ* our itinerant nature – here today and gone tomorrow – . . . [people are] less likely to trust you" (Y3P1). She conveyed her frustration at continuing prejudice against show people, leavened by occasional support from people of good sense:

. . . there are some people who don't even associate with showmen down in New South Wales and the week we were there their machine got broken into. But this person said that why blame the show just because we're here – it's more likely that they've – certain boys she mentioned – they've done it because they know the showmen are in the town. (Y3P1)

Sometimes the combination of being perceived as 'dirty' and as 'thieves' shaded into a stereotyped association between show people and Gypsies. This association linked the show people's otherness to a much older and more concentrated aversion and prejudice in which Gypsies are typecast as unwashed outcasts, with devastating consequences for their educational access among other aspects of their quality of life (Liégeois, 1998). According to Broome with Jackomos (1998):

*While the Showies' subculture was born out *oſ* positive and shared ideals, it partly depended on the negative feeling *oſ* being classed as outsiders. Some *oſ* this stemmed from the public's view that Showies*

were the same as Gypsies, although the Showies vehemently denied any connection. (p. 42)

Pursuing this theme, an older show person contrasted “*our industry*” immediately after World War Two, “*when we had a lot of Gypsies in it and so forth*”, with the current situation, when “*it’s a pretty big one today in Australia*”, largely because “*Through the Showmen’s Guild now we’ve a very organised body of people*” (Y4P3). In other words, being “*organised*” was intended to counteract public perceptions that show people are like Gypsies, and therefore shiftless, untrustworthy and not contributing to the formal economy. This recalls de Certeau’s (1984) insight that “*The ‘proper’ . . . is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place*” (p. 36). That is, the show people’s efforts to impose order and routine on their seemingly random and unstable movements through the spaces of their itinerancy constitute an attempt to turn marginalised ‘space’ into valued ‘place’.

A younger show person went further in insisting on a demarcation between show people and the negative images attributed by the public to Gypsies:

And then there’s a few people that were of English Gypsy orientation, where that was in their blood. So how could it not – they were bad people but that was the way they were, and you can’t do anything about that. And that was also part of our business because they were showmen from original, so we had to accept them. But they did the wrong thing. We also had to say, “Well, this and this is the rules”. So we have had people who haven’t represented us in our best interests over the years.

So people may have built up their negative attitudes from one or two incidents or something. (Y4P5)

Again the implication is clear that local people's "negative attitudes" are irrational and based on stereotypes of the show people as 'different' and 'foreign', yet also that those "negative attitudes" have a considerable and enduring regrettable impact on the show people's capacity to live their lives as they wish. Relatedly, as McVeigh (1997) pointed out, "the subtlety of these distinctions", such as between show people and people "of English Gypsy orientation" identified by the person cited in the previous paragraph, "are often lost on sedentary people with the power to define the 'whole vagrant population'" (p. 16). It is this very "power to define", and by implication to devalue and elide the show people's own efforts "to define", their identities that lies at the heart of the show people's marginalisation.

I have demonstrated in this section the relevance and the accuracy of de Certeau's (1984) insight that strategies of marginalisation involve "a mastery of places through sight" (p. 36). From that perspective, the show people are indeed "foreign forces" who have been transformed "into objects that can be observed and measured", and who are thus subject to "control" and inclusion within the 'proper's' "scope of vision" (p. 36). Specifically, I have argued that the show people's itinerancy leads directly to their being perceived as 'strange', objects of pity and of animosity, 'dirty', untrustworthy and likely to engage in theft, and similar to Gypsies. These perceptions recall McVeigh's (1997) assertion:

Travellers are subject to a whole series of stereotypes which combine to render them hugely problematic: they are criminals by 'nature', they come from outside the community, they are dirty, they are dishonest, they are immoral and amoral and, most importantly, they are 'nomadic'. Most of these contemporary constructions of nomads draw on a long history of establishment fears about the travelling dispossessed and the threat they pose to the moral and political order. (p. S)

In combination, then, and from the perspective outlined by McVeigh (1997), the negative perceptions identified above mark out the show people as 'different' and construct them as 'other' to 'normal' and 'proper' settled society. This process is an extremely powerful instance of the operation of strategies of marginalisation against the show people.

5.5 Forms of unproblematic knowledge

In addition to experiencing, and suffering as a result of, absence of place and constructions of otherness, the show people have endured the third attribute of strategies of marginalisation identified by de Certeau (1984): forms of unproblematic knowledge. As de Certeau noted:

It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize in these "strategies" a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. Thus military or scientific strategies have

always been inaugurated through the constitution of their “own” areas (autonomous cities, “neutral” or “independent” institutions, laboratories pursuing “disinterested” research, etc.). In other words, a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge and not merely its effect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge. (p. 36)

This account of forms of unproblematic knowledge signals the direct and immediate link between the show people’s marginalised status and their educational experiences. From this perspective, schooling functions, not just to facilitate enlightenment or empowerment, but also as an ally of the strategies of marginalisation that deny show people a place and construct them as other to the rest of the community. This is the real significance of de Certeau’s (1984) insight that “a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge *and not merely its effect or its attribute*”, and that “*It produces itself in and through this knowledge*”. In other words, formal education is never innocent or neutral, but rather reflects broader social forces. Whether education works against or for the show people depends in large part on the particular relationship between education and the marginalisation, resistance or transformation of the show people’s identities.

How might superficially straightforward conditions of schooling be complicit in the show people’s marginalisation? The answer lies in the link between those conditions and the two other attributes of marginalising strategies identified by de Certeau (1984): absence of place and constructions of otherness. Firstly, the show people’s itinerancy, which involves their

movement in and out of spaces that are others' places, means that they are without places of their own and hence without the stability of identity, meaning and power that are the preserve of *"the 'proper'"* and that enable and underpin *"the foundation of an autonomous place"* (p. 36). Secondly, the show people's absence of place renders them subject to the centre's surveillance, and to their own conversion from *"foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured"*, and therefore liable to *"control"* and inclusion *"within its scope of vision"* (p. 36). The show people's absence of place thus leads inexorably to the construction of their otherness.

Thirdly, the powerful forces that deny a place to the show people and construct them as other are the same forces that underpin *"a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place"* (p. 36). This knowledge is accompanied by a host of assumptions, which become institutionalised and therefore naturalised, about the 'right' way for education to function in a late capitalist society generally, and in Queensland specifically. Two assumptions are particularly noteworthy in the context of the show people's marginalisation. The first is that schooling is rightly located in specific 'places' called 'schools', which are the officially sanctioned institutions for the dissemination of knowledge. A crucial corollary of this assumption is that the students and teachers who labour in schools themselves live in permanently resident situations – the 'rightness' of which is reflected in the school's equivalent location in a fixed place. The show people's absence of place clearly and dramatically puts them at a fundamental disadvantage in relation to schooling, which thereby contributes to their marginalised status. A striking illustration of this situation is the curriculum of the distance education packages, which are predicated on the assumption of

students having a fixed residence (*albeit* at a distance from ‘the centre’) and which are constructed in unsuitable ways for the show people’s mobile lifestyle. Furthermore, the distance education curriculum generally conceives of the show children **as** ‘blank slates’ on which the curriculum needs to be inscribed, rather than as having a myriad of lived experiences and skills into which the distance educational materials should be fitted.

The second noteworthy assumption about schooling is that the understandings of the world held by those who occupy the places of ‘the centre’ are used **as** the basis for deciding who and what are ‘normal’ and who and what, on the other hand, deviate from those social ‘norms’. There are no half measures here: you are either ‘for us’ or ‘against us’. This thinking is what underlies the construction of a group’s otherness: in some fundamental way ‘they’ are ‘different’ and hence are subject to ‘our’ surveillance and control (or else are overlooked and ignored by ‘us’). Certainly for the show people, the stereotypes that position them as ‘foreign’ are fuelled by their patent inability to ‘fit the norm’ in terms of educational provision: their otherness creates a ‘problem’ that educational authorities must seek to resolve.

This analysis suggests strongly that the construction and dissemination of knowledge are tied to how that knowledge is encoded, mediated and delivered. Furthermore, the ‘invisibility’ of these processes portrays that knowledge **as** straightforward and unproblematic. From this perspective, it is ‘obvious’ that schools are located in permanent places, and that groups that differ from ‘the norm’ are ‘other’ to ‘normal’ citizens. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to demonstrate how these forms of unproblematic

knowledge, manifested in particular institutions of schooling, are inextricably imbricated in the show people's marginalisation.

This demonstration is pursued by means of analysing the limited educational options (including location and control of schooling) available to the show people before the establishment of the specialised program provided by the Brisbane School of Distance Education (which is discussed in detail in the next chapter). The unifying theme in the show people's recollections of these previous educational options is that, regardless of their respective 'pros' and 'cons', in combination these options revealed the existence of forms of unproblematic knowledge underpinned by powerful forces of marginalisation.

Prior to the establishment of the specialised program, show people's options for their children's education were restricted to six possibilities:

- sending their children to local schools along the show circuits
- sending their children to boarding schools
- not sending their children to local or boarding schools but instead teaching them correspondence lessons on the show circuits
- coming off the show circuits and finding alternative employment for the duration of their children's education so that the children could attend local schools
- remaining on the show circuits and sending their children to live with relatives and attend local schools
- not sending their children to school at all.

As will be seen below, each option had particular difficulties associated with it and was not considered the foundation of a long term solution to the show people's distinctive educational needs and aspirations. As one parent expressed the situation in relation to show life and Traveller education:

It's good. It's a good life and that ~~for~~ the kids. The only thing that really suffers with the kids is the lack ~~of~~ education, because you pretty well know before you have children what your opportunities are. It's either boarding school or correspondence or school to school. (Y4P2)

An older show person aptly conveyed the long term consequences of such educational neglect – virtually an entire generation of illiterate show people:

We know what it's like ~~for~~ our children to grow up and come and ask us questions about "Pop, or Dad, what's that word?". Sometimes we couldn't answer it because we never had much education. (Y4P3)

This situation was confirmed by a relative newcomer to the show circuits:

There was a time when a lot of showmen I don't think had any means of teaching their children, and if they couldn't afford to send them to school, they didn't get the schooling at all. (Y2P5)

As with many of the quotations below, this utterance reflected neither 'inverted pride' nor 'special pleading'. It was not easy for show people to talk about their own formal illiteracy, but they considered it necessary to convince educational researchers such as myself of the extent of the educational marginalisation arising from their itinerancy. They also used it as a 'rallying

cry' among themselves to articulate their expectations for more appropriate educational provision and to devise tactics to bring such provision about.

5.5.1 Sending show children to local schools on the show circuits

With regard to the show people's option of sending their children to local schools along the show circuits, their references to that option reflected the operation of the marginalising educational 'norms' associated with that option. For example, one of the key people in lobbying for the new program had a clear recollection of the situation that existed prior to the program's introduction.

[Before the program] *the choices that were available to the parents were basically zilch. They [the children] just went from school to school and there was no continuity or gauge on what the kids were doing, so they got to a certain age and lost interest very quickly.* (Y1P2)

Here the reference to the absence of a "*continuity or gauge*" demonstrated the speaker's acknowledgment that such a "*continuity or gauge*" was a pedagogical device commonly used by teachers to monitor their students' learning. The emphasis on its absence exemplified the educational corollary of the show people's absence of place: that absence meant that the option of show people's sending their children to local schools was educationally unsound.

Another show person described the difficulties of show children attending local schools when the show was in town and trying to join in the lessons of the non-itinerant children.

*But sometimes it wasn't even for a week. You see, this is a short week here, sometimes it was only **for** three days. . . . If you arrived late on Sunday night, say one **or** two [o'clock] in the morning, you wouldn't even get up to send the kids to school the next day. The kids wouldn't get up, so then it might only be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And then. . . there was a holiday **for** the show. **And** I suppose the teacher thought, "Well, what can I teach this kid in three days? I won't worry about it", so they didn't. And then they did their correspondence at the school. That was a little bit better - but this is a lot better. . . . Before that, the kids just went to boarding school. They just went to school from town to town until they were about ten and then they went to boarding school.*
(Y1P1)

The speaker's reference to what "*the teacher thought*" reflected her implicit awareness of a particular form of unproblematic knowledge about schooling: the assumption that learning could take place only with the continuity and routine of permanently resident students going to school in the same place for an extended time. The other aspect of this interview statement to emphasise is the speaker's equal awareness that the show people's own continuity and routines were 'at odds' with the school's operations, and that accordingly their children suffered educationally from the lack of 'fit' between the two systems.

An older show person remembered a time when boarding school **was** not an option for parents:

None of us could afford boarding school. We couldn't afford it, and again when we came to town, you'd take your children to a school and nine times out of ten they were put down the back of the class. And they were given a little project to do while they were there for two or three days. They learn very little this way. (Y4P3)

Two young parents remembered their own experiences of (not) learning under those circumstances:

I was only a kid, so you'd be getting the same thing over and over again. They didn't know what to do with you. They had you for a week, so they would sit you up there and do the best they could. . . . (Y4P6)

I did the same project on New Zealand at five different schools. So there's how you could get away with it. I was familiar with the work. They'd say, "We're doing a project". "Oh, I can do a project on New Zealand". I did the same one. (Y4P5)

But that's what you had to do. (Y4P6)

Because that was what was making the teachers happy, but that wasn't teaching me anything. I got to know my project down pat. And that happened often. You'd say, "I know how to read this book", and you'd just read that book. And you'd only do the things that you were familiar with, that you had confidence with. (Y4P5)

Then you'd go to school, and all the kids would be in a school uniform, and you'd come in there, and it was pretty heart breaking. I used to cry all the way. My mother used to get upset. I bet she felt like saying, "Don't worry about it". But she did it. (Y4P6)

This interchange demonstrated starkly two key components of the show people's past educational experiences. Firstly, the institution of schooling constructed knowledge as unproblematic, a construction that fuelled its representatives' assumptions about the necessary conditions of learning. This process helped to explain the fact that the teachers "*didn't know what to do with you*": the show children deviated from the 'norm' of permanently resident students whom the teachers had been trained to instruct. Because the teachers' professional knowledge was regarded **as** unproblematic and had not been subjected to scrutiny or critique, the 'problem' was projected onto the itinerant children, and the teachers discharged their responsibility when "*they would sit you **up** there and do the best they could*". Another example of this unproblematic knowledge was the assumption that students should wear school uniform, to identify them more closely with the single educational institution that they would attend and mark them **as** not attending another school.

The second key component of the show people's past educational experiences manifested in this exchange was a corollary of the first: the pervasive influence of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge led directly to experiences that were marginalising and harmful for the show people. Both speakers' intense frustration was redolent in their exchange: experiences that occurred more than twenty years earlier were recalled with

vivid clarity. *"Getting the same thing over and over again"*, being permitted to do *"only...the things that you were familiar with"* and *"coming in there"* without a school uniform, so that *"it was pretty heart breaking"*, were graphic illustrations of the sustained and deleterious impact of this option on the show people's educational experiences.

Other parents also recalled the social rather than the educational drawback of this situation. One mother referred to show children *"Going in shy, having to walk into a class with thirty other kids and not know any [of them]"* (Y1P2). According to another parent:

...I remember what it was like. It wasn't too bad when there were other kids and that. But when you were the only one by yourself it was the worst feeling in the world. You're standing up there in front of all the class and you have to say your name and "Hello", and what you do. You just stand there and cry. It was just the worst feeling. ...I think I used to hate that. It was horrible. (Y4P2)

The speaker explained that, largely as a result of this recurring situation, *"I just went to sixth class. That was my education"* (Y4P2).

This is another example of the conflict between unexamined assumptions about schools and teaching on the one hand and the show people's itinerancy and identities on the other. Unproblematic pedagogical knowledge suggests that introducing new students publicly to the class helps to make them feel welcome and lets other students know something about them. However, for the show people, this practice brought into unhelpful alliance their absence of place and their construction as other in an educational setting. One result of

this alliance was that the local students' stereotypical views of show people were strengthened by this process of literally subjecting the itinerant children to their uncomprehending gaze, because the show children were not in town long enough to develop meaningful relationships that would break down those stereotypes. The other result was the inducement of *"just the worst feeling"* in the show children, who *"would just stand there and cry"* at having their exotic foreignness publicly displayed in this uncompromising fashion.

Another show parent explained that learning with her daughter, rather than her own educational experiences, had equipped her with formal literacy skills: *"I never went into school; I just went from school to school. I never learnt to read and write, so I've been learning since I've been teaching. . [my daughter]"* (Y2P1).

A member of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia synthesised these debilitating educational experiences this way:

... Going to school once every couple of weeks, and being told, "Draw that picture there", and the next school, "Draw that picture". "But I drew it at the last school." "Well, draw it again, you'll get good at it." So of course by the time the end of the run came, we had a lot of brilliant artists, and in the top brackets of the teams, we had some very good artists. And that's not a ridiculous statement; it's true, because that's all they did. They painted pictures. All day they drew pictures, all day they traced, all day. They're brilliant signwriters and everything like that, and we've got some wonderful people who can paint out there. But of course, let's be realistic. (Y4P1)

The form of unproblematic knowledge being emphasised here was the pedagogical presumption that ‘practice makes perfect’. Being told to “*draw it again, you’ll get **good** at it*” reflected an uncritical assumption that the best way to occupy the limited time of these itinerant children was to assign to them a generic activity that would not distract the rest of the class and that might give them a skill that they might eventually be able to use in their future occupations. The lack of coherent connection with the show children’s learning before or after they entered that school was presumed to be beyond the teacher’s capacity to address. This practice also tells us something about the show children’s perceived ‘right’ to knowledge: all that they were being offered was mastery of a task that is rated very lowly in schools and society. (The speaker’s concluding injunction, “...let’s **be realistic**”, reflected the show people’s awareness of the limited value of that task and laid the groundwork for their resistance of such inadequate schooling provision, as the next chapter demonstrates.)

The option of show people keeping their children with them and sending them to local schools along the show circuits was clearly not effective. Limitations included recurring discontinuity in the children’s learning and a reinforcement of the show children’s sense of marginalisation and alienation from ‘mainstream society’. The speakers’ recollections of efforts to make this option succeed were filtered through their explanations of how life on the show circuits works. The lack of ‘fit’ between the two systems reflected and reinforced the show people’s absence of place and their construction as other to ‘the centre’, and it also highlighted the negative impact of the way that schooling institutions represent knowledge in unproblematic ways to which people must conform.

5.5.2 Sending show children to boarding schools

Another previous option available to show people in educating their children was to send them to boarding schools. One parent described her family's experiences and perceptions of exercising this option:

*Oh, I don't like boarding school. . . .My dad, he went to boarding school, and he didn't like it. So he never sent me to boarding school **for** that reason. And. . .[my daughter] nearly went to boarding school, but she said no, she's too young. So I pulled out **of** that idea. . . .Because I didn't like the idea of sending her away. I thought it's silly to have kids and then send them away **for** half their life. (Y4P2)*

Another parent recalled the pressures on her family when she was growing up in relation to pursuing the boarding school option:

. . .my mum had been to board and so had my father, but we. . .[have] a very close family network; your family is your friends and your workmates. So it's difficult with your children being away from you. (Y4P5)

A member of the Showmen's Guild expressed many Guild members' attitudes to boarding school education this way:

*"We're going to watch. . .[our children] grow **up** once every **six** months if we send them away to a boarding school." And showmen are a very close knit community, and they want their families with them all the time. . . ."* *. . .and we've got to not send our kids away to boarding school **for** the first twelve years **of** their life. We want them with us. . .". (Y4A1)*

Regardless of whether show people are more of “*a very close knit community*” than other groups, and despite the fact that a number of show people have attended prestigious Australian boarding schools, these speakers effectively conveyed their resentment that parental concerns to maximise their children’s educational success would ‘direct’ them to pursue an option that physically separated family members. Furthermore, it was implicitly acknowledged that this option was not available to many show people owing to the high costs involved. Again the real point to emphasise is that knowledge that is assumed to be unproblematic about the nature of ‘normal’ school students and their families is found to exclude and devalue the show people’s itinerant lifestyle and the associated restrictions on available options for educating their children.

5.5.3 Teaching show children correspondence lessons on the show circuits

Another educational option previously available to show people was not sending their children to local or boarding schools but instead teaching them correspondence lessons as they travelled along the show circuits. One show person also believed that correspondence schooling, without the children attending local schools in different towns, had several problems.

I don't know how the parents managed with the correspondence. I couldn't have done it. I think you've got to have a lot of patience to do correspondence with your own kids. I mean, to be a mother and a teacher, and the kids just saying, "Well, I'm not doing it". If you're a

teacher, you can say, "Yes, you are", but if you're the mother you just don't seem to be able to do anything about it. I've seen plenty of people nearly fall apart trying to do correspondence. It must be really hard.

(Y1P1)

Another parent recalled her own mother's efforts to educate her siblings and herself via correspondence lessons:

*Well, my mother used to want to kill us, but I mean, we had to persevere; but we did do it. . . . But no, I have been on correspondence all my life. I haven't got a bright education, but I do know enough to get me by. Which unfortunately **for** my kids, that wouldn't be enough in this day and age. I'd like them to have a little bit more, (Y4P4)*

Her marginalising experiences of correspondence education prompted her to make alternative arrangements for educating her own children:

*. . . I have a nine and a seven year old. And they have done correspondence **for** a few years on the circuit with me. I am a single mum. I'm bred and born on the showgrounds. And as you can see, I've got another generation coming up in the world. It was hard. I persevered with working and that with them, but only could fit an hour or two in.*

(Y4P4)

Another parent recalled her own experiences studying via correspondence lessons:

My aunty was a correspondence teacher, my dad's sister. It was really hard. They put us on it when we were kids but we were hopeless. It was too hard. (Y2P1)

Another parent remembered her mother's efforts to provide correspondence lessons for her siblings and herself

*I just remember my mum had such a hard time. . . . And she'd try and do her best, but there were six children in our family. And she could notice that we were missing [out on education], so she took on correspondence **for** about twelve months, and she had **four** kids in **four** different grades, and two toddlers running around underneath her. And it's just horrendous. It's not a way – you know, people can say, “Well, you set aside time”. My mum was feeding **four** men that were out working. So meal times were solid times when she was working. And then she was also selling **for** us. We didn't have much money; she was trying to get everything as much as we could. So it wasn't easy at all. She was prepared to work the extra hours and do as much as she could, but still she felt her children were missing [out on education]. (Y4P5)*

She recalled also her own impatience with some of the content of the correspondence lessons that she had completed:

*When they send you correspondence, there's so much junk, like crafts and stuff. We're not lacking in that stuff because we're setting up and we've got vision and we've got scope in what we're doing in our work. So it's not really **of** value, if you know what I mean. It's the bulk **of** your school work [that is important]. (Y4P5)*

The reference to “*so much junk, like crafts and stuff*” reinforces my earlier point that the show people’s mobility positions them ‘outside’ the assumptions and understandings of educational providers, whose constructions of ‘legitimate’ knowledge are seemingly unable to encompass clients who routinely move from place to place and who, despite or because of that circumstance, have different but equally valid patterns of knowledge construction.

These recollections construct show parents – almost without exception mothers – as valiantly struggling to educate their children via correspondence lessons that they had to incorporate into a myriad of competing and stressful demands on their time and energies. Implicit in the recollections were the point that many mothers themselves lacked high levels of formal literacy, and the presumption that many show adults and children attached far less priority to formal schooling than to the exigencies of working ‘on the run’. Within the spaces of their itinerancy, then, correspondence lessons had an ‘alien feel’ about them and did not ‘fit’ into the rhythms and routines of life on the show circuits. This reinforces the proposition that education does not occur in the kind of vacuum – or in the type of discrete place – that curriculum documents often assume. This also demonstrates once again the fundamental point that, rather than being ‘natural’ and ‘universal’, existing forms of schooling are designed in ways that privilege some groups over others. In this case, knowledge is encoded, mediated and delivered in forms that work to disadvantage those whose itinerancy creates an absence of place and constructs their otherness – the show people. The ‘alien feel’ about this educational option is therefore an accurate index of the extent of their marginalisation.

5.5.4 Show people coming off the circuits and sending their children to local schools

Although it was theoretically an option for show parents to withdraw from the show circuits for the duration of their children's schooling and send the children to local schools while the parents found alternative employment, very few interviewees referred to this option. One show parent explained partly why this was so:

*It breaks your family up if you decide to stay in a house and send your children to school. . . [But] economics push you to that sometimes. If you've got three or **four** children you can't afford to send all of them to boarding school. And **i** you haven't got any facilities to do it at home, and if you were trying to work and do correspondence, it's really difficult. (Y4P5)*

Another parent concurred

*Well, I knew what choices I had, and I didn't want to have to settle down to send. . . [my son] to school, as in leave our business and our home and his father. I **knew** that wasn't on the books. (Y1P2)*

Partly her determination not to pursue this option derived from her mother's experiences of pursuing the option for the speaker's siblings and herself:

...once all of us were school age, mum had to leave [the showgrounds] and come home to send us all to school – which was very hard on mum and dad. They stuck it out together; they're still together. But it was really hard on them, and I'm so glad that we don't have to do that.
(Y1P2)

This educational option not only had economic and social drawbacks but also constituted a profound if indirect attack on the show people's itinerancy. The logic underlying the option was that it was not possible to work as a show person and at the same time receive an equitable education for one's children. The fact that a few speakers referred to their parents having considered pursuing the option reflected their willingness to 'try anything' that could potentially maximise their children's educational outcomes. More broadly, this option demonstrates with considerable starkness the marginalising impact of unproblematic assumptions about how knowledge should be constructed and disseminated to students. In particular, it reinforces the argument pursued in this section of the chapter that the show people's itinerancy constructs them as unable to conform to the narrow conceptions of how the institution of schooling functions and how children and parents must function in relation to that institution.

5.5.5 Sending show children to live with relatives and attend local schools

Another option previously available to show people in educating their children was for them to remain on the show circuits and to send their children to live with relatives and attend local schools. An older show person explained the situation that caused her to send her children to live with her sister-in-law:

Well, I had them [her children] on correspondence for a while, and then they went away. My husbands' fortunately got a sister who lives on. . . a property. And they went to school at her place before they were old enough to go to boarding school. (Y4P1)

She elaborated on the reasons for taking this action:

*. . . When. . . I first started out, it was very busy ~~for~~ us. We had about seven men who I had to cook ~~for~~. I had to drive a truck. I had to work on the trailer. And I had three children very close together, thirteen and seventeen months apart. And it **was** pretty hard. I thought that it was probably better to give them that early schooling by sending them away to. . . [her sister-in-law]. Because I really couldn't cope with the correspondence. (Y4P1)*

The speaker also reflected on the family disruption and emotional turmoil attendant on this decision, which were similar to the effects of sending children to boarding schools:

. . .you'd get yourself so worked up about it, but you sort of had to be cruel to be kind. That was my way of looking at it. And. . .if I had my time over again now, there's no way in the world I would have sent them away. I'd keep them with me, and then persevere some way. But because we were young – and we were just sort of establishing our business in this life, in this business, it was sort of hard for us. You think you're doing all the right things at the time, but now if I had my time over again I wouldn't send my kids away. I'd employ a teacher, or. . .[go] without something to have a teacher travelling with us or something like that. To teach the kids. But I mean, you learn by your mistakes. (Y4P1)

One of the mothers who described above how difficult she had found educating her children via correspondence lessons identified the option of sending her children to live with family members as a possible solution to the situation:

But then my mum and dad bought a property,. . .and my kids, they said to me, "Bring them down to me and I'll teach them there". So they've been there since one was six and the other was five, and they're doing all right, because it was too hard for me to work and look after my kids and give them a good education. (Y4P4)

Another parent explained the limitations of this option: *" . . .if you've got family, you send them [children] to family, but even there you're still to me missing out on so much of their life" (Y4P2).*

Like the other options previously available to show people in educating their children, the option of sending their children to live with relatives and attend local schools had some benefits but more drawbacks. In particular, once again the implicit choice was between giving children a 'good education' by sending them away and keeping them on the show circuits but giving them an 'inferior education'.

Family separations of this kind are outside the comprehension of an education system predicated on students of fixed residence living and attending school in a single location. This is a stark reminder of the negative consequences for groups who lack a place of their own (in the de Certeauian sense), and who are construed as 'exotic' and 'foreign'. The result is systemic marginalisation, through these kinds of restrictions on their educational options. This is once again a signal of the power that lies behind and below forms of knowledge – power that is invisible because it is constructed as 'natural' and 'neutral', but whose effects are felt in such ways as through family separations of this kind.

5.5.6 Not sending show children to school at all

The final option previously available in the education of show children was for their parents not to send them to school at all. I encountered only one direct reference to this option, when one parent recalled:

No correspondence, no follow on with lessons, and it was go to this school because we had to. There was a couple of years there where we had terrible trouble with truant agents and stuff like that, which I

suppose there was [a] needfor. There were children who weren't going at all. (Y4P5)

On the one hand, the reference to having “*had terrible trouble with truant agents*” evoked an image of further surveillance, with the show people once again being subject to the gaze of ‘the centre’ on account of their itinerancy, ostensibly in the name of ensuring that their children received equitable educational access. On the other hand, it is likely that these agents of the state lacked the requisite understandings of precisely why some show children and their parents would elect not to attend an institution that they found alien and disempowering. This option, therefore, encapsulates the ‘second best’ quality of the options previously discussed and represents what for many show people would have seemed the logical culmination of those options: if formal schooling refuses to accord us a legitimate place and constructs us **as** other, why should we be complicit in that process and thereby deprive our children of the educational opportunities to which they are entitled?

Finally in this account of the show people’s previous educational experiences, an important point to emphasise is that a number of show people remembered individual teachers who did what they could to maximise the show children’s educational experiences across the range of options selected by parents. For example, **an** older show person stated:

*Now and again you’d get a dedicated teacher, who’d take them [show children] in and try and do something **for** them. But then they’d only be there **for** two or three days, and [then] off again. (Y4P3)*

Another show person acknowledged:

And I will say sometimes you went [to school] and the teacher was enthusiastic to try if you were willing to learn; the teacher was enthusiastic to try and give you something. But they realised it was. . .[pointless]; it was only a week and how much could they do? But you did have some. (Y4P5)

She recalled a particular teacher who had taken a special interest in her education:

*We did the Queensland run around Brisbane. And so mum found a school where she knew they were really interested in us. So she used to drive us from every show and we went to the same [school]. . . .It was a Catholic school. And there was a Sister Maria, and she really took notice of me. And she spoke to my mother, and she used to keep me **for** an hour after school for special remedial [lessons]. And also I used to go in playtimes to the principal's office for special remedial [lessons]. So because they made that effort my mum would drive us back, whether we were at Sandgate, whether we were at all the shows all around Brisbane, to that school. And we went solidly **for** three months, every year **for** three or **four** years. And I think that was a big thing **for** me, because I was older and they took more time with me. (Y4P5)*

In other words, show people consistently articulated their critique of their past educational experiences at the level of systemic failure rather than personal prejudice. The show people's responses to this perceived systemic

failure derived from earlier generations' educational experiences. According to a member of the Showmen's Guild:

And there was no education at the time. It was purely correspondence, but of course the parents before them were very poorly educated as well. . . . And of course what happened then was when that generation started to have their children, then they realised suddenly that they didn't have an education, and they realised suddenly that they were illiterate and how hard it was for them to survive in the world that was new back in the early '70s, . . . '80s period. They realised. . . it's going to be much harder in the '90s and the next century to survive without an education, let alone how hard it is now for us. . . . So they got their heads together obviously, and of course it's all history now, and that is the showmen's education program. And it basically developed from that sense of need from the parents' perspective that they said, "We don't want our kids to grow up without an education, and to have every opportunity possible – opportunities that weren't given to us during that '50s, '60s, '70s period". And of course, the Showmen's Guild is a perfect vehicle to establish that program through the government. (Y4A1)

The significance of this statement is its demonstration that the show people's 'tactics of consumption', which are explored at length in the next chapter, have been a direct response to, and engagement with, their experiences of marginalisation. The valiant efforts of individual teachers notwithstanding, the six educational options previously available to the show people worked in alliance with their absence of place and their constructed otherness to locate them outside 'the fold' of educational provision and its associated

unproblematic assumptions about forms of knowledge. The result is that the show people lack “*the power to provide oneself with one's own place*”, that same power that “*produces itself in and through*” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36) the same knowledge that operates to marginalise and exclude the show people from the ambit of schooling provision.

5.6 Review of the chapter

This chapter has sought to answer the first research question guiding this study: “*How do the show people experience marginalisation?*”. The question was predicated on the assumption that the show people's ‘tactics of consumption’ in relation to their educational experiences, which are the focus of this thesis, can be understood only against the backdrop of their persistent and pervasive marginalisation arising from their itinerancy. A further assumption was that, while some manifestations of that marginalisation are overt and visible, many are not, thereby necessitating the application of the study's conceptual framework to the research data in order to make clear and transparent what for many show people are unconscious – although no less deleterious for that – experiences of being ‘on the margins’ of the settled community.

The conceptual lens deployed to identify and critique the show people's marginalising experiences was de Certeau's (1984) notion of ‘strategies of marginalisation’, considered in combination with the concept of ‘place’. As he pointed out:

In sum, strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical pieces (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed. (p. 36)

From this perspective, strategies, like places emanating from and supporting ‘the centre’, can be seen to place show people immediately at a fundamental disadvantage: their itinerancy renders them outside “a proper” and therefore without power. It is this lack of power as understood by ‘the centre’ that both leads to, and is reflected in, their marginalised status.

More specifically, the chapter examined the following three attributes of strategies of marginalisation identified by de Certeau (1984) in relation to the show people:

- The show people’s absence of place locates them outside a fixed location, whose strategic importance lies in its association with determining who has power and who has not.
- The show people’s itinerancy and absence of place render them liable to perception as ‘exotic’ and ‘foreign’, which leads to the construction of their otherness in relation to the settled community.
- The show people’s absence of place and construction as ‘other’, derived from their itinerancy, place them in opposition to forms of unproblematic knowledge about the ‘proper’ location and provision of schooling, so that the six educational options previously available to them forced them to choose between maintaining their lifestyle and maximising their children’s educational opportunities.

In combination, the show people's absence of place, the construction of their otherness and their having to conform to forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge endorsed by late capitalist schooling are all dimensions and indexes of their marginalisation. The significance of that marginalisation is profound and cannot be overstated: it is at the same time the impetus for their 'tactics of consumption' and their moves towards transformation, and the set of 'levels' or 'marks' against which they judge the extent of their progress at resistance and transformation. The show people's marginalised status is therefore integral to their 'learning on the run'.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: THE SHOW PEOPLE'S PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE

*"I've had things happen with different principals and their attitudes have been not very good. But I always **make** the point **of** setting [them] straight, because unless they learn and they know what we're about, nothing is going to improve. So you tend to try and. . .[move] in the right direction."*

Y1P2

"And there's no boundaries in terms of our education, both in terms of geographical boundaries and in terms of what we can do and can't do."

Y4A1

6.1 Overview of the chapter

The previous chapter answered the first research question ‘outlined in the introduction to this thesis. Following a de Certollian analysis, the show people’s experiences of marginalisation, arising from their itinerancy, were classified as being focussed on their absence of place, constructions of their otherness and forms of unproblematic knowledge that effectively excluded them from equitable access to conventional schooling.

If that analysis captured the full range of the show people’s situation, they would emerge as passive victims, forever destined to respond to circumstances as they arose and incapable of influencing or even shaping the conditions in which they experience education. Yet, as has been contended elsewhere (Danaher, 2000a), acknowledgment of the show people’s marginalisation is the beginning, not the end, of the story. The argument underpinning this study is that the show people’s successful lobbying for the Brisbane School of Distance Education program and subsequently for a separate school for their children constitutes a counternarrative to the traditional narratives about Traveller education within which show people are constructed as ‘different’ and ‘deviant’. This counternarrative concentrates on the recognition and valuing of multiple forms of residence and hence of educational provision.

Further to my conscious desire to eschew idealising show people and their success as educational innovators (for example, by not suggesting that such a process was ‘automatic’ or ‘easy’), I must emphasise at this point that the move from marginalisation to transformation implicit in the unfolding of this counternarrative is by no means straightforward or unproblematic. On the

contrary, several elements combined to make such a move possible. In particular, resistance – conceived as a positive and agential force, or what McVeigh (1997) termed “*the continued possibility of alternatives*” (p. 22) – is a necessary but by no means sufficient precondition if marginalisation is to give way to transformation. Exploration of that resistance and its complex nature is the focus of this chapter.

Specifically, the purpose of the chapter is to address the second research question explicated in the introduction: “**How** do the **show** people resist their marginalised status?”. The chapter follows the same structure as, and articulates with and expands on the points elaborated in, the previous chapter. Thus the chapter consists of the following four sections:

- a review of de Certeau’s (1984) concept of ‘tactics of resistance’, which provides the chapter’s conceptual framework
- an account of the show people’s resistance of their absence of place, illustrated by their multiple understandings of ‘home’
- an analysis of the show people’s resistance of the constructions of their otherness, demonstrated by their uses of the terms ‘showies’, ‘local’s and ‘mugs’
- an examination of the show people’s resistance of forms of unproblematic knowledge that enormously restricted their previous educational options, exemplified by their lobbying for and refinements of the Brisbane School of Distance Education program.

6.2 Tactics of resistance

In the previous chapter, I synthesised the most salient features of de Certeau's (1984) conceptualisation of strategies of marginalisation as the organising framework for understanding the show people's routine experiences of marginalisation. Here I provide a complementary overview of de Certeau's conceptualisation of tactics of resistance as a means of interrogating the show people's practices in resisting that marginalisation. As with the discussion in Chapter Five, this account articulates with the more sustained theoretical analysis of de Certeau's ideas contained in Chapter Three.

I stated in Chapter Five that de Certeau (1984) conceptualised strategies of marginalisation in terms of three elements: that they proceed from "*a subject of will and power*"; that they proceed from "*a place than can be circumscribed as proper (propre)*"; and that they engage in "*generating relations with an exterior distance from*" their source (p. xix). This delineation of marginalising strategies as being intimately connected with power, 'place' and 'otherness' found its counterpoint in de Certeau's corresponding elaboration of what he envisaged as tactics of resistance:

I call a "tactic," on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is a victory of space over time.

On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized “on the wing.” Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities.” The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. . . (p. xix)

Thus tactics of resistance are deployed by “*The weak*”, in contrast to the exercise of marginalising strategies by the powerful. Similarly, this lack of power helps to explain why a tactic “*has at its disposal no base*” and why “*it does not have a place*”. That is, tactics are restricted to unstable ‘space’, with occasional and temporary forays into the ‘place’ of the powerful. Furthermore, tactics are resorted to by those who are constructed as ‘other’ by the forces of power with marginalising strategies at their disposal. All three of these characteristics of tactics of resistance therefore position them as diametrically opposed to strategies of marginalisation: instead of having power, ‘place’ and ‘otherness’, they lack power, they have only fleeting access to ‘place’ and they are constructed as ‘other’ through their marginalising experiences.

As with his elaboration in Chapter Three of *The practice of everyday life* (1984) of his earlier synthesised overview of strategies, so de Certeau extended in the same chapter his initially compressed account of tactics:

. . . a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. . . . It operates in isolated

actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of “opportunities” and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. (pp. 36-37)

I wish to emphasise two elements of this elaborated conceptualisation of tactics. Firstly, the lack of “*the condition necessary for autonomy*” means that “*The space of a tactic is the space of the other*”. That is, ‘tactic’ and ‘space’ are the devalued and marginalised binary pairs of the more powerful and commanding ‘strategy’ and ‘place’. The previous chapter demonstrated the direct and varied consequences of the show people of their absence of place – including the constructions of their otherness and the pervasiveness of forms of knowledge that routinely exclude them. So power and its absence are as much in the centre of the conceptualisation of tactics and ‘space’ as they are evident in ‘the centre’s’ deployment of marginalising strategies as outlined in Chapter Five.

Secondly, the reference to a tactic’s having “*a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment*” recalls two crucial features of the show people’s literal mobility. The first is that that mobility is a visible sign of the show people’s assumed absence of place – that they have no ‘home’ of their

own, and so their itinerancy is at once a cause and a consequence of their absence of de Certeauian place. The second is that that same mobility gives show people opportunities to resist the marginalising strategies that they encounter in each new place, by seizing “*on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment*”. This suggests that the show people are attentive to such “*possibilities*” and work “*vigilantly*” to make the most of them.

I indicated in Chapter Five that de Certeau followed his detailed conceptualisation of strategies of marginalisation with a delineation of three key attributes of such strategies: that they deny a place to those whom they conceive as enemies; that they construct those enemies as ‘other’; and that they perpetuate their power through the establishment of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about the world. Correspondingly, de Certeau followed his detailed conceptualisation of tactics of resistance with three further comments (*albeit* in a slightly different sequence) that provide another counterpoint to his remarks about strategies. Firstly, he noted:

Lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment, a tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power. (p. 38)

Here is the obverse and the consequence of a strategy’s working to deny a place to the less powerful: the absence of place is directly correlated with “*the absence of power*”. This lack is precisely what animates and motivates a tactic.

Secondly, de Certeau argued:

In short, a tactic is an art ~~of~~ the weak. . . .[T]rickery is possible ~~for~~ the weak, and often it is his [sic] only possibility, as a "last resort": "The weaker the forces at the disposition ~~of~~ the strategist, the more the strategist will be able to use deception." I translate: the more the strategy is transformed into tactics. (p. 37)

This refers to the tactic's response to the construction of the less powerful as 'other'. It is important to make it clear here that I interpret "*an art of the weak*" in this context as referring more to a relative than an absolute lack of power and agency. That is, I envisage tactics as potentially contributing to the 'writing' and 'speaking' of counternarratives in ways that actively resist, and possibly transform, constructions of groups like the show people as 'other'.

Thirdly, de Certeau contended that

. . . a tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer. Cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework ~~of~~ a system, consumers' ways ~~of~~ operating are the practical equivalents of wit. (pp. 37-38)

I regard this as an effective counterpoint to the strategy's complicity in concealing the existence of power behind forms of apparently unproblematic knowledge about the world. The reference to "*a flash shedding a different light on the language ~~of~~ a place*" conjures up a faint but persistent illumination of something previously taken for granted that reveals it in its 'true colours' – that is, as the realm of 'the centre', supposedly invisible and

innocent, but actually the source of the marginalising strategies that work to privilege some groups over others. In this way, little by little, alternative forms of knowledge can be inserted into the ‘place’ of ‘the centre’.

Again as he did in the case of strategies and ‘place’, de Certeau provided a useful summary of his conceptions of tactics and ‘space’:

Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. . . [T]actics are a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power. (pp. 38-39)

From this perspective, if show people are to resist the marginalising strategies that confront them on account of their itinerancy, they need to take full advantage of time, by maximising “the opportunities it presents”. That is, they need to use the limited time that they have in each new space through which they pass on their travels and their negotiations to seek to resist traditional narratives, or ways of portraying and understanding show people, and to replace those narratives with counternarratives based on more positive, agential and transformative constructions of themselves. Only in this way will they have any possibility of contesting and transforming “the foundations of power” that represent them as ‘different’ and ‘deviant’.

6.3 Resisting absence of place: “*Where is home to you?*”

Following de Certeau (1984), I argued in Chapter Five that a major element of the show people’s experiences of marginalisation is their alleged absence of place. Their itinerant lifestyle is held to position them ‘outside’ the purview and the concern of ‘the centre’, which, it is possible to argue, finds their constant movement through space a threat to its dominance and which seeks to neutralise that threat by speaking and writing them ‘off the page’ of official discourse. So absence of official place for the show people functions to prevent their entry into terrain that is crucial to ‘the centre’s’ power and vital to “*the foundation of an autonomous place*” that is fundamental to the ‘proper’s’ “triumph of place over time” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36).

Yet, as shall become clear, the show people do not accept meekly or unquestioningly the official status of their absence of place. On the contrary, they use all means at their disposal to construct ‘a home away from home’ when they are travelling, whereby they strive for similar comforts and routines as those enjoyed by permanent residents. This, of course, is an obvious point: to evince surprise at this situation would be to perpetuate the same stereotypes already critiqued. Less obvious, however, is the fact that they are very well aware of the link between resiliently stereotypical assumptions that they have no home other than their caravans and the perpetuation of their marginalised status. Accordingly they exploit opportunities such as this research project to seek to dispel those assumptions by talking openly about the reality of their residential arrangements. Even more fundamentally, they exhibit a complex and variable set of understandings and experiences of home whose effect is to

give them, on their own terms, a sustaining sense of place. In combination, these tactics effectively resist the absence of place that is ascribed to show people and that is deeply complicit in their marginalisation.

The political significance of this resistance of absence of place cannot be overemphasised. If the show people are to counter traditional and stereotypical images of their otherness, and if they are to achieve a specialised form of educational provision that responds to their difference, they must first be accepted by decision makers and shapers of attitudes that they have a legitimate existence and a legal and moral right to expect equity of access to resources and services. This acceptance in turn depends crucially on their capacity to convince others of their rightful ‘speaking position’ – as having the knowledge and understanding required to articulate their needs and aspirations. Unless they can replace the marginalising strategy that denies them a ‘place’ (and hence a respected ‘speaking position’), they will not be able to convince anyone of anything, because they will not be heard.

In this context, it is helpful to recall de Certeau’s (1984, p. 18) assertion:

Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other’s game. . . , that is, the space instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. People have to make do with what they have.

The point to emphasise here is that challenging dominant discourses about what is ‘home’, and all the associated benefits and resources, is a political tactic by show people that helps them “to get along in a network of already

established forces and representations". This tactic of "*mak[ing] do with what they have*" reflects strength rather than weakness, because it represents an act of political ability and agency by the show people to legitimatise their multiple experiences and understandings of 'home' as a means of resisting their absence of place.

Within the parameters of this argument, then, many show people readily referred to the show people's caravans as their 'homes'. A twelve year old girl explained how she helped her parents to sell food bags from a canteen at the show: "*Sometimes I do about an hour a day when I come home from school, working in there*" (Y2C4). A seven year old boy commented, "*I've got a big stack of books that I like at home*" (Y1C7). One boy explained about his seven year old friend, a fellow show child: "*He has to do his chores at home*" (Y1C2). A mother stated, "*My children come home from school; they're allowed to go and play*", and she was pleased that "*the kids come home bouncing and happy. . .*" (Y1P2). She described how she supervised her son's homework in the family caravan: "*As you would as a parent that was in any school situation, you see what comes home and you ask where he's up to*" (Y1P2).

For the show people, their references to their caravans as 'home' was closely connected with their common cultural identity, and hence with resisting their absence of place. The caravan is for show people a functional necessity: it is their means of efficient, reliable movement from one town to the next; it must accommodate themselves and their possessions in a very restricted space; and it is one of the very few 'private places' in a lifestyle in which privacy of thought, word and action is at a premium. The caravan is also a

tangible link with the show people of previous generations, who depended in the same sorts of respects on conveyances similar in function to, but very different in form from, those used by the contemporary ‘showies’.

At a deeper level, the initial identification of ‘home’ as caravan in most interviews functions simultaneously in several different ways. Firstly, it is an obvious and tangible marker of difference between show people and non-show people, thereby illustrating the connection between absence of place and marginalisation (even though the distinction between ‘showies’ and ‘non-showies’ is fluid, as the next section of this chapter demonstrates, and even though many Australian who have no connection with show life live in caravans).

Secondly, the show people’s identification of their caravans as ‘home’ reveals a great deal about their sense of their own identity. Although occasionally irate about the work involved in justifying this to others, they are comfortable with publicly identifying a moving residence as their ‘home’, and one show person was confident enough to conduct a videotaped interview in a caravan (Y4P6) – admittedly her sister’s rather than her own, on the grounds that her sister’s caravan had recently been extensively remodelled and would therefore convey a more positive image of show people’s living conditions. This is significant because it demonstrates how the show people tell other, alternative stories about itinerancy and home and thus wear down the power of traditional narratives about those concepts.

Thirdly, show people vary in the extent to which they conceive of their caravans as their homes on a permanent basis. Apart from being likely to differ in the longevity of their commitment to spending their working lives on

the show circuits, show people understand 'home' in several ways apart from being their caravans. This suggests less a degree of impermanence in the show people's lives than their capacity to engage as creatively with changes to physical residence as with changes to less tangible aspects of their lives.

The point that I am emphasising here is that show people's references to their caravans as 'home', and their use, appropriation and re-definition of that term, reflect the habituated and situated nature of their experiences of living on the show circuits. That is, on a day to day basis such references are literally factually correct: 'showies' are 'at home' when they travel in their caravans. Their differing and complex responses to my explicit question "*Where is home to you?*", however, demonstrate their awareness that the 'home:caravan' homology is the one uppermost in local people's stereotyped views of 'showies', and furthermore that that homology forms the basis of their marginalised status. This awareness is vital to the show people's resistance of their absence of place through their deployment of multiple meanings of 'home'.

Show children made varying responses to the question "*Where is home to you?*". An eleven year old boy answered, "*Probably where I'm like living now. Dayboro*" (Y2C1). Many of the nuances in discussions of 'home' were encapsulated in the following exchange with a ten year old boy:

[But if I said to you, "Where is home to you?", what would you say?]

Brisbane.

[Brisbane. You've got a house in Brisbane?]

Oh, it's not really mine, it's my aunty's, but we usually live there.
(Y1C1)

A ten year old girl reported a similar residential situation:

. . .we have a house in Brisbane, and my nana, sometimes, because she's getting too old now, so she just stays at home, and she tries to help me in school work, so I stay home with her most of the time. (Y1C8)

Another ten year old girl referred to home as

Brisbane. . .because we [stay there] about two or three times a year. It's really our nana's, but, you know. We have a place in Sydney, but I haven't been there since I was about two. (Y1C4)

One other ten year old girl, who claimed not to remember where she was born, identified home as being “*in Queensland*” (Y2C3).

Adults connected with the show circuits also responded in various ways to the question “*Where is home for you?*”. One parent replied, “*Here. Here this week. We just travel all year round*” (Y1P1). Another parent said, “*Yes. Sort of. Off and on*” (Y2P4) in answer to the question, “*So is Melbourne home to you?*”.

The potential contradiction implicit in the conflation of show people's understandings of ‘home’ as a caravan and a house can be explained partly by the interpolation of the explicit question “*Where is home to you?*” posed by an interviewer who presumably lived in one place. Under these circumstances, the most likely response to the question was probably going to refer to a specific residence in a particular town. Nevertheless, this conflation of

understandings is significant in this discussion of the show people's resistance of their absence of place. Far from being perpetually 'itinerant' or 'nomadic', these people are fully acquainted with the benefits and drawbacks of both sets of living conditions – of travelling from one town to another once or twice a week, and also of living in one place for a defined period. The latter experience is an important element of the show people's identity. This circumstance points also to an adaptability and a versatility that indicates show people's ongoing engagement with change in their everyday lives and that belies the stereotyped image of a show person seeking refuge from 'the real world' in the glamorous allure of an itinerant lifestyle. Furthermore, this circumstance is a direct riposte to 'the centre's' ascription of absence of place to the show people: measured in 'the centre's' terms, the show people are in fact regularly present in the place officially denied to them.

All of this emphasises the pervasiveness of the stereotyped association between 'home' and a single site of permanent residence. In talking about 'home', show people are aware that for many Australians permanent residence is a mark of stability, reliability and trustworthiness. This awareness has a major influence on their resistance of their absence of place, resulting in their tendency to talk to non-show people (including educational researchers) about 'home' in terms of where their family homes are located. This suggests that it is difficult – but not impossible – for show people to insert alternative forms of residence into the dominant discourse on 'home', forms that undermine the dominant assumption of fixed settlement. It indicates also the enormous impact of that dominant discourse in separating show people from other Australians and in turning their perceived lack of a 'proper home' into the basis of their marginalisation.

Significantly, one of the show parents remarked, in the context of describing previous career changes by other family members and herself, “But as they say, *you* always come home” (Y4P4). This comment encapsulates many of the multiple meanings identified in this section of the chapter as being ascribed to the term ‘home’. Those multiple meanings in turn are vital elements of the show people’s complex and subtle sense of place, which this section of the chapter has demonstrated as being a direct and powerful counterpoint to their ascribed absence of place.

This tactic resonates with de Certeau’s (1986, p. 227; emphasis in original) insight that “. . .the political relevance *of* the geo-graphical distinctions between separate places is echoed. . .in the distribution *of* places *of* power. . .”. As I argued at the beginning of the section, constantly reasserting their legitimate and appropriate experiences and understandings of ‘home’ is far from being mere pedantry on the show people’s part. On the contrary, they are playing for extremely high stakes: nothing less than official and public recognition of their right to live the lifestyle of their choosing, and their concomitant right of access to specialised educational provision. From this perspective, their alternative conceptions of ‘home’ function to sustain them in their resistance of marginalisation and to underpin their counternarrative to official discourses that construct them as ‘other’ on the basis of their alleged absence of place.

6.4 Resisting constructions of otherness: 'Showies', 'locals' and 'mugs'

In the previous section of this chapter, I indicated how the show people use their understandings of 'home' to resist, strongly and repetitively, consequences arising from dominant perceptions that they lack not just a static residence but also a political 'place'. Now I turn to examine how they resist, equally strongly and repetitively, their marginalised status in the eyes of 'mainstream society' on account of their perceived 'difference', 'lack' and 'deviance'. In Chapter Five, following de Certeau (1984), I explained how defining the show people as foreign objects led directly and inexorably to the constructions of their otherness. As I cited in that chapter, de Certeau used a dramatic metaphor to convey the power and force of such a construction:

It [the "proper"] is also a mastery of places through sight. The division of space makes possible a panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and "include" them within its scope of vision. To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space. (p. 36)

In this section, I demonstrate that the show people deploy their own uses of identity associated with the terms 'showies', 'locals' and 'mugs' to resist their constructed otherness. I wish to emphasise at the outset that those alternative uses of names are **far** from being mere quibbles over nomenclature: they go to the heart of how the show people see themselves 'on their own terms' as well as in relation to others. Their naming practices act in concert

with their multiple experiences and understandings of home, described above, to contest and subvert the debilitating marginalisation to which they have traditionally been subject. Finally, as I explore in the next section of this chapter, the show people's subversive naming practices in turn enable them to resist the forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about appropriate schooling for itinerant people outlined at the end of the previous chapter.

What I am arguing, therefore, is that the show people's efforts to recapture and remake in their own image the term 'showies', and use it in combination with the terms 'locals' and 'mugs', are an act of tactical and political resistance. That resistance is directed squarely at the "panoptic practice *proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured*" identified by de Certeau (1984, p. 36), and is intended to nullify 'the centre's' power to "*control and 'include' them within its scope of vision*" (p. 36). Elsewhere de Certeau recognised language's 'double-edged' capacity to function as an ally of both/either marginalisation and/or resistance when he noted that "*. . . language is indeed the privileged terrain on which to discern the formal rules proper to such practices [of resistant or tactical consumption]*" (p. 32).

I argue that the show people carry out this resistance by putting forward their own alternative and positive constructions of who they are, both on their own terms and in relation to other Australians. This is based on the assumption that if social agents, which is how I understand the show people to be, seek to resist their marginalised status it is not sufficient for them to say, 'I am not like your view of what I am'. On the contrary, they need to go much further, to be proactive rather than merely reactive, and to say, loudly, clearly

and often, 'This and this and this are what I am – not just *that*'. Resistance understood in this way is crucial to understanding how the show people move from marginalisation, through resistance, towards transformation of their situation.

From the perspective of the preceding conceptual framework, then, the show people resist the use of the term 'showies' by non-show people to mark the show people as 'different', 'lacking' and 'deviant', thereby contributing to the construction of their otherness. That construction is centred on the fact that the term 'showies' is used by non-show people in ways that homogenise the show people. The consequences of this homogenisation include the elision of the diversity of life on the show circuits and its reduction to a single label, and the essentialisation of the show people's 'difference' and 'marginality', by assuming something to the effect of 'once a showie, always a showie'. In combination, this homogenisation and essentialisation work to represent the show people as always and irredeemably 'other' to 'normal', permanently resident citizens.

Evidence of the marginalising stereotypes ascribed to show people, and hence of their constructed otherness, was presented in Chapter Two. As a reminder of those stereotypes, in the view of Broome with Jackomos (1998), Australian "*showpeople were viewed by the rest of society with both fear and wonder, and as outcasts*" (p. viii). Examples were provided by two of Bob Morgan's interlocutors in *The showies* (Morgan, 1995). According to Tommy Castles:

...in the old days when the showies came to town, the townspeople used to lock up their daughters and chooks [chickens] – in that order – because these terrible interlopers were all considered gypsies, and occasionally there was a ‘wildCard’ in the pack. (p. 13)

Similarly, Frank Foster recalled:

You’ve got to remember that we show people get a load of bad publicity. In days gone by when the show came into town people used to say, “Pull your washing in and lock your daughters up”. (Cited in Morgan, 1995, p. 128)

These acknowledgments of marginalising stereotypes provided the launchpad for the show people’s resistance of the constructions of their otherness.

The show people resist those constructions of otherness in three principal ways, all of which reflect their ability to make of the label ‘showies’ “*something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind*” and an associated commitment to using it “*with respect to ends and references foreign to the system*” in which they are located (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiii). Firstly, the show people assign to the label ‘showies’ different, and far more positively valenced, connotations than those understood by non-show people. In doing so, they are effectively saying, ‘This is the label by which others know us, but we shall use this label in ways that suit us and strengthen rather than weaken us’. Secondly, the show people disrupt the homogenised and essentialist cast of ‘showies’ as used by non-show people. They do this by using the terms ‘showies’ and ‘locals’ in ways that make the distinction between those terms dynamic and fluid rather than a rigid and marginalising

dichotomy. Thirdly, the show people sometimes deploy the term 'mug' as a kind of reverse terminology, whereby 'mugs' are representatives of 'the centre' that thinks that it has safely marginalised and weakened the 'showies', who are in fact stronger and more resilient than they appear and are indeed more competent and successful than those representatives when they venture onto the show people's territory. All of this reinforces the view that the terms 'showies', 'locals' and 'mugs', as deployed by the show people, are the sites of overt and continuing resistance of their constructed otherness.

6.4.1 Giving 'showies' a positive valence

Several show people made comments that reflected the first means of resisting their otherness identified above – that is, their attribution of special and positive features to 'showies'. One set of such comments was concerned with identifying certain characteristics or qualities that the speaker asserted as being present among show people and implied as being absent from local people. One man praised the adaptability of show people.

As Tex Morton once said, "Showme a showman's son or daughter and there's no fools amongst them". He sang a song about them. They were. . .[such] good children, they adapted to other things. (Y4P3)

One woman explained how this adaptability operated in the practical, everyday conditions of show life.

I mean, it might sound fun, travelling and all that, but there's a lot of hard work involved and it's very hard. . .to teach children and travel and work and that. (Y4P1)

The speaker asserted that, because “*they see so much with the travelling*”, show children’s “*outlook on life is really great*” (Y4P1). Another woman referred to show children’s special maturity, which by implication derived from their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.

. . .I think they're pretty well very smart kids to start with. They're very grown up. . . .[My daughter is] only seven, but you can sit down and have a conversation with her like she's an adult. They know what's going on outside. (Y4P2)

I should point out here that this study was not intended to verify these perceptions articulated by show people. My concern is with their significance as manifestations of the show people’s representations of themselves and non-show people, not with the veracity of the show people’s claims. From that perspective, these statements are powerful demonstrations of a belief that show people are ‘different’ and ‘special’, less with an exclusionary purpose than as an expression of identification with and pride in a particular cultural heritage. Furthermore, if that heritage is perceived as ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and ‘desirable’, show people are more likely to demand access to what others construct as ‘normal’ resources, including educational provision – in other words, to resist their absence of place and their constructed otherness. At the same time, I need to emphasise that ‘difference’ is not automatically associated with ‘deviance’ or ‘lack’ – that the show people take active agential pride in their multiple signifiers of identity, rather than merely and passively using those

signifiers as 'protective shields' against the hostile strategies of marginalisation.

The belief that show people have special attributes deriving from the exigencies of their distinctive lifestyle prompted a couple of assertions of identity demarcation. In discussing the difficulties faced by newcomers to the show circuits, one woman stated explicitly, *"But it is better, I suppose, if you can marry within your own boundaries"* (Y4P1). Another woman, whose nine and seven year old children were currently living with her parents while she travelled on the show circuits, asserted: *"If we get a good school or a good education department that will teach our kids in our own environment, I'll bring them back then for sure"* (Y4P4). Both these statements reflected a direct association between show life and being in one's *"own boundaries"* or one's *"own environment"*. The corollary of this association is the necessity of 'the other' as a way of defining what falls within and what lies outside those boundaries and that environment. This is the function of the show people's representations of 'locals', which as I discuss below accordingly and inevitably has a less positive valance than 'showies' for many show people.

This theme of resisting constructed otherness by means of adding a positive charge to the term 'showies' certainly underpinned several statements by the show person whom, for reasons outlined in the previous chapter, I interviewed twice. For example, during the videotaped interview she emphasised the advantages of the show people's lifestyle.

I must be biased, because I think we have the best lifestyle. We have everything. We have Australia's most beautiful places that we see every year. We have travelling, life, colour, movement, all in our world. We do

things, we move, we have activities, we have a little taste of everything. We go to places where they do bungee jumping. We all try. . . whatever's the tourist spot in town, we go and have a look. We get to look at all this beautiful scenery, the countryside. We get to do all that, plus we can earn a living and do it. We don't have the stressful [need to] get up at nine o'clock, but we'll work hard. But we have so much scope in what we can do. . . [W]hat we experience every day is not regular, and it's not routine. So therefore it's exciting to get up each day and not know what may be at the end of the day. . . . But it's so good. You have so many advantages that people can't even conceive. (Y4P5)

This is a powerful and proud articulation of the pleasures and benefits of occupational travelling. It is noteworthy that the speaker argued strongly that show life is full of variety, experience and excitement. Moreover, she represents the show people's lifestyle as being “better” than that of “most people”, with “so many advantages that people can't even conceive”. This representation suggests that this show person had a clear notion of her own identity and that of her fellow ‘showies’, and that that identity gave her a secure basis for resisting ‘the centre’s’ efforts to construct her peers and herself as ‘other’.

Secondly, the speaker identified certain special characteristics that she ascribed to ‘showies’, and that by implication were the prerequisite of their enjoying the special advantages that she had already outlined.

*We've got the drive, we're not scared to work. See, the thing is with our growing up is our form of doing things is that if it's broken, you **fix** it. You don't have to ask someone, you have to do it today. We're here for two days, we earn our money now, we do our jobs now. (Y4P5)*

This statement functions to position the show people as a young, energetic, dynamic group of people, in contrast to the inbuilt conservatism of some business and government bureaucracies. According to this admittedly simplistic representation, the 'showies' are utilitarian and practical in their approach to life: "*if it's broken, you fix it*". They are also task oriented and well organised, largely owing to the regularity with which they move from town to town. This regularity means that they must complete tasks here and now: "*It's always urgent*". Again, the assumption is that these are special characteristics of show people, and that they need to be recognised and celebrated, in place of others' less positive constructions of 'showies' as 'other'.

Thirdly, the speaker's identification of distinctive qualities of 'showies' led her to stake a claim for those qualities underpinning a special identity.

. . . we need to have our own identity, we need to be separate, and we need to be able to have flexibility within ourselves to do things that we need. We can't have to wait for bureaucracy or if it doesn't please one person, they say, "No", and all of a sudden we have to put our hands down. We're not those sort of people. We're the sort of people who get things done and do things. And if we have that independence and freedom, we'll do a lot. (Y4P5)

For the speaker, the basis of the show people's "own identity", and of their "need to be separate", is their "flexibility", "independence" and "freedom". These qualities – by implication specific but not necessarily exclusive to 'showies' – make them "the sort of people" that they are: hard working achievers who do not have time to waste on "bureaucracy" and the obstructions of people who do not understand show life and who certainly could not survive on the show circuits. On the other hand, if decision makers have the foresight to give show people what they seek, the 'showies' will be very successful at whatever they set out to achieve: "we'll do a lot".

This is the crucial point about this particular approach to resisting otherness: the show people have something positive to replace the 'deficit' and negative stereotypes ascribed to them by others. This point articulates with one of de Certeau's (1984, p. 30) examples of tactics of consumption in operation:

*Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France) insinuates into the system imposed on him [sic passim] by the construction of a low-income housing development or of the French language the ways of "dwelling" (in a house or a language) peculiar to his native Kabylia. He superimposes them and, by that combination, creates **for** himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law **for** him, he establishes within it a degree **of** plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.*

I argue that the show people's attaching a positive valence to the term 'showies' is a striking example of how they have created "*for [themselves] a space in which [they] can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language*", by loading the term with a far greater range of semantic associations than that envisaged by 'the centre'. This avowedly political tactic resonates with other minority groups' appropriations of derogatory terms such as 'black', 'gay' and 'queer' to disrupt the marginalising strategies connected with their original use. The greater range of meanings assigned by the show people to 'showies' is an example of their establishment of "*a degree of plurality and creativity*", because it is based on a flexibility and multiplicity of linguistic usage that resist efforts to homogenise and essentialise 'showies'. Furthermore, by 'turning the tables' on 'the centre's' efforts to elide the show people's identity and agency, the show people have indeed drawn "*unexpected results from [their] situation*".

6.4.2 Disrupting the 'showie'-'non-showie' dichotomy

The second approach to resisting constructions of otherness that I identified earlier in this section was the way in which show people break down the seemingly essentialised, fixed and homogenised 'showie'-'non-showie' dichotomy. This is another way of contesting and subverting the marginalising strategy of representing the show people as naturally and irredeemably 'marginal' and 'other' to 'normal' Australians, by demonstrating that the conceptual barrier on which such a construction is predicated is actually a fluid and shifting set of discourses.

In that context, the show children made several references to the ‘showie’–‘local’ division being fluid and temporary. A twelve year old girl asserted strongly, “*No, we travel around, because we’re with the showmen*” (Y2C4). She explained: “*We settled down ~~for~~ a while and went to school, and then mum got us correspondence and we started travelling again*” (Y2C4). Her reference to having “*settled down*” suggests that the change of status from ‘showie’ to ‘local’ and back to ‘showie’ was not necessarily an easy or straightforward transition for her. Her description of relations with ‘locals’ was a somewhat negative one. She recalled that local teachers

. . . treated us different[ly] from the locals. We weren’t allowed to do things that they were allowed to do. . . [W]hen they used to go. . . swimming. . . , we weren’t allowed to go. (Y2C4)

Despite her earlier reference to having “*settled down*” as a ‘local’, here ‘locals’ assumes a different meaning and purpose – to point out how in her view show children have been poorly treated by educational providers. Yet her explanation of her situation also indicates the transitional rather than the separate links between ‘showie’ and ‘local’.

One boy, who stated that “*I’ve got a couple off friends who are locals*” (Y1C5) but most of whose friends followed the show circuits, described at second hand the reverse transition from the ‘showie’ to the ‘local’ categories. He explained that “*my brother and Z had a friend and he went off the show and he’s a local. . . [and I don’t know where he lives]*” (Y1C5). Perhaps his concern at the loss of a friendship underlay his assertion that ‘locals’ “*can come back*” to the show circuits, and his statement that “*I think a few of them*” actually do so (Y1C5). Here this boy’s discussion of ‘showies’ and

'locals' is tempered by his personal knowledge of someone who had traversed the boundary between those categories, and by his evident regret that this process had ended a valued friendship.

Another boy described at second hand the change from 'local' to 'showie' status, a change with a different outcome from the situation quoted in the previous paragraph. He explained how his friendship with another boy endured the latter's changing status in connection with show life that derived from his parents joining the show circuit.

Well, . . . [he wasn't] actually a local. See, what it was ~~is~~ I said —, which is our friend really, the one on the show, because what it was is I was friends with him about two years back when he was a local, but now he's a full showman.

[. . . When he's a local, what does that mean?]

That means, like now we can get free rides and all that and he couldn't and all that, and he had to pay ~~for~~ the tickets.

[If he's a local doesn't ~~he~~ travel with the show?]

No. He has to stay in one place. But now he's a showman. (Y1C2)

In both these cases, the show children's references to individuals moving on and off the show circuits in some respects parallel the show people's traversing the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy. That is, the emphasis is on fluid and shifting markers of identity and signifiers of meaning, rather than fixed essences. The particular point that I am emphasising here is it is that fluid and shifting character that show people

exploit in resisting the constructions of their otherness – in this case, by emphasising that the difference between them and others is less clearly defined and permanent than other people might realise or like to think. This argument resonates with McVeigh's (1997) contention that historically "*the sedentary/nomad distinction was much more ambiguous than it is in contemporary societies*", and that

. . .even when this distinction does become unambiguous. . .it bears emphasis that nomadic–sedentary transition is not a one-way process. Just as people can exchange a nomadic ~~for~~ a sedentary existence, so they can exchange a sedentary ~~for~~ a nomadic existence. (p. 11)

The means of resisting the show people's constructed otherness outlined in this subsection recalls a vivid metaphor provided by de Certeau (1984) and previously discussed in Chapter Two. The preceding discussion has established how the show people's dissolution of the supposedly rigid Qchotomy between 'showies' and 'locals'

. . .enables the [show people] to avoid being disseminated in the occupiers' power grid, to avoid being captured by the dominating, interpretive systems ~~of~~ discourse (or by the simple inversion ~~of~~ those discourses, a tactic which remains prisoner to their logic). (p. 229)

By this means, show people have succeeded in replacing the ascribed and marginalising ideology of "You are not like me and never can be like me" with the more dynamic representation of "You and I are in many respects not so different after all". This resistance sows the seeds of transformation of the show people's identity constructions, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

6.4.3 Giving 'mugs' a negative valence

Finally in this section of the chapter, I turn to the show people's use of the term 'mugs'. I indicated earlier in the section that the third approach to resisting otherness adopted by the show people was to use 'mugs' to describe local people in a similar way to many non-show people's use of the term 'showies' – that is, as a negatively charged label that sets the labelled apart from the labellers. The significance of this approach is less that it is a device of revenge than its reversal role. That is, when 'showies' use the term 'mugs', they are referring to the way that 'locals' operate when they are on the show people's territory – generally incompetently, because they lack the specialised cultural capital that make the show people masters and mistresses of their domain. This version of resisting otherness says that 'These people who marginalise us are not competent in functioning on our territory, so therefore the cultural capital that equips them to construct us as "other" is invalid and weak' – precisely the stereotyped characteristics ascribed to show people.

For me, this is a vivid example of de Certeau's (1984) reference to "*the indigenous Indian cultures*" (p. 31) conquered by Spanish colonisation: "*They metaphorized the dominant order; they made it function in another register*" (p. 32). At the same time, it is worthwhile remembering McVeigh's (1997) timely injunction:

We must contrast the capacity of the overwhelmingly dominant settled population to racialise, marginalise and discriminate against the nomad with the incapacity of the nomad to operationalise any anti-sedentary prejudice he or she may hold. (p. 12)

From this perspective, what is surprising is not that show people are routinely and enduringly marginalised in multiple ways, but rather that their tactics of resistance take various forms and are often effective.

In an example of what I mean by this, a twelve year old girl explained the meaning of the term ‘mugs’ in the context of describing interactions between show children and local children.

...we call them ‘mugs’.

[What does ‘mugs’ mean?]

Oh, it just means that they’re locals and we’re show kids. So mugs have to pay to get on the rides and we don’t because we know all the show kids.

[So if they talk to you like that, you’re not going to talk to them about your school work, are you?]

No, we don’t talk to them nice[ly] if they talk to us like that. We call them ‘wankers’ and that. (Y2C4)

This exchange between interviewer and respondent recalled a show child’s explanation, cited earlier in this section, of another child’s change of status from ‘local’ to ‘showie’. In both instances ‘showies’ were represented

as not having to pay money to enjoy the rides of 'sideshow alley' – and by implication **as** experiencing the benefits of an itinerant lifestyle, travelling from town to town. In the earlier exchange, 'local' was taken to refer to a permanent resident in a particular location or locality. In this exchange, 'mug' takes on a certain negative valence, in comparison with the more neutral valence of 'local'. It implies someone who is not very intelligent, or else someone who is being duped or misled. It certainly implies a greater level of hostility, of disdain verging on contempt, than that suggested by the term 'local'. This is a reversal of terminology – and its associated meanings – at work in resisting otherness.

One of the parents also referred to 'mugs'. In the process of explaining why including information about shows in the education program implemented by the Brisbane School of Distance Education was *"not really relevant to us"*, she stated, *"I mean, most ~~of~~ the [show] kids, they take as much money from the mugs as we can"* (Y3P1). This statement suggests that 'mugs' has a more restricted usage than 'locals', and perhaps that 'mugs' are the 'locals' who come to the shows and who spend their money without being aware of the ways in which they are encouraged to do so. This statement also indicates that show people attach considerable cultural capital to a person's skill at being able to part 'mugs' from their money. Furthermore, it would seem that the 'showie'–'mug' distinction is more securely fixed than the 'showie'–'local' distinction. For example, while some show people referred to their change of status from 'showie' to 'local' and back again, none of my respondents constructed herself or himself as a 'mug'. This point reinforces the perceived differences between show people and non-show people, and it also emphasises the instability and the contextualised character of those differenc-

es. It also underlines the multiple and successful ways in which the show people resist their constructed otherness.

This section of the chapter has outlined the show people's representations of themselves and other people according to the respective attributes of the categories 'showies', 'locals' and 'mugs'. Assigning these labels to people allows show people to say who they are on the basis of identifying who they are not – a powerful and effective reversal of efforts to construct them as 'other' on account of who they are and are not. Attaching a positive valence to 'showies', disrupting the dichotomy between 'showies' and 'locals' and assigning a negative valence to 'mugs' function in combination to contest and subvert the

. . .panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and "include" them within its scope of vision. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36)

That same resistance of the show people's constructed otherness also serves to equip them to resist the forms of unproblematic knowledge attending their previous educational experiences.

6.5 Resisting forms of unproblematic knowledge: The Brisbane School of Distance Education program

To this point in the chapter, I have examined the multiple ways in which the show people successfully resist their absence of place and the constructions of their otherness. That resistance places them in a stronger position to resist the educational dimension of their marginalisation. I identified in the previous chapter the forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge that had marginalised the show people from equitable educational access for generations. Their previous educational experiences were centred on six options, all of which required them to choose between their traditional lifestyle and their children's formal education. The inadequacy and injustice of those options derived from unquestioned assumptions by educational authorities about how and where 'normal' people live in relation to the authorised sites of schooling.

As de Certeau (1984) noted about the third strategy of marginalisation that he identified:

It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize in these "strategies" a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. Thus military or scientific strategies have always been inaugurated through the constitution of their "own" areas (autonomous cities, "neutral" or "independent" institutions, laboratories pursuing "disinterested" research, etc.). In other words, a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge and not merely its effect or

its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge. (p. 36; emphasis added)

From this perspective, unquestioned assumptions that most ‘normal’ students travel from home to school to receive their education, and that a minority of students stays at a permanently located home to receive distance education, are complicit with, and an integral part of, the means by which “a certain power. . . produces itself in and through this knowledge”.

The show people’s resistance of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about how and where show people learn occurred in two distinct phases:

- establishing a specialised program with the Brisbane School of Distance Education
- consuming the program through a close monitoring of its operations.

While the phases were chronologically distinct, they had in common the show people’s determination to turn educational provision for their children from a marginalising and alienating institution into a set of practices directly responsive to their specialised learning needs and aspirations. This constituted a mastery of history, by transforming it into readable spaces. In the process, they sought to attain positive and practical achievements from their resistance of the forms of unproblematic knowledge to which they were traditionally subjected.

6.5.1 Establishing the program

The education program provided for the show people’s children by the Brisbane School of Distance Education had certain distinctive features. It was

targeted at preschool and primary school children and combined face to face and distance education. Teachers from the school travelled to selected sites along the coastal and western Queensland show circuits and worked with the children in a spare classroom in a local school or in a church hall. They provided enriching activities designed to help the children to complete the written papers prepared by the Queensland Open Access Support Centre for all Queensland distance education students (most of whom live on cattle and sheep properties). When the teachers returned to Brisbane, the children continued working on the papers, sending their work regularly to the teachers for marking. They communicated with the teachers via telephone and facsimile machine as the need arose. Some children had access to home tutors employed by their parents to facilitate the completion of their written papers. Even when the show circuits took the children out of Queensland, they continued working on the Queensland program.

Effective learning partnerships among teachers, students and home tutors were clearly vital to the success of the program. In Queensland, teachers apply specifically to join the staff of one of the Schools of Distance Education; successful applicants already have experience in conventional classrooms, and they need to demonstrate a commitment to developing pedagogies and using technologies in ways appropriate to teaching at a distance. Teachers involved in the show children's program applied specifically to join it, and in doing so needed to acquire an understanding of the distinctive learning experiences of those children. This understanding was augmented by formal and informal contacts between teachers and show people, as awareness and appreciation of the other group's circumstances grew. From the teachers' perspective, that awareness and appreciation in turn underpinned their adaptation of the Open

Access Support Centre materials and their preparation of the distance learning packages for the show children. The fact that they had volunteered to work with those children reflected their determination to make the program as successful as possible.

The home tutors' role was equally crucial to maximising the show children's learning outcomes. They needed to maintain the children's enthusiasm and motivation when the teachers were not present; to supervise the children's completion of designated work and to send that work to the teachers; and to provide a communication link between teachers and students. As I indicated in the previous chapter, some home tutors were relatives of the children who performed their role on a voluntary basis; others were people from outside the show circuits employed especially for the task. (I explore in Chapter Seven the home tutors' – and the teachers' – perceptions of the show people's transformations of their marginalising experiences and resistant practices.)

The change from the six inadequate schooling options outlined in the previous chapter to the program described above, catering specifically for itinerant students (and largely for show children, with a small number of circus children being enrolled as the program progressed) within Queensland's largest school of distance education, demonstrated starkly the efficacy of the show people's resistance of previous assumptions about educating Travellers. The motivation underlying this resistance, and the tactical approach fuelled by that motivation, were clearly articulated by a member of the Showmen's Guild:

. . .it wasn't just one person. There were a group of people who sat down around the campfire one day and said, "What are we going to do? Our kids are going to be uneducated. They're not going to learn through correspondence" in terms of what correspondence was.
(Y4A1)

At one level, the idealised image of decision making "*around the camp fire*" might be regarded as exemplifying poetic licence. At a more fundamental level, the speaker used a strongly evocative metaphor to (re)present a local event in mythic terms, thereby underlining its significance for the show people's community. The emphasis in this statement was on focussed discussion on the benefits and limitations of available options and the possibility of extending the range of such options. This focussed discussion, derived from a collective experience of an itinerant lifestyle and of the most potentially productive avenues of change, led to the formulation of a plan of equally collective action, while recognising that individual show people's contributions to the resistance would vary according to circumstance.

This notion of collectively motivated and individually varied resistance of forms of unproblematic knowledge about Traveller education was recognised by one of the teachers involved in delivering the program:

. . .a number of women who were Guild members lobbied hard and strong to get a program like this up and running. Through their hard work they have achieved a lot. . . .That's often the only way to get it done, unless you've got a mum who's prepared to take time away from work and do that, because they are very busy, very businesslike in their approach to their jobs, and very efficient. (Y2T1)

This observation was noteworthy in three respects. Firstly, the references to the show people's being "*very busy, . . . very businesslike. . . , and very efficient*" suggested that their resistance to unproblematic knowledge would be systematic, tactical and targeted. That is, they would deploy their customary skills of organisation and orderliness in a different arena to achieve their goal of extending and maximising their educational options. Secondly, the reference to "*the only way to get it done*" acknowledged a considerable degree of self-sacrifice on the show people's part: they were prepared to interrupt, perhaps even disrupt, their business routine to devote their energies to operating in a very different arena, that of an educational bureaucracy. Thirdly, operating in that different arena required the show people to take risks of self-disclosure with individuals who were armed with bureaucratic authority. That kind of self-disclosure betokened both courage and determination in challenging and resisting authorised assumptions about the 'place' and form of Traveller education.

These three features of the show people's resistance – organisation, self-sacrifice and self-disclosure – were very much in evidence in a particular tactic in which they engaged. This tactic centred on their interactions with the then Queensland Minister for Education, as one of the participating show people recalled:

There were three of us that went to the Minister ~~for~~ Education in the beginning and that's where. . . [the program] started. It started with some correspondence to the Education Department, but ~~we~~ didn't really know where to channel our correspondence, and a friend ~~of~~ a friend. . . gave us the opportunity to meet with the Minister at the Royal Brisbane

Show, . . . and through that meeting we got the program going. And that was the big step. (YIP2)

I recognise that, although many members of the general public have sent “some correspondence to the Education Department”, very few such people have “the opportunity to meet with the Minister” for Education. That the speaker and her colleagues were provided with that opportunity by “a friend of a friend”, who was highly connected with “the Royal Brisbane Show”, was testament to the show people’s determination and their capacity to enlist the support of people with sufficient capital to bring about an introduction to the state official who was most likely to achieve the outcomes that they desired. In this situation, resistance took the form of refusing to allow themselves to be sidetracked by bureaucratic obfuscation or to be sidelined by circuitous conversations with underlings.

Although it is rarely at the disposal of resistant groups, the tactic of ‘going straight to the top’ was in this case highly effective at subverting taken for granted assumptions about educating itinerant people. On this occasion, the show people were successful at building on the power associated with the institution of the government, and enlisting that power to garner support for their educational agenda. This calls to mind de Certeau’s (1984) lively metaphor about the nature and effect of resistance:

Statistics can tell us virtually nothing about the currents in this sea theoretically governed by the institutional frameworks that it in fact gradually erodes and displaces. Indeed, it is less a matter of a liquid circulating in the interstices of a solid than of different movements making use of the elements of the terrain. (p. 34 ;emphasis in original)

This analysis of the show people's lobbying for the Brisbane School of Distance Education program demonstrates the literal mobility associated with this kind of resistance of inadequate educational provision,

The success of this tactic of resistance was evident in the speaker's account of the events that followed that meeting:

Before I got to the Minister, . . . I was starting to get a little bit lost with it, because there're so many different people in charge of different sections that you didn't really know where to tap into to get a response back. . . And once we got to the Minister and he realised there was such a need for it, there were no problems after that. It followed suit. There were other people appointed to judge our situation, and we worked with it from there. (Y1P2)

The outcome of the initial meeting was therefore that, in contrast to their previous status **as** supplicants 'outside the system', the show people had 'forced an entry' to position themselves 'inside the system' – or at least to position themselves much more strongly with the personal endorsement of "the Minister", which endorsement would undoubtedly change the way that the "other people appointed to judge our situation" exercised that judgment. So identifying the most likely change agent was a very effective antidote to the experience of "starting to get a little bit lost with it" in the bureaucracy of a government department, and was certainly likely to ensure that when the show people contacted that department in the future they would indeed "get a response back". The crucial significance of these actions was that they helped to insert a counternarrative into official educational discourses, one based on the realities of an itinerant lifestyle rather than either replicating inaccurate stereotypes about such a lifestyle or omitting it from consideration at all.

The same speaker conveyed her assumption about how this tactic of resistance works when she stated:

*I've always said it's not what you know but **who** you know to a certain point, because obviously **f** we hadn't gotten to see the Minister – he was the only real one to put. . .[the program] into the budget. (Y1P2)*

Conversely, she described the result if the directly interpersonal element is absent from the equation:

*I was in America when it was all happening [in Victoria] and I missed out on helping. It's hard – I don't really know **how** to get involved down there, because it's a different **group** of people. (Y1P2)*

Identifying, and forming effective working relationships with, people able to make decisions that lead to change are therefore integral elements of the show people's approach to resisting unproblematic knowledge about who they are and how they should be educated.

This tactic of creating new categories and rules as a corollary of resisting old and marginalising ones was evident in the following statement by the same show person: “. . .[we] were handed over to so many different people. 'That's not really my category', but there was no real category **for** us. It was a whole new thing” (Y1P2). Again the show people demonstrated unambiguously their determination and their capacity to resist, rather than passively accept, their marginalisation through not belonging to any “*real category at all*”.

In de Certollian (1984) terms, the show people's effective lobbying for a specialised program within the remit of the Brisbane School of Distance Education reflected the utility of “a way of using” (p. 18) what was previous-

ly available to them educationally to create something new and more appropriate. According to de Certeau:

... a way ~~of~~ using imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for manoeuvres of unequal forces and ~~for~~ utopian points of reference. (p. 18)

From this perspective, the show people's lobbying for the Brisbane School of Distance Education was a stark example of "*resistance to the historical law of a state ~~of~~ affairs and its dogmatic legitimations*" – in this case, "*dogmatic legitimations*" through the authorised but inadequate educational options previously available to the show people. Furthermore, the program's establishment constituted "*a certain play*" in the established order, and it created for the show people "*a space for manoeuvres of unequal forces and ~~for~~ utopian points of reference*" that enabled them to begin to insert and circulate their counternarrative about what and how Traveller education could and should be.

More broadly, the reference to "*a space ~~for~~ maneuvers*" recalls de Certeau's (1984) conceptualisation of space elaborated in Chapter Three. Specifically:

.In short, space is a practised place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act ~~of~~ reading is the space produced by the practice ~~of~~ a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs. (p. 117)

"In the same way", the preceding analysis has demonstrated how the show people's lobbying for the Brisbane School of Distance Education clearly indicates their efforts to turn the *"place"* of formal schooling into *"the space"* in which they feel comfortable and are able to achieve academically 'on their own terms'. Making this *"space"* into *"a practised place"* by means of the program's establishment was a crucial element of the show people's resistance of the forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about their educational experiences and opportunities identified in the previous chapter. At the same time, I must reiterate that that establishment was never a foregone conclusion but rather the outcome of a long and continuing struggle. Indeed, the lack of guaranteed permanence associated with the program induced the show people to monitor its implementation very closely.

6.5.2 Consuming the program

The preceding subsection analysed the show people's establishment of the Brisbane School of Distance Education program as resistance of forms of unproblematic knowledge about how itinerant people should be educated. I turn now to argue that the show people's consumption of that program demonstrated a similar resistance. 'Consuming the program' in this context refers to the de Certeauian sense of consumption outlined in Chapter Two, whereby consumers are not passive recipients of production but instead make their own uses of what is produced – sometimes uses that are significantly different from the producers' intentions. As de Certeau (1984) noted:

...between the person (who uses them) and these products (indexes of the "order" which is imposed on him [sic]), there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them. (p. 32)

Furthermore:

...once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. The thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the customers in a supermarket, the practitioners of urban space, the consumers of newspaper stories and legends—what do they make of what they “absorb”, receive, and pay for? What do they do with it? (p. 31)

The short response to de Certeau’s question “*What do they do with it?*” is that the show people took every available opportunity to make the program closer to their image of specialised Traveller education. That image was centred on aligning as closely as possible the maintenance of their itinerant lifestyle and the maximisation of their children’s educational and employment opportunities. They were aware how superior the program was to the inadequate educational options previously available to them and detailed in Chapter Five. They were also aware how long and how hard they had had to struggle to establish the program. They were therefore determined to consume or use it in ways likely to make it a success.

This indicates that there is a qualitative difference between the forms of consumption identified in this and the preceding subsections of this chapter. When the show people were lobbying for the program’s establishment, they were consuming what had previously been available to them, in the sense of ‘malung do’, or ‘malung the best of a bad situation’. They were ‘pushing the boundaries’ and using ‘trial and error’ to try to see what could be done to enhance their children’s educational prospects against a backdrop of generations of neglect. By contrast, after the program’s establishment the

show people consumed that program, in the sense of constantly monitoring its implementation in order to refine it and maximise its alignment with their distinctive learning needs. This suggests that after the program had been established the show people did not automatically assume that it was merely a transition to having their own school. On the contrary, **as** far **as** they knew at the time having a separate school was little more than a 'pipe dream', and hence they were determined to make the program **as** closely 'in their own image' **as** possible.

From that perspective of consumption as monitoring, it was to be expected that most comments pertaining to the program were complimentary. This situation reflected the show people's conscious awareness of the options that had previously been available to them in educating their children, **as** well as the fact that a number of show people had been directly involved in lobbying for the program's establishment and subsequently for its extension from the coastal to the western Queensland show circuits. Accordingly they had greater 'ownership' of the program's implementation and refinement. More broadly, the program had been incorporated into the practice of the show people's everyday lives, and consequently was seen **as** functioning as a 'consumer production' and a 'tactics of practice' of their own, **as** opposed to an imposition from state authorities. The much greater responsiveness of the program to the show people's distinctive educational needs and aspirations meant that it was helping to resist the show people's marginalised status and particularly the forms of previously unproblematic knowledge about the appropriate 'place' of conventional schooling. In addition, the program was seen to promote the show people's social agency in turning education from a 'place' to a 'space' (a practised place).

Within that context, then, several parents commented on the perceived advantages of the education program in comparison with the options available under their previous educational experiences. According to an older show person, “. . . *we’re very proud of what our ladies have been doing in bringing this education program forward. . . . [I]t’s a very good step for our way of life and our industry. . .*” (Y4P3). This was a significant endorsement of the program, because it reflected an acknowledgment that, unlike the previous options available to show people in educating their children, the program was at least and at last responsive to the show people’s distinctive educational needs and aspirations encapsulated in “*our way of life and our industry*”.

This crucial point was echoed by a younger show person with a seven year old daughter:

. . . *here you’ve got the best of both worlds. You can still work, [and] you’re not leaving your children. Your kids are still there all the time and that, so it’s good.* (Y4P2)

The reference to “*the best of both worlds*” is important: the presumption was that, unlike previous educational options, the program had allowed show people to combine their itinerant lifestyle and their children’s educational opportunities, rather than having to choose between them **as** unproblematic assumptions about educating itinerant people had required. This was a clear example of how the show people closely monitored the program and thereby consumed it to fit as closely as possible with their distinctive learning needs: being “*the best ~~of~~ both worlds*” functioned as a gauge for evaluating the program’s continued effectiveness in meeting those needs.

One parent said that, **as** a result of the program's establishment, "*We have got a very good relationship with the schools in Queensland. They're getting better – every year it's getting better*" (Y1P2). This 'special relationship' was often expressed in terms of interactions with individual teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education. For example, after the involvement of a particular teacher began, the program "*skyrocketed*" partly because "*. . . she really pushes things along, gets things going*" (Y1P2). In other words, the program was a developing situation rather than a static entity: "*. . . I think the program's been essential for the children and that it has progressed considerably during the last three **or** four years*" (Y1P2). She reaffirmed in relation to the show children's education:

. . . [I]t's so much better than what they had before the program started. So they're a thousand times better off than they were four years ago. . . . This is so much better. (Y1P2)

It was instructive to gain this parent's perception of the success of a program in whose establishment she had been so active. She had no doubt that the program was achieving its aims. A principal benefit was that the children now derived some meaning from their schooling.

***Now** with the program they're not only a part of something that belongs to them, that they feel apart of, we have a gauge, a learning system that we can control. . . . I know with. . . my son who's eight, in Grade Three, he's right **up** to date with the average school, and in some subjects he's also ahead, so you can't be happier with the program.* (Y1P2)

Although there had been some problems with the postal service, this parent felt that her son's work had not suffered.

So that's the only gauge you can use. As long as they're up to date and you are getting the work through quickly. And the quality is very, very good, everything's excellent. (Y1P2)

She believed also that the children's social skills had improved significantly: "Now, as I said, these kids are a part of something and they know it, and their self esteem and confidence is up here" (Y1P2). The reference to using a "gauge" to measure the program's effectiveness reflected the show people's close monitoring of its implementation, while identifying the show children as "a part of something" was an implicit acknowledgment that previously show people had been dislocated from, rather than being integrated with, formal educational provision. This close monitoring, as I posited above, represents a particular form of consumption of the program, and hence a resistance of traditional assumptions about how and where itinerant people should be educated.

Another parent, a relative newcomer to the showgrounds, concurred about the value of the program:

I think the program itself is excellent. I mean, it would be nearly. . . impossible if the program wasn't made available. It's something that they have where they were having nothing in the years past. (Y2P5)

This person explained that, although her own children were too young to be involved in the program, she had heard good reports of its operations from other parents:

I do know that from my understanding of materials that get sent to them [the teachers], they review it, they grade it and send it back for them to review. They keep them up with their lessons, and I think that's the most important aspect of it. I mean, if you didn't have that you couldn't do it.

So it's vital. . . . A lot of the interaction that goes on is between teacher and mother, not teacher and child. So it's good when the teachers come out to see the kids. The kids get a chance to then interact with the actual teachers themselves. (Y2P5)

This statement again reflected the close monitoring to which the show people subjected the program; this parent revealed a detailed working knowledge of the program even though she was not involved in it. This suggested not only the considerable degree of dialogue among parents and between parents and teachers about the program's consumption, but also how central that consumption **was** to the show people's ongoing resistance of their previous educational marginalisation.

Another parent was very enthusiastic about the program: “. . . it's very successful for us. We love what we've got” (Y2P1). She added: “With this, it's presented so easy. Everything comes over clear and easy. . . .” (Y2P1). She summed up her overall approval of the program's operation:

*Our kids love school. They love school. The teachers are fantastic. If you give them work, it's not like in a classroom, our kids do it all. They might be a little bit backward. . . . In a classroom, there's always the kids up the back that you never **know**, and they get to sixth grade and they still can't read and write. Our kids, when they're given proper first grade work, they don't not learn. We've had a couple [of children] who went onto boarding school, and they are high in their grades. You've got to learn from this; it has to work. We do all right. We're coping. (Y2P1)*

Another parent was equally pleased with the outcomes of the program to date. She noted that the *“teachers are very good. I mean, everyone’s happy with the teachers”* (Y3P1). Furthermore, she was particularly enthusiastic about another innovation associated with the program:

. . . we now have a school camp because of this program. Our kids actually go to school camp, whereas they didn’t before. They’ve done it for the last one, two, three years now. . . . It gets them all together away from school, away from home. (Y3P1)

These disparate comments by parents shared a conscious and publicly stated determination to consume the program by subjecting it to ongoing scrutiny and critique, in order to consolidate the educational gains that they had made on behalf of their children.

The show children, the most direct ‘tactical consumers’ of the education program, were also complimentary about its implementation. They had established strong rapport with the itinerant teachers (whom they addressed by their Christian names, and who in some cases were regarded as members of the extended family), and they largely enjoyed the program. One boy claimed that the show children *“have a lot of fun”* (Y1C1) with the itinerant teachers. A ten year old girl said that she preferred going to school in Queensland rather than New South Wales because of the program’s operation in Queensland and the company of her friends from the show circuit (Y1C8). When asked from whom they seek help with difficult work, students most often identified the Brisbane teachers; otherwise a parent, a grandparent or an older sibling might be called on for assistance.

Children recognised that some subjects were more relevant to the show children's distinctive lifestyle than others. One eight year old boy explained his preference for studying mathematics – which was echoed by many of his contemporaries thus: *“Because I like working at the sums, and you gets lots of [games] in mathematics”* (Y1C6). This was verified by one of the home tutors, who commented that the show children handled money from an early age as part of the work expected of them within the family business (Y1HT1). The same eight year old boy explained the different phases of learning involved in the program: content work in the papers when the teachers were in Brisbane, and interactive activities with the teachers when they visited the children along the show circuits:

*When we come to a school,. . .we don't do much with **our** work. We get activities done on the theme we're on and then we do something, and might just do an afternoon, like a bit of maths, a bit of language arts and a bit of social studies at the end of the day when we come into school.*
(Y1C6)

One ten year old girl found the work easy to understand: *“...once you know **all** your stuff, **for** example, it's real easy to go along, once you know what you're doing”* (Y1C4). A twelve year old girl concurred, saying about the program: *“...because it's better. It's easier”* (Y2C4). A seven year old boy identified the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers as *“our real teachers. . .[who] never get grouchy – never get grumpy like those old teachers”* in local schools (Y1C7).

My argument about these laudatory comments about the program by show parents and children is that they reflected the show people's conscious and deliberate consumption of the program that they had lobbied to establish

through a close and careful monitoring of its implementation. This underscores the crucial observation that consumption from this perspective is a continuing process rather than an end point. Furthermore, the positive remarks about the program demonstrated the show people's determined resistance of previous assumptions about educating itinerant people that had provided them with inadequate options for their children's schooling. This resistance was evident in the show people's careful identification of the program's positive features, all of which are related to a greater alignment between an itinerant lifestyle and maximum educational opportunities. Whether the comments referred to the quality of the distance education papers, the children's liking for this kind of schooling or the empathetic understandings of the teachers, they encapsulated the show people's active involvement in ensuring the retention and refinement of a program that they had worked hard to establish.

The significance of this argument for relating the show people's consumption of the education program to the study's conceptual framework cannot be overestimated. De Certeau (1984) referred to

*...the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive **or** docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term 'consumer' (pp. xi-xii)*

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the show people are indeed far from being "*either passive **or** docile*" in consuming the program: on the contrary, they have been actively involved in refining it to suit their distinctive needs and circumstances. Moreover, the analysis has highlighted the validity of de Certeau's (1984) bald assertion: "*The tactics **of** consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a*

political dimension to everyday practices” (p. xvii). The show people’s consumption of the problem certainly has “*apolitical dimension*”, largely because resistance is an avowedly political practice.

Finally, the preceding analysis has also confirmed the appropriateness of de Certeau’s (1984) identification of

. . forces that are the starting point for an intellectual creativity as persistent as it is subtle, tireless, ready for every opportunity, scattered over the terrain of the dominant order and foreign to the rules laid down and imposed by a rationality founded on established rights and property. (p. 38)

These forces, of which the show people’s resistant lobbying for and consumption of the education program are a strilung example, point the way forward to creating a new “*terrain*” by virtue of their “*intellectual creativity*”. That same “*intellectual creativity*” enables the resistance and subversion of the “*rationality*” that underpins the construction of “*the dominant order*”. That “*rationality*” in turn articulates with de Certeau’s (1984) reference to “*the power of knowledge. . . [being] to provide oneself with one’s own place*” (p. 36). So “*rationality*” is actually complicit with forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge – in this case about the ‘place’ of schooling and the ‘place’ of itinerant people – and is therefore suffused with power. This power is, as far as possible, counteracted by the show people’s resistance of those forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge, as reflected in their lobbying for and consumption of the Brisbane School of Distance education program for their children.

6.6 Review of the chapter

I argued in the previous chapter that the show people's experiences of marginalisation, which denied them access to institutional or strategic power as a direct consequence of their itinerancy, were usefully summarised by de Certeau's (1984) identification of three key attributes of strategies of marginalisation:

- the show people's absence of place
- the construction of their otherness
- the imposition of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about how they should be educated.

The purpose of this chapter has been to address the study's second research question: "*How do the show people resist their marginalised status?*". The posing of this question reflected an assumption that, far from being 'passive victims' of their marginalisation, the show people exhibit enormous agency and ingenuity in subverting that status. Responding to the research question required the application of de Certeau's (1984) concept of 'tactics of consumption', aided by his notion of 'space'. His synthesis of the overlap between these ideas is a timely reminder of their emphasis on agency and ingenuity and of their avowedly politicised dimension:

Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. . . [T]actics are a clever

utilization of time, *of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power.* (pp. 38-39)

Specifically in relation to the three attributes of strategies of marginalisation identified above, I have made the following key points about the show people's tactics of consumption and their use of space:

- They resist their ascribed absence of place through their multiple experiences and understandings of 'home', which enable them to lay claim to a place of their own and hence to a location of power.
- They resist their constructed otherness by giving the term 'showies' a positive valence to counteract the negative stereotypes ascribed to it by others, disrupting the 'showie'-'non-showie' dichotomy and giving the term 'mugs' a negative valence as a tactic of reversal.
- They resist forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about their schooling through their lobbying for, and consumption of, a specialised educational program operated by the Brisbane School of Distance Education, thereby countering the six inadequate and marginalising educational options previously available to them.

It is timely to reiterate that there is nothing inevitable or certain about the effectiveness of the show people's resistance of their marginalised status; their tactics of consumption have had to be deployed across a large range of sites and in a considerable number of contexts. What has unified those disparate endeavours has been their recognition that education holds the key to their efforts to establish a counternarrative to their marginalisation. The show people's resistant practices are therefore as integral as the strategies of marginalisation identified in the previous chapter to their 'learning on the run'.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCH QUESTION

THREE:

THE SHOW PEOPLE'S

TRANSFORMATION OF

THEIR MARGINALISING

EXPERIENCES AND

RESISTANT PRACTICES

"...I teach primary [show] kids...I can take into it my experiences from outside. I can open up their imaginations, I suppose, to things...on a wider scale, which I know is what the parents want."

Y3HT1

"...who knows what the potential is of this program? It's like the potential of all children."

Y4T1

7.1 Overview of the chapter

In Chapter Five of this thesis, I argued that the show people's itinerant lifestyle subjects them to what de Certeau (1984) identified as three key attributes of strategies of marginalisation. These three elements related specifically to the show people's absence of place, the construction of their otherness and forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about where and how itinerant people should receive their schooling. In Chapter Six, I asserted that the show people engage in direct and effective resistance of those marginalising strategies, as evidenced through their multiple experiences and understandings of 'home', their own uses of the terms 'showies', 'locals' and 'mugs', and their lobbying for and consumption of a specialised educational program under the auspices of the Brisbane School of Distance Education. These resistant practices were identified as exhibiting de Certeau's (1984) concept of 'tactics of consumption', and as reflecting the show people's determination to turn the alienating 'space' of conventional schooling into a welcoming and enabling 'place' of Traveller education.

In this chapter, I provide answers to the third research question guiding the thesis: "**How do the show people transform their marginalising experiences and resistant practices?**". In doing so, I demonstrate how the show people's deployment of various 'tactics of consumption' is a prelude to their efforts to change 'the rules of the game' that construct them as marginalised and 'other' to 'mainstream' Australia. That is, my reading of the show people's words and actions focusses on how their politically informed subversion of those 'rules' make alternative and more positive frameworks of Traveller education possible as a counternarrative. It is through these processes of change and transformation that the show people are able to

change the marginalised ‘spaces’ of itinerancy into valued ‘places’ of their own. It is important to acknowledge at the outset that these processes occur on a multitude of fronts. For the purposes of this study, however, I have concentrated on the ways in which the various dimensions of the Traveller education program can be read as illustrating resistance and transformation.

The chapter consists of four sections:

- outsidedness, creative understanding and transformation
- transforming absence of place: a place of their own
- transforming constructions of otherness: valuing difference
- transforming forms of unproblematic knowledge: a separate show school.

In the first section, I draw on Bakhtin’s (1986a) ideas of outsidedness and creative understanding to provide a conceptual bridge from de Certeau’s (1984) focus on marginalisation and resistance to transformation. In the second and third sections, I use the words of the home tutors and the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers to demonstrate the transformation of the show people’s previous absence of place and constructed otherness. Here the argument is that the other groups’ growing awareness of the show people’s struggles to assert their own notions of ‘home’ and their positive views of their identities are a testament to the potential for productive change in previously devaluing situations. In the fourth section, I use the show people’s words about their idealised hopes for Traveller education to argue that the newly established separate school for show children represents a powerful transformation of previous marginalising and alienating assumptions about the education of itinerant people. In combination, these points illustrate the capacity of the show people, a supposedly disempowered and marginalised group, to work in concert with representatives of the ‘mainstream’ society

whom they enlist to their 'cause' in order to circulate and replicate counternarratives that are more understanding and valuing of the show people's lifestyle and culture.

7.2 Outsidedness, creative understanding and transformation

Resistant 'tactics of consumption' are a necessary but by no means a sufficient prerequisite for more fundamental and permanent change occurring to the strategies of marginalisation faced by the Queensland show people. In particular, I perceive the transformation of their marginalising experiences and resistant practices as being directly and inextricably linked with their capacity to enlist the understanding and support of other people. As long as the 'battle lines' are drawn between 'them' and 'us', show people are inevitably at a recurring political disadvantage. However, if others take up the battle on their behalf, and work with them to challenge stereotypes and subvert alienating policies, 'the rules of the games' can be altered and a new terrain can be mapped out in which show people can potentially obtain a 'place' of their own.

Theoretically, my concern with transformation begins with de Certeau (1984). I indicated in Chapter Three my dissension from the consensus view that his distinctions between 'strategies of marginalisation' and 'tactics of consumption' and between 'place' and 'space' constitute a static model of social life. On the contrary, I argued that his conceptual framework is dynamic and mobile and fully aware of the political interstices into which subversive tactics can be inserted in order to generate productive change.

It is helpful to be reminded of de Certeau's explicit acknowledgment of the role of transformation in his social theory. As I noted in Chapter Three, de Certeau (1984) stated:

It is as though the opportunity ~~for~~ a sociopolitical renewal ~~of~~ Western societies were emerging along its fringes, precisely where it has been the most oppressive. Out of what Western societies have held in contempt, combated and believed they had subjugated, there are arising political alternatives and social models which represent, perhaps, the only hope ~~for~~ reversing the massive acceleration and reproduction ~~of~~ totalitarian, homogenising effects generated by the power structures and technology of the West. (p. 231)

Here is a direct explication of how de Certeau envisaged 'the rules of the games' being changed, centred on the "*political alternatives and social models*" that have been "*emerging along. . . [the] fringes*" of "*Western societies*". I regard the show people's actions as a striking example of how groups on the "*fringes*" of 'mainstream' communities, which the same 'mainstream' communities "*have held in contempt, combated and believed they had subjugated*", are able to counteract the "*totalitarian, homogenizing effects*" of those 'mainstream communities'.

Further evidence of de Certeau's (1984) recognition of the displacement potential of 'tactics of consumption' can be found in his use of the term 'transform' in his elaboration of his social theory. For example, he noted:

*There is no longer an elsewhere. Because ~~of~~ this, the "strategic" model is also **transformed**, as if defeated by its own success: it was by definition based on the definition ~~of~~ a "proper" distinct ~~from~~ everything*

else; but now that “proper” has become the whole. (p. 40; emphasis added)

He referred to the purpose of his own inquiry as being “*totransform what was represented as a matrix-force of history into a mobile infinity of tactics*” (p. 41; emphasis added). He also noted the transformative tendencies of ‘space’, as when “*the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers*” (p. 117; emphasis in original).

In this chapter, I analyse interview statements by show people, home tutors and Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers for evidence of the ways in which tactics of consumption become transformative. In doing so, I emphasise what I consider the most significant aspect of that potential: the opportunity to construct a counternarrative about who show people are and how they should receive an education. What I have in mind here is what was conveyed by de Certeau’s (1984) reference to “*. . .the tactical trajectories which, according to their own criteria, select fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them*” (p. 35).

It remains the case, however, that de Certeau devoted more attention to the resistance than to the transformation of marginalisation. Consequently he was less suggestive about how transformative actions might be identified and analysed than about the nature of tactics of consumption. Accordingly I have turned to Bakhtin (1986a), and particularly his concepts of outsidedness and creative understanding, to provide a more detailed conceptual framework for understanding how the show people’s resistant practices can be transformed into enduring displacements of their marginalising experiences.

As I indicated in Chapters Three and Four, Bakhtin (1986a) provided a helpful overview of the links between outsiderness and creative understanding:

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (p. 7; emphasis in original)

I have taken Bakhtin's precept of the importance "*for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture*" as a rationale for the organisation of the next two sections of this chapter. As I indicated at the outset, those sections analyse the comments by home tutors and teachers about the show people's supposed absence of place and the constructions of their otherness. This is a crucial element of my understanding of transformation: the show people can and do talk about how they resist those marginalising strategies, but it is necessary for 'outsiders' to do the same if real change in the show people's situation is to occur. (I see a parallel here with debates about Indigenous Australian 'reconciliation': while meanings attached to this term vary widely, the underlying concept is predicated on the active involvement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike.) The final major section of the chapter then argues that that evidence of the home tutors' and teachers' creative – and

transformed – understanding of the show people's possession of a place of their own and their difference rather than otherness contributes directly to the show people's transformation of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about schooling into their successful establishment of a separate school for show children.

This approach to analysing transformation resonates with Rowan and Brennan's (1998) overview of some of the crucial elements of fundamental and enduring shifts in cultural life. Firstly, they argued that:

The work of cultural transformation is thus not so much an intended 'rational project' in line with some pre-set view of 'progress' as a set of partial and reflexive interventions into constantly changing and reproducing institutions and subjectivities. (p. 5)

This chapter is very much *my* reading of ongoing alterations in the show people's marginalised status, a reading that derives from the particular combination of conceptual resources that I have mobilised in this thesis. Similarly, as I indicated in Chapter Six, I eschew a teleological view of social change in favour of one that constructs the gains made by show people as tentative and needing to be constantly reviewed in order to guard against slippage back into the previous, marginalising situation.

Secondly, and conversely, I concur with Rowan and Brennan's (1998) observation that "*The acknowledgment that marginality is produced rather than permanently and naturally inscribed draws attention to the potential for its resultant material consequences to be displaced...*" (p. 9). Herein lie the explanation and the justification for the argument presented in this chapter: through resistance and transformation, the show people are able to use against the strategies of marginalisation the same tools deployed by those strategies to

marginalise them. That is, the show people succeed in changing ‘the rules of the games’ by arguing that those rules are neither ‘natural’ nor ‘neutral’, the same charges levelled against the show people in the process of constructing them as marginalised.

Thirdly, Rowan and Brennan (1998) referred to “*counternarratives...[as] stories of cultural change*” (p. 10). This chapter demonstrates the effectiveness of the show people’s counternarratives in presenting alternative and resistant constructions of their own ‘place’ and their difference rather than otherness as the basis of, and the justification for, different and more positive forms of Traveller education. Indeed, this chapter and the study of which it forms a part seek to contribute to the creation of those counternarratives about the show people’s lives and learning.

7.3 Transforming absence of place: A place of their own

As I indicated above, my task in this section of the chapter is to demonstrate the show people’s transformation of their ascribed absence of place into a place of their own through the words and understandings of the home tutors and the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers. That transformation relies partly on the home tutors and teachers acknowledging the show people’s ‘right’ to pass onto ‘their terrain’ in their role as representatives of ‘the centre’ by virtue of their own, more ‘normal’ residence in fixed locations.

As a consequence of the show people’s multiple experiences and understandings of home being communicated to these ‘outsiders’ to the show circuits, the home tutors and teachers are enlisted to spread a counternarrative

about the show people's forms of residence and group relationships that disrupt the stereotype of no fixed location – and hence of no political 'place'. So the spaces of itinerancy become 'a place of their own' in the hearts and minds of these others, who in turn report those new understandings to those whom they encounter. These shifts in awareness can be likened to moves from outsideness and creative understanding (Bakhtin, 1986a) that I posited above as the basis of transformation in the context of this study.

Turning first to the home tutors, their 'outsider' status enabled them potentially to combine relatively detached comments about their students' and employers' ideas about 'home' with their own references to this concept (a point that is implicit in the habitual use of 'home' in front of the identification of their role as 'tutors'). One home tutor stated that, at the end of her employment as a home tutor, *"I went home, to Mackay. . ."* (Y5HT1). Another home tutor explained how she *"went home"* after an initial period of working on a show circuit: *"That was in Maryborough, because that's where I come from"* (Y1HT1). For a home tutor, this statement was an unusually explicit association between 'home' and *"coming from"* or 'belonging to' somewhere. This statement differed from the show people's initial connection between 'home' and their caravans, but paralleled those same people's references in particular contexts to specific towns as being 'home'.

The home tutors reinforced the show people's correlation between 'home' and the caravans in which they lived. One home tutor stated that *"I've been able to spend some time with the kids at home, in their little van things"* (Y3HT1). Another home tutor, in the context of explaining how for the show children *"Money's just an everyday issue. . ."*, added a reference to the

caravan as home: “. . .they'll sort of get home and see their parents counting out the change ~~for~~ the next day. . .” (Y1HT1).

In many ways the ‘outsider’ home tutors found life on the show circuits exciting and intriguing. In other respects it was stressful for them; they were away from their own families and social networks, and sometimes they found it difficult to become accepted as authentic ‘teachers’ by their young charges (and occasionally by their employers, the parents). Perhaps some of this tension underlay a home tutor’s reference to “*anywherethey call home*”, and his strong opinion (unsubstantiated in the interview) that “*if some of the kids were honest they would probably say it would be really nice to live somewhere and not just shift all the time*” (Y3HT1). On the other hand, the same home tutor commented perceptively about the centrality of the show circuits in the children’s distinctive lifestyle: “. . .*their routine is to be at a show – that’s their home – to pull up everything – business, home – and shift. . .that’s the routine*” (Y3HT1). This statement by a home tutor reflected a presumably unconscious incorporation of show people’s constructions of the “*routine*” shifts of the show circuits as a defining characteristic that separates them from other people.

I interpret the ambivalence underlying these home tutors’ comments about the show people’s conceptions of ‘home’ as reflecting a crucial and in some ways ongoing struggle between outsidedness and creative understanding. The home tutors’ difficulties with constantly moving ‘home’ are a symptom of the resilience of the marginalising stereotypes about show people’s absence of place analysed in Chapter Five. The deleterious effects of generations of lack of understanding and respect do not disappear overnight. On the other hand, the home tutors’ comments about ‘home’ also reflect a

growing comprehension of the centrality of the itinerant lifestyle to the show people's *raison d'être*, and hence of the validity and vitality of that lifestyle. For me, this growing comprehension recalls Bakhtin's (1986b) distinction between creative understanding and empathy and his associated insistence on the need for outsidedness if genuine understanding were to result:

One cannot understand understanding as emotional empathy, as the placement of the self in the other's position (loss of one's own position). This is required only for peripheral aspects of understanding. One [also] cannot understand understanding as a translation from the other's language into one's own. (p. 141)

At least some of the home tutors' perceptions of 'home' cited above were shared by the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers. After all, they shared with the home tutors – although for shorter periods of time – many of the difficulties attendant on leaving their families and living out of suitcases. One of the teachers, in his first year of involvement with the show people, used his account of how his colleagues and he worked with the show children at local schools to equate their 'home' with their caravan: "*We often look at a project for the week. . .so we can finish the documents at the end of the week that they take home. . .*" (Y2T1). However, his perception of certain limitations in the show children's schooling prompted his reference to a different location of 'home':

Sometimes I'd love to be able to take them home, and bring them into a school for an extended period of time, and really get them up to speed because there's a couple of little gaps, and you stumble across the gaps sometimes. (Y2T1)

For this teacher, ‘home’ represented the predictable routines of living in one place, a situation in which the distractions of constantly moving gave way to an opportunity to work intensively on perceived learning “*gaps*”.

By contrast, a teacher who had been involved with the program from the outset argued strongly that “*part of the success*” of that program for the show children

... is the development of understandings about the working lifestyle, and the huge time constraints and commitments by our families in maintaining their family, and their working lifestyle, their profession. (Y4T1)

The reference to “*our families*” reflected the extent to which this teacher in particular had come to identify personally as well as professionally with the distinctive needs of the show people. This identification helped to underpin her construction of the show people as actively contesting and transforming marginalisation into a way of life that is positive, productive and agential. This sense of the transformation of marginalisation was encapsulated in the speaker’s reference to “*their working lifestyle, their profession*”, a form of words that placed the show people on the same plane as teachers, whose “*profession*” remains valuable and vital for all that it is currently subjected to media and political belittling. Implicit in that reference was a recognition of both the difference and the validity of the show people’s multiple experiences and understandings of home.

I have sought in this section of the chapter to trace some of the elements of the transformation in others’ understandings of the show people’s lifestyle and values. That transformation helps to facilitate the show people’s success in moving from an absence of place to a place of their own. In doing so, I argue that the home tutors’ and teachers’ growing comprehension of the

distinctive meanings that show people attach to 'home' articulates with the show people's resistance of the fact, noted in Chapter Five, that "*The 'proper' is a triumph of place over time*", and that "*It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place*" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36). That resistance, as I observed in Chapter Six, resonates with de Certeau's (1984) insight that ". . . *the political relevance of the geo-graphical distinctions between separate places is echoed. . . in the distribution of places of power. . .*" (p. 227). The taking up of that resistance by the home tutors and teachers – *albeit* tentatively and inconsistently in some cases – helps to turn the disruption of resistance into the displacement of transformation.

I contend that this shift reflects the interplay between Bakhtinian outsidedness and creative understanding. Specifically, I assert that the comments about the show people's meanings of 'home' by outsiders who had been with them for a longer period provided evidence for Bakhtin's later identification of creative understanding as a four stage process, as reported by Morson and Emerson (1990):

. . . first, the physical perception, then its recognition, then a grasping of its significance in context, and finally – and this is the crucial step – "active-dialogic understanding." This fourth step is more than an acknowledgment of existing context; it is implicitly creative, and presumes ever-new, and surprisingly new, contexts. (p. 99)

For me, a vital dimension of those "*ever-new, and surprisingly new, contexts*" is the implication that the home tutors' and teachers' increased awareness of the show people's multiple experiences and understandings of home is a crucial element of their transformation from an absence of place to having a place of their own.

7.4 Transforming constructions of otherness: Valuing difference

In Chapter Five, I noted de Certeau's (1984) identification of constructions of otherness as one of the key attributes of strategies of marginalisation of particular social groups. I traced the 'progressive' – in the sense of sequential rather than 'enlightened' – development of those constructions in relation to show people through 'locals' perceptions of show people's 'strangeness' to regarding them as objects of pity to treating them with animosity and hostility to replicating negative stereotypes that they are 'dirty' and likely to be thieves to subliminal associations between show people and Gypsies. I argued that the ever increasing antipathy exhibited by 'locals' towards show people was tied directly, and led inexorably, to their construction as 'other' to the norms and values of the 'mainstream' community and hence as outside that community's protection and unable to gain equitable access to its resources and services.

In Chapter Six, I demonstrated that the show people actively and effectively resist the marginalising constructions of their otherness. They do this through particular 'tactics of consumption': giving the term 'showies' a positive valence; disrupting the 'showie'-'non-showie' dichotomy by emphasising how show people regularly move on and off the show circuits; and giving a negative valence to the term 'mugs', and thereby engaging in some reversal of terminology (in a similar way to other marginalised groups deploying terms such as 'black', 'gay' and 'queer' against their oppressors). This tactic works to turn the 'gaze of surveillance' back onto 'the centre' and allow the show people to present their lifestyle as valid and valuable.

My purpose in this section of this chapter is to use the home tutors' and teachers' words and understandings to gauge the degree of transformation in constructions of show people's identities, by moving from a focus on their otherness to an emphasis on valuing their difference. As I have insisted throughout this chapter, 'the rules of the game' that construct show people as 'other' can be changed, and a new terrain for valuing their difference can be mapped, only if they are demonstrably successful in inserting and circulating counternarratives about who they **are** and want to become. A crucial element of this transformation is the extent of their capacity to displace traditional and marginalising stereotypes about themselves by demonstrating that those stereotypes, far from being 'natural' or 'neutral', are in fact political constructions with tremendously deleterious effects. My aim is to illustrate how dominant, generally negative, attitudes towards the show people can be, and have been, transformed via an exploration of the changing views and growing understandings of the home tutors and teachers.

From that perspective, I turn first to the home tutors' statements about how they perceived the show people. One home tutor noted:

*But I found most of them to be really good. Some **of** them aren't, some of them are. It just. . . some **of** them will be wonderful to you, and other people won't be that nice to you. (Y1HT1)*

This home tutor endorsed the comment by a parent that the show children's lifestyle sometimes approaches "*afantasy land*" for them (Y1P2). She asserted about the show children: "*I think they have a ball, just play [ing] with each other. See, as they get older there's different rides that they're allowed onto. . .*" (Y1HT1) She went further and stated, "*I think a lot **of** them get a bit spoilt. Not spoilt rotten, but they are used to having money. . .*" (Y1HT1).

As in the previous section of this chapter, I detect considerable ambivalence in some of the ‘outsiders’ perceptions of show people. As I noted earlier, it takes a great deal of time and persistence for ingrained assumptions about the show people’s identities – the constructions of their otherness identified in Chapter Five and resisted in Chapter Six – to be dispelled and replaced with more positive counternarratives. This home tutor’s remarks encapsulated much of that ambivalence, which displayed outsidedness more than creative understanding in Bakhtin’s (1986a) terms. Nevertheless there were sparks of valuing the show people’s difference evident in comments such as “*. . .some of them will be wonderful to you*” and “*I think they have a ball, just play[ing] with each other*”.

Another home tutor, who positioned himself explicitly as expressing “*an outsider’s point of view*” (Y3HT1), identified with local people’s desire to attend the annual show.

. . .people seem to be willing to go to the show because it was an event that they remember as kids and wanted to perpetuate it with their own kids. Kids want to go because in a town like this perhaps nothing much happens. (Y3HT1)

This home tutor’s distancing of himself from the show people prompted him to speculate on their reaction to him as a home tutor who was also competent at driving a truck.

*I think they’re wary at first. . .perhaps because I’m older – that affords you **some** sort of respect anyway, because they know that you’ve got qualifications and they know that you’re experienced and [don’t] speak like a lot of the people they mix with speak. . .* (Y3HT1)

Superficially these comments indicate the speaker's explicit identification with 'locals' and a consequent, even if implicit, dissociation from show people. Yet I analyse his statements in a different vein: rather than replicating the 'showie'-'local' divide, I perceive his remarks as exhibiting both outsidedness and creative understanding. The explicit self-positioning as expressing "*an outsider's point of view*" implied two elements: a recognition of the fundamental differences between 'showies' and 'locals'; and an implicit suggestion that his detachment enabled him to observe positive aspects of the show people's lifestyle. This was evident in his identification of reasons why rural parents take their children to the show: that identification indicated that the show people perform a valuable service by providing entertainment "*in a town like this*". Similarly, the ascribed recognition by show people "*that you've got qualifications and. . . [don't] speak like a lot of the people they mix with speak. . .*" suggested his reciprocal acceptance that many show people also have "*qualifications*" and speak 'properly' – otherwise they would be unable to perceive those 'virtues' in him.

I contend that this reverse recognition exemplifies Bakhtin's (1986a) notions of outsidedness and creative understanding. As Morson and Emerson (1990) related Bakhtin's concepts to different languages:

To realize and develop the potential of a language, "outsidedness"—the outsidedness of another language—is required. That outsidedness may lead to an exchange in which each language reveals to the other what it did not know about itself, and in which new insights are produced that neither wholly contained before. (p. 310)

This home tutor's articulation of "*an outsider's point of view*" enabled him to express "*new insights*" into the show people's contributions to local communities and their levels of cultural capital. In doing so, his statements contributed to the critique of the show people's constructed otherness and to the transformation of that otherness into a valued difference.

Another home tutor emphasised what she saw **as** the fixed character of the boundary between 'showies' and 'locals'. She stated, "*Everyone's that's outside the show's an outsider*" (Y5HT1). Later she reinforced this point when she described people being "*on the outside*" of the show circuits (Y5HT1). She added, ". . .[there is] *nothing like an outside influence that brings them all together. . .*" (Y5HT1), implying the existence of heterogeneous groups on the show circuits. Given this supposedly fixed division between 'us' and 'them', the home tutor considered that show life provided a safe and secure environment for the expression of group and individual identity. Show life "*is their whole world*", so that, despite inevitable interpersonal and inter-group tensions, many show people feel comfortable in their relationships on the show circuits, "*withouthaving to compete with the rest of the otherpeople in society*" (Y5HT1).

In contrast to the previous home tutor cited above, who positioned himself as articulating "*an outsider's point of view*" (Y3HT1), this home tutor was at pains to identify herself **as** being associated in important respects (although not in every respect) with the 'showies'. An indication of her acceptance by the 'showies' was when her employer "*showedme where the secret gate [into the showgrounds] was to get in so I didn't have to pay*" (Y5HT1). Here the avoidance of paying entrance fees was a badge of identification with show people that the speaker prized highly, indicating in

doing so the considerable cultural capital attached to this relatively modest piece of financial capital. On the other hand, the speaker was aware of the unspoken but understood boundaries around her acceptance as a 'showie':

"I'm not a showman, I'm still an outsider" (Y5HT1). She also stated, *"I'm just a person who just lives with the showmen. . ."* (a comment that also implied that the show people do have a definite 'home'), rather than describing herself as one of those *"showmen"* (Y5HT1). These fine distinctions reveal the complexity and dynamism of the 'showie'–'local' divide, despite this speaker's own suggestions that this divide was uncomplicated and unchangeable. This revelation suggested the home tutor's implicit acceptance of the show people's tactic – analysed at length in Chapter Six – of highlighting that complexity and dynamism in order to resist the negative stereotype of 'once a show person, always a show person'.

As I indicated in Chapter Five, a recurring theme in this home tutor's discourse was the assertion that show people have traditionally been poorly treated by the wider society, and that that poor treatment has caused them to retreat into a separate existence on the show circuits.

. . .no other outsiders would be welcome. . .inside [the show circuits]. They would not. Well,. . .the world wasn't interested in them,. . .the communities. . .didn't know them, all they thought of them was – scum, really. (Y5HT1)

Shortly after this statement, the home tutor reinforced this view.

Everything that the showmen are is a product of the way we treat them – the way their pride is, the way they work, the way they are – is a product of years and years, centuries of our treatment of them. And that is the basic line. (Y5HT1)

Later in the interview, the speaker elaborated this view.

Like I said, the way they are, and the way they act, it's years and years of our treatment of them. That's the basic line. ..because of the way we. . .have treated them. Their own respect has come from the way they put us down,. . .the way the people outside have put them down. (Y5HT1)

For this reason, the speaker claimed, the 'showies' generally confine their interest in the world to the events of show life: ". . .why should they go out of their way. . .for the outer community, when the outer community have never treated them anything but. . .[poorly]?" (Y5HT1).

From one perspective, these comments could be considered patronising, with the show people's identity being constructed purely in terms defined by the broader society. From a different viewpoint, however, this was the strongest statement by a home tutor championing the show people as an oppressed and marginalised group. Furthermore, this was consequently the most direct evidence among my interviews with home tutors of the shift from outsidedness to creative understanding. This was a striking example of Morson and Emerson's (1990) observation that, within Bakhtin's (1986a) theoretical framework, people "cantake maximal advantage of the differences and of their outsidedness by an act of creative understanding that is truly dialogic in the best sense" (p. 429). From that perspective, this home tutor's clear articulation of the show people's traditional marginalisation, and her use of the interview with me to posit an alternative view of who they are and want to be, were indeed part of "an act of creative understanding" based on valuing the show people's "differences" and thereby displacing the constructions of their otherness.

A similar process was evident in the same home tutor's reference to 'mugs'. She asserted strongly, "*Oh no, not me, I wasn't a mug*" (Y5HT1) in a part of the interview where I was seeking to delineate terms that show people used to separate themselves from other people. Yet this tutor also indicated that, although she had travelled with the 'showies' for almost two years, for most of that time she dwelt on the margins of identity, not accepted by show people as a complete 'showie' and yet perceived by 'locals' who attended the shows as being associated with the show circuits. In that context, the speaker's rejection of the label 'mug' as having applied to her at any time reinforces the proposition that it is a more derogatory and specialised term than 'local'. This proposition was supported by the home tutor's subsequent reference to 'mug' in connection with 'rort', as a description of a 'rigged' game: "*I mean, how are you going to knock these down? That's a joke!*" (Y5HT1). So 'mug' in this sense has a more restricted meaning and use than the more generalised term 'local' – a point that I made in Chapter Six in connection with the show people's use of the term as a reversal tactic to counteract the derogatory terms routinely levelled at them. This home tutor's implicit acceptance of the function of that tactic was evident in her recognition of its negative valence.

Turning the focus from home tutors to the teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education, one teacher's admiration for the show children's courage in the face of adversity enlivened his account of a particular action by show children that spanned age differences:

But they're also very protective of their own. A couple of the bigger boys, I've got a lot of time for. And they're all very close, and they'll see the younger blokes, and they're not necessarily related to them, little boys in

Grade One, and they'll go and get a drink and the big boys can see some ~~of~~ the locals, they call them 'locals', giving them a bit ~~of~~ stick. And they'll quietly walk over and let them know, not in an unfriendly way, that they're around and like to be seen near their friends. And I'm always very proud ~~of~~ them when they do that because they just handle it. (Y2T1)

The teacher reflected on his own response to a potentially stressful situation that appeared to occur in nearly all the local schools attended by the show children:

I feel sorry ~~for~~ them that it would be great ~~f~~ they could just come into a school, enjoy the facilities without being hassled. . . . Sometimes the [show] kids go out and play footy with the [local] kids, and they get involved, but on the whole they tend to stick to themselves. (Y2T1)

This teacher had not been involved with teaching the show children for very long, and he identified elements of their lifestyle that he considered educationally marginalising. In that context, it was suggestive that he complimented the social maturity of particular show children in their interactions with local children. **As** a relative newcomer to the show children's education program, he tended to take at face value show people's constructions of the division between 'showies' and 'locals' as fixed and permanent, whereas teachers with a longer involvement with the show people qualified those constructions with references to specific contexts and individual people.

On the other hand, this teacher acknowledged instances of friendly interaction between show children and local children. He cited **as** evidence the particular approach to the 'buddy system' that was in operation at a school on the western Queensland show circuit.

. . .we went into a classroom and we were invited to work in the classroom with our kids and we were made to feel part of that class. The kids in that class adopted our kids, and they were always coming up to us and saying, "Would you like to play with us?", and being very kind to the kids. That was lovely. (Y2T1)

The selected statements by this teacher encapsulate my argument in this section of the chapter. The teacher's outsideness was revealed in such comments as "*I feel sorry for them*" which, taken alone, could shade into the marginalising constructions of the show people's otherness identified in Chapter Five. In the context of the teacher's educational discourse, however, his reference to the older show children's maturity in dealing with a potentially hostile situation, and his pleased reaction to instances of show children and local children working and playing together amicably, reflected his growing creative understanding of the pressures on show people and their productive engagements with those pressures.

The home tutor's recognition that show people have to work at disrupting their marginalising and constructed otherness in turn recalled for me Morson and Emerson's (1990) account of Bakhtin's insight – reflected in the works of the German writer Goethe – that

. . .a real sense of creativity would have to involve human work. . .It must involve work growing out of concrete needs but producing something that is also genuinely new and not exhaustively specified by the past. (p. 415)

This is the real and twofold significance of the home tutor's comments about the show children for my argument: the move from outsideness to creative understanding "*must involve work*" and a genuine commitment to mutual

comprehension on ‘both sides’; and such a move can indeed be successful in *“producing something that is also genuinely new and not exhaustively specified by the past”*. Transformative counternarratives that value the show people’s difference rather than replicate constructions of their otherness are striking examples of this kind of production.

7.5 Transforming forms of unproblematic knowledge: A separate show school

To this point in the chapter, I have discussed the show people’s transformations of their marginalising experiences and resistant practices in relation to changing their absence of place into a place of their own and changing the constructions of their otherness into a valuing of their difference. These transformations are important in their own right, as they go directly to the heart and centre of what it means to be a show person and how that meaning is open to dynamic flows as show people imagine themselves otherwise. These transformations are also vital to the show people’s educational experiences and opportunities, as this section of the chapter will demonstrate.

In Chapter Five, I focussed on the third key attribute of strategies of marginalisation identified by de Certeau (1984): the forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about how and where show people should receive formal schooling. I explained that, while some of the six options previously available to show people for educating their children were better than others, all of them were fundamentally flawed because they derived from a conceptual opposition between the show people’s itinerant lifestyle and maximising their children’s educational outcomes. I related that fundamental flaw to de

Certeau's (1984) insight that "*the power to provide oneself with one's own place*" is the same power that "*produces itself in and through*" (p. 36) forms of "*knowledge*" that are neither innocent nor objective, but that are instead actively complicit with perpetuating the power of 'the centre'. That is, implicitly and unquestioningly assuming that 'normal' children remain in one place to receive their schooling was the basis of the show people's educational marginalisation.

In Chapter Six, I demonstrated that the show people have resisted those seemingly unproblematic forms of knowledge about schooling provision by means of two particular resistant practices: their lobbying for the establishment of the special Brisbane School of Distance Education program for their children; and their tactical consumption of that program to refine and reshape it continuously to fit more closely with their distinctive learning needs. I used the show people's words about the program to reveal their very strong commitment to enhancing their children's educational outcomes and their determination to institutionalise the educational innovation. This commitment and this determination derived from the show people's recognition that gains in soliciting understanding of their situation were by no means guaranteed, and reflected de Certeau's (1984) depiction of tactics as ephemeral and transient in character.

I turn now to examine how the show people, animated and encouraged by their success in transforming their absence of place and their constructed otherness, transform the forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about their schooling into a particular manifestation of Traveller education that reflects and suits their distinctive circumstances. Their calls for, and their success in obtaining, a separate school of their own constitutes a counter-nar-

rative that reverses ‘the rules of the game’ and a new terrain in educational provision. As I have emphasised throughout this thesis, this transformation is the response to generations of neglect and the result of years of energy and labour; it is therefore less teleological and triumphalist than conceived as the possibly temporary outcome of an ongoing struggle about identities and life chances. As de Certeau (1986) noted about the South American “Indians” in their resistance of the Spanish invasion:

. . .if the survivors’ resistance has found political expression, it is because. . .their communities continued to return periodically to the home village, to claim their rights to the land and to maintain, through this collective alliance on a common soil, an anchorage in the particularity of a place. (p. 229)

The fact that “*the survivors. . .continued to return periodically to the home village*” is a powerful metaphor for the multiple ways in which the show people have continually revisited their own inadequate educational experiences to ‘recharge the batteries’ of their efforts to create something new: a genuinely Australian version of Traveller education.

From that perspective, the show people’s efforts to transform forms of unproblematic knowledge about their schooling varied according to whether they believed that the Brisbane School of Distance Education program could be amended to accord with their developing expectations or that only fundamental structural change would meet those expectations – in short, whether ‘evolution’ or ‘revolution’ should be the basis of a transformative Traveller education for them.

In looking ahead, the show people sought to identify ways in which Traveller education could fit more and more easily into the spaces of their itinerancy, and consequently ways in which they could continue to turn those spaces into 'places' consumed and occupied by themselves. In doing so, they reflected their continuing awareness of the crucial importance of harnessing the outsideness and enhancing the creative understanding of educational providers, whose support they would continue to need if they were to succeed in their progressively more ambitious plans. It is in this respect that my interpretation of Traveller education for Queensland show people is not teleological: each 'settlement' is tentative and temporary, and gains can quickly become losses if the show people do not consciously safeguard their terrain.

In this account of the show people's transformation of forms of unproblematic knowledge I move from the 'evolutionary' to the 'revolutionary'. Some respondents concentrated on the structural basis of the program rather than its components. These speakers identified the program's association with the Queensland government as a major restriction on its future expansion. They speculated about the potential benefits of adding a national government dimension to the Traveller education available to the show children. For example, one parent said of her daughter, "*Maybe by the time she's ready to go [to school], it will be right throughout Australia, and that will be even better*" (Y1P1). Another parent elaborated this perception:

What I thought was, we tend to work basically in the four states of Australia, which would be Queensland, the Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales. And basically, because the setup's been done with the [School of] Distance Education in Brisbane, . . . the kiddies still

do their work, [but] they don't do it as far as the program with the schools, the classrooms and so on in New South Wales and Victoria. If it was funded nationally, federally, it would be a much better idea, I believe. If it was possible to get a grant or something. Because it's very hard for one government to accept the responsibility, basically. (Y2P3)

As the program developed, however, several stakeholders came to the belief that the show people's future educational experiences lay along a very different path: the establishment of a separate school for show children. A nascent indication of this thinking became evident in the first year of data gathering, in the fourth year of the program's operation, when a show person stated:

*When I think this program would go in leaps and bounds, what would help it, is to have a teacher who could travel with us. There was a situation for. . . thirty years on the showground, where a policeman travelled the circuit with us and stayed in motels in each town. And he was the p[ublic] r[elations] through the community **for** the showmen. And it was really great. Now **if** they had a teacher who could come and travel with us **for** this length of time. . . because what we found the problem is, every time the children go into the next classroom, that whole first day is taken up just finding out **for** that new teacher where the kids are at. But **if** there was a teacher that could keep them in line and organised and know each town where they were at, it would be so [good], and they could work one on one every day with a different child. It would be such a bonus to the program; it would be excellent. (Y1P2)*

It is important to point out that the speaker was referring to a situation in which one or more teachers travelled full time or permanently with the show circuits, rather than returning to Brisbane after every second show as occurred at the time of her suggestion. At this early stage, this parent still thought in terms of this permanently travelling teacher or teachers as being part of Education Queensland:

*. . . maybe we could fund the money, maybe use certain parts of the money to have a teacher to travel. And as. . . one of the teachers suggested, . . . a big 'bus would be great that they could stack up the library books and just drive, and if they wanted to build a room in it, [a] self-contained room, they could camp in our area. . . . [Which] would cost them no rent or anything; it would cost them nothing once it was initiated, once it was there. And we might use it **for** three or **four** months of the year, and perhaps the Education Department could use it in other situations **for** the rest of the year. (Y1P2)*

As the show people's constructions of their future educational experiences developed over time, however, a distinct shift occurred away from this notion of sharing resources with Education Queensland to calls for specialised resources being allocated for the exclusive use of the show people. Another parent articulated the rationale underpinning this shift in mindset:

*We tried to do it where they were integrated, but we're a different system altogether. The distance. . . education. . . kids are there, but they're just there. . . . They're out a hundred k[ilometre]s on a property, and they come to town every so often, and they're contactable, and they're there. **Our** kids are completely a different system. So we can't take their rules and make them work **for** us. And we've done it **for** a few years, and*

*we've found it's just inhibiting us too much on what we can strive **for** and do. . . . And we are specialised, so therefore we should specialise on us. (Y4P5)*

This speaker's mobilisation of a discourse centred on being "*different*" and "*specialised*" again reflected the process whereby the show people's resistance of forms of unproblematic knowledge about their schooling shaded into transformation of those forms through the construction of the new terrain of Traveller education. That is, the interviewee's 'spealung position' was located in an awareness of the need to subvert "*their rules*", which they found "*just inhibiting us too much*", and create new rules of their own. As in the two previous sections of this chapter, part of that transformation was associated with engaging with educational policy makers' outsideness from, and developing creative understanding of, the show people's situation. Equally crucial to the process, however, was a confidence in establishing new rules and categories if the existing ones were inappropriate or deleterious. This confidence is central to the show people's construction of the counternarrative of Traveller education.

This assertion of a "*different*" and "*specialised*" status for the educational needs and aspirations of show children led, seemingly inexorably, to calls for the establishment of a separate school for such children. The same parent who articulated this status elaborated this call: "*We're talking about being a separate school. I think that being a separate school only means that we can specialise and concentrate on the needs of our children*" (Y4P5). In making this call, she emphasised that the school would not be restricted to children of members of the Showmen's Guild:

...the itinerant children, there are a few [of them], and our system is open to them, even though it will be called "The Showmen's Guild of Austral[as]ia School" – it won't cut out any people. (Y4P5)

Furthermore, another parent explained that, even though she also wanted a special education program for show children:

...I don't mean we can't mix with other kids. We're not saying that. We don't think we should be all in a little thing with the kids. We need to learn on our own because we're different like that, [but we] can still play with all the other kids. They need that too. Still play with all the kids. (Y4P6)

At about the same time, a member of the Showmen's Guild outlined a variation on this call for a government school for the show children:

...in another twenty years' time, when the showmen's education program has its own school, and I'd like to see it one day become a private school in some sense. Not so much a public or a state school, but certainly one that might be based here [at the Guild's headquarters at Yatala, south of Brisbane], down the back or somewhere like that. It might have its own library, and all this type of thing. It's a pipe dream, but certainly it's a possibility one day. (Y4A1)

In the event, after the data gathering phase of this research project had been completed, the show people lobbied the Howard Coalition federal government for the establishment of a separate school for show children. They proved adept at using the government's discourse of 'freedom of choice' in relation to education and at capitalising on the government's 'new schools' policy. At the time of writing, a school for show children has been set up with federal government approval and under the auspices of the Queensland state

government. One of the teachers involved with the Brisbane School of Distance Education program has been appointed as principal, and two teams of teachers travel along the circuits teaching the show children full time (Anonymous, 2000; Special Broadcasting Service, 2000).

De Certeau (1984) identified in strategies of marginalisation “*aspecific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one’s own place*” (p. 36) and conversely by the power to deny such a knowledge to others. This section of the chapter has traced the show people’s determination “*to provide [themselves] with [their] own place*”, through the establishment of a separate school for their children. That determination has been fuelled by their resistance of the inadequate schooling options previously available to them and by their lobbying for and consumption of the Brisbane School of Distance Education program. That determination has been strengthened also by the show people’s success at having their ‘spealung positions’ on education recognised and valued by others, notably government officials, whose initial outsideness has been turned into creative understanding of the show people’s situation. These several currents of energy and activity have converged in the new school’s opening, which marks a ‘sea change’ in the institution of Australian Traveller education as a counternarrative to the show people’s educational marginalisation and resistance.

7.6 Review of the chapter

This chapter has answered the third research question framing this thesis: “**How** do the show people transform their marginalising experiences and resistant practices?”. The posing of that question reflected an assumption

that, in addition to and beyond the show people's resistance of their marginalised situation arising from their itinerancy, their actions have resulted in fundamental changes to 'the rules of the game' governing their previous educational options and have succeeded in creating a new terrain of Australian Traveller education.

Conceptually the chapter was guided by acknowledging that de Certeau (1984) recognised the potential for resistance to lead to transformation of marginalisation, and by deploying Bakhtin's (1986a) notions of outsidedness and creative understanding. Specifically, I applied Bakhtin's explication of the integral links between outsidedness and creative understanding to my analysis of the words of home tutors and Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers in order to demonstrate the extent of the show people's success at enlisting those others in circulating new stories about the show people's lives and education. In doing so, I made the following specific points:

- The show people, through the home tutors and teachers, have transformed their ascribed absence of place into a place of their own and hence into a location of power by extending to those others their multiple experiences and understandings of 'home'.
- The show people, through the home tutors and teachers, have transformed the constructions of their otherness into a valuing of their difference by communicating to those others the positive valence of the term 'showies'.
- The show people have transformed forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about the appropriate forms and places of educating itinerant people by successfully lobbying for a separate school for show children.

This analysis suggests that, although such an outcome was neither inevitable nor permanent, the show people have succeeded in generating a

counternarrative to the traditional marginalisation and resistance of their identities and educational opportunities. From this perspective, the show people's transformative actions, 'spaces' that they turn into 'places' through their exploitation of outsideness and their facilitation of creative understanding, are a fundamental component of their 'learning on the run'.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOME ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

“I do not really wish to conclude and sum up, rounding off the argument so as to dump it in a nutshell on the reader. A lot more could be said about any of the topics I have touched upon. . . . I have meant to ask the questions, to break the frame. . . . The point is not a set of answers, but making possible a different practice.”

Kappeler, 1986; cited in Lather, 1992, p. 95

*“In research the horizon recedes as we advance, and is no nearer at sixty than it was at twenty. As the power of endurance weakens with age, the urgency of the pursuit **grows** more intense. . . . **And** research **is** always incomplete.”*

Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon*, chap. 10

8.1 The problem addressed and the research questions answered

In the introduction to this thesis, I enunciated the problem to be explored in the study in this way: what does the Queensland show children's educational provision reveal about the intersection of education and marginalisation, resistance and transformation, as well as about broader issues in Australian Traveller education? The intention was to elaborate some of the dimensions and implications of that highly evocative and redolent phrase, *"learning on the run"*.

Furthermore, I stated the three research questions that would frame the conduct of the investigation carried out to address this research problem:

- *"How do the show people experience marginalisation?"*
- *"How do the show people resist their marginalised status?"*
- *"How do the show people transform their marginalising experiences and resistant practices?"*

This study therefore assigned prominence to the three concepts of marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to both the Queensland show people and the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy. That is, I perceive itinerancy as simultaneously the site of undoubted neglect of and discrimination against travelling people and of the possibilities of a more productive and equitable educational provision for those people.

In Chapter Two of the thesis, I surveyed the current literature in two areas: Australian shows; and Traveller education. I identified varying manifestations of ambivalence, marginalisation, resistance and transformation associated with the literature on Australian shows, particularly in terms of the relations between itinerant and local people. I also discerned considerable ambivalence, marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the literature on Traveller education, with the majority of studies continuing to conform to the features of either an ‘unproblematic othering’ or an ‘unproblematic celebration’ of itinerancy, with respectively assumptions of itinerancy being a ‘deficit’ lifestyle and therefore education having a ‘remedial’ function, or else an excessive emphasis on the exotic fascination of living an itinerant lifestyle. By contrast, there is also a growing body of literature predicated on itinerant people’s rights to pursue the lifestyle that they wished and to have equitable access to appropriate educational provision. The existing literature on Australian shows and Traveller education also creates a space for my intended contribution to that literature arising from this intensive study of Queensland show people’s experiences of ‘learning on the run’.

A significant part of that intended contribution relates to my application to the empirical site outlined above of the conceptual framework articulated in Chapter Three. That framework was centred on the derivation of a mutually engaged and responsive interplay between Michel de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’, whereby show people seek to change the often uncomprehending and sometimes hostile ‘spaces’ through which they travel into ‘places’ of their own, and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, whereby the show people’s interactions with others assist them in changing ‘the rules of the games’ that construct them **as**

disadvantaged. This conceptual framework has the particular value of throwing into stark relief the marginalised, resistant and transformative aspects of ‘learning on the run’.

Chapter Four applied ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, and marginalisation, resistance and transformation, to the study’s research design. I explained my own ambivalence about the study’s potential for replicating, as well as contesting, the show people’s disadvantaged situation, and I argued that de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’, and his two binary categories of ‘consumption’/‘reading’ and ‘production’/‘writing’, provided a way of understanding my relations with the show people and a justification for the asserted trustworthiness of my analysis of their interview data. I further asserted that Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ helped to explain the show people’s interactions with both myself and the staff members of the Brisbane School of Distance Education. **So** ambivalence was posited as a potentially productive approach to both the research design’s ethical and political dimensions and the data gathering techniques, which consisted of semi-structured interviews with forty-two people and an analysis of relevant documents. **As** I elaborate below, ‘learning on the run’ is a descriptor that can be applied **as** much to me as a researcher as it can to the Queensland show people.

I provided answers to the study’s three research questions in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. In Chapter Five, I used de Certeau’s (1984) notion of ‘strategies of marginalisation’ to identify and critique the show people’s marginalising experiences. Specifically, the chapter examined three key attributes of strategies of marginalisation directed against the show people:

their absence of place; the construction of their otherness in relation to the settled community; and forms of unproblematic knowledge about the ‘proper’ location and provision of schooling. In combination, these three elements of marginalisation provided the impetus for the show people’s resistance and transformation of their marginalised situation, and is therefore integral to their ‘learning on the run’.

I used Chapter Six to explore the show people’s ongoing efforts to resist their marginalised status. I identified their resistant practices by means of applying de Certeau’s (1984) concept of ‘tactics of consumption’, aided by his notion of ‘space’. Specifically, I argued that the show people resist their ascribed absence of place through their multiple experiences and understandings of ‘home’. Furthermore, they resist their constructed otherness by giving the term ‘showies’ a positive valence to counteract the negative stereotypes ascribed to it by others, disrupting the ‘showie’–‘non-showie’ dichotomy and giving the term ‘mugs’ a negative valence as a tactic of reversal. They also resist forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about their schooling through their lobbying for, and consumption of, a specialised educational program operated by the Brisbane School of Distance Education. The show people’s resistant practices are therefore as integral as the strategies of marginalisation identified in Chapter Five to their ‘learning on the run’.

In Chapter Seven, I analysed the show people’s efforts to move beyond the resistance of marginalisation to the transformation of the spaces of their itinerancy. I applied Bakhtin’s (1986a) notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ to explain how the show people have succeeded in making fundamental changes to ‘the rules of the game’ governing their

previous educational options and have succeeded in creating a new terrain of Australian Traveller education. Specifically, I analysed the words of home tutors and teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education to demonstrate how the show people have transformed their ascribed absence of place into a place of their own and hence into a location of power by extending to those others their multiple experiences and understandings of 'home'. They have also transformed the constructions of their otherness into a valuing of their difference by communicating to those others the positive valence of the term 'showies'. Moreover, they have transformed forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about the appropriate forms and places of educating itinerant people by successfully lobbying for a separate school for their children. From this perspective, the show people's transformative actions, whereby they turn the 'spaces' of itinerancy into 'places' through their exploitation of outsideness and their facilitation of creative understanding, are a fundamental component of their 'learning on the run'.

8.2 The personal note revisited

At the end of Chapter One of this thesis, I inserted "*A personal note*" that outlined some autobiographical information. The intention was to emphasise from the outset my awareness of the usually implicit relationship between a research project and the researcher's subjectivity, and moreover of the potential for that subjectivity to be complicit in replicating the existing disadvantage of a group of 'research subjects' or of otherwise not doing them positive good. I have explored this matter elsewhere in somewhat greater

length (Danaher, 1998b), and I consider below the implications of the issue for possible future directions in Traveller education research. Here I shall focus on my continuing and changing relationship with the research project.

Throughout this thesis, my musings on this issue of potential complicity have constituted a set of antiphons in a minor key to the focus – the verses in major chords – on the show people’s marginalisation, resistance and transformation. That is, I have made explicit on occasions my ambivalence about particular matters, such as the ethical and political dimensions of the study’s research design. Thus I have drawn attention to the resistant and transformative elements of the spaces of the show people’s itinerancy while striving to challenge the marginalising elements of those same spaces. At the same time, some feelings of ambivalence about doing so are occasioned by my awareness that getting the balance between these polarities ‘right’ is always difficult (Kenny, 1997). So an important part of my own ‘learning on the run’ in writing this thesis has been a growing understanding that such ambivalence is likely to remain with me about the study, and moreover that such ambivalence can have positive effects.

I feel supported in making this statement by the view expressed by Kenway and Willis with Blackmore and Rennie (1998) – to which, as I noted in Chapter Four, I would add the descriptor ‘self-reflective’:

*We know that our preferences **for** action and **our** knowledge are situated, partial and interested. They arise **from** our biographies, our different theoretical, institutional, geographic and time locations.* (p. xii)

In other words, my personal note at the beginning of the thesis, this reflection on that note at the end of the thesis and my musings on my ambivalence about conducting this study are all ‘grist to the mill’ of making researchers’ subjectivities more, not less, visible in investigating Traveller education. This kind of approach helps readers to evaluate the ‘truth claims’ made in studies such as this, and also keeps ‘on the agenda’ issues such as researchers’ roles in replicating or contesting the marginalisation of itinerant people.

As I stated in Chapter Four, I take heart also from the following observation of Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990):

*Inevitably, a work is always a **form of** tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning as ongoing passages to an elsewhere (-within-here). . . . What needs to be reconsidered are these widely adopted and imposed **forms of** closure whose main function is simply to wrap up a product and facilitate consumption. They create neither a space of serenity nor **of** fecundity **for** the mind and body to rest and grow; rather, they naturalize the zone **of** conformity, where freedom consists of filling in to one’s taste and monetary capacity, the pre-assigned slots. (p. 329)*

My desire is that I have written this thesis in ways that encourage ‘tactics of consumption’ by the reader, and practices of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ with the reader, that will allow temporary and tentative closures rather than an imposed closure designed “*to wrap up a product and facilitate consumption*”. Such temporary and tentative closures are far more in keeping with the various conceptual, methodological and empirical lessons that I have learned ‘on the run’ about the constituent spaces of itinerancy.

8.3 Possible directions for future research

Focussing on the constituent spaces of itinerancy also suggests some possible directions for future research in Traveller education – or ways whereby ‘learning on the run’ can be applied to the broader field in which I have positioned this study. A useful starting point in this process is Kiddle’s (1999) call for a new “*terrain*” to be developed in Traveller education in England:

Education and pride in themselves is the power that parents and teachers can jointly give to the children – a power to develop self-esteem, a power ~~for~~ choice, a power to defend against exploitation. . . . I have no illusion about the immense difficulties that presents ~~for~~ both parents and teachers, Traveller and non-Traveller, but I do not care to contemplate the alternative future for the children. (p. 156)

Thus for Kiddle (1999) Traveller educational provision and research have an imperative to transform educational opportunities for Travellers whereby they have “*power*”. Kenny’s (1997) “*vision statement*” (p. 296) for Traveller education also focussed on the political dimension:

Traveller children, in collaboration with emancipatory teachers, will acquire the knowledge and skills needed ~~for~~ emancipatory practice. They will learn to clarify who their enemies are, and direct their resistance with increasing accuracy. Teachers and parents will establish reciprocal relationships in schools and in a developing, politically and culturally

dynamic Traveller society. Thus, the patronage which, in situations of internal colonialism informs relations between the dominant and subordinated ethnic groups, will be confronted and replaced with mutually respectful, dialogic relations. (pp. 296-297)

The reference to “*mutually respectful, dialogic relations*”, and the implication that such relations depend on a transformation of the political dimension of Traveller education, resonate with this study’s analysis of the ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ manifested in the Queensland show people’s marginalisation, resistance and transformation associated with their itinerancy. As I noted in Chapter Four, that reference and that implication also highlight the enduring importance of Traveller educational research having a “*transformative*” function as enunciated by Anyanwu (1998):

Transformative research is a systematic inquiry into the real conditions which create oppression or hinder self-determination. It produces reflective knowledge which helps people to identify their situation and in doing so, to change such [a] situation for the better. (p. 45)

From that perspective, the findings of this thesis are intended to have just such a “*transformative*” function. My analysis of the interplay among marginalisation, resistance and transformation as the show people use ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ in efforts to make the spaces of itinerancy more congenial and meaningful highlighted aspects of their lives that constitute part of “*the real conditions which create oppression or hinder self-determination*”. At the same time, I pointed to conclusions that potentially might assist the show people “*to identify their*

*situation and in doing so, to change such [a] situation **for** the better".* I do not mean by this that I have communicated a particular opinion about the 'pros' and 'cons' of having a separate school, for example. I mean instead that this study, and future Traveller education research, can and should contribute to a developing body of knowledge about, and understanding and acceptance of, the specialised educational needs and aspirations of Travellers that will potentially create new and more enabling educational opportunities for them.

On a related matter, I indicated in Chapter One that claims are often made about open and distance learning as a possible panacea for addressing the educational needs of different kinds of learners. The significance of this study is that such claims must be counterbalanced by an intensive examination of the learning experiences of specific groups of learners. In the case of the show people, their resistance and transformation of their marginalisation – derived from and fuelled by their agency – enabled them to consume a particular distance education program on their own terms and in their own image. As I have said, this is not always the case, and so a healthy scepticism would seem the most appropriate approach to uncritical and unexamined assertions about the empowering capacity of open and distance learning.

As Kenny (1997) has pointed out, the development of knowledge about Traveller education has some parallels with ongoing research into the links between education and gender:

The shift in mindset is comparable to that involved in addressing issues related to gender equity: what was assumed to be the natural order of things was found to be a male construct, and it was not enough to

*simply make room within it for women. We need to realise that there is nothing natural about **our** sedentary life-style and all that it requires, any more than there is about reading from left to right. (p. 296)*

This denaturalisation of sedentarism provides a fitting and welcome riposte to McVeigh's (1997) reference to

*. . .a host of other less tangible ideas, actions and structures which construct being sedentary **as** the only possible mode of existence within contemporary society. (p. 9)*

Such a denaturalisation would have the associated benefit of promoting theoretical understandings of residence **as** having multiple forms, each equally valid and worthy of value. In this way, the spaces of itinerancy would become transformed into an infinity of places whose inhabitants would constantly move in and out and who would be connected by means of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

As for my own more detailed "vision statement" (Kenny, 1997, p. 296) of Traveller education research, in 1996 I spoke the following words at an international seminar on open and distance learning for Traveller education organised by the European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers (EFECOT):

*. . .an artistic analogy. . .is useful in helping me to view the education of the children of occupational Travellers **as** a number of adjoining panels in a very large landscape painting. The foreground depicts children learning in situ, with their teachers changing their conventional roles **as** the key figure in a permanent classroom. The middle ground shows the*

excited faces and the bright colours of a fairground ride or a circus tent, and the exhausted but contented demeanours of fruit pickers after a hard day's work. The background consists of the flat land and greenfields of western Europe in some panels and the Australian eucalypti stretching to undulating hills on the horizon in others. My colleagues and I hope that this seminar will bring closer to fruition the joining of the panels and the unveiling of the larger painting, so that the constants and the variables of educating the children of occupational Travellers around the world may be revealed. (Danaher, 1996, pp. 47-48)

This thesis has been conceived as contributing to “*the joining of the panels and the unveiling of the larger painting*” that depict the complexities and subtleties of itinerancy and Traveller education. The thesis's contribution to that enterprise lies largely in its delineation of some of the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy and Traveller education, particularly the marginalising, resistant and transformative dimensions of those spaces. The thesis has demonstrated how the Queensland show people's ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ enable them to resist and transform the marginalising spaces in which they are located, an achievement that reveals the continuing existence of, and the interplay among, marginalisation, agency and ambivalence for Travellers and Traveller education researchers alike. These, among others, are the important lessons of ‘learning on the run’.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

NOTE: Individual questions were expressed according to whether the respondent was a student, a parent, a home tutor or an itinerant teacher.

1. Background information:
 - name
 - age
 - number and ages of siblings or children
 - length of time on program to **date**
 - previous educational experiences
 - where school work and homework are done
 - who helps with school work and homework
 - favourite and least favourite subjects
 - career** aspirations
 - participation at the show
 - recreationalactivities
 - friendships
 - where and when holidays are taken
 - where is home?
2. What are three words that you would use to describe living and learning on the show circuit?

3. What are three words that you think locals would use to describe living and learning on the show circuit?
4. Which has a greater influence on the type of people show children are – travelling on the show circuit or watching television and videos?
5. Are there enough jobs on the show circuit for all the show children when they grow up?
6. How easily do show people adapt to living in “the outside world”?
7. Tell me about the relationships between show people and locals when the show comes to town.
8. What are the main benefits and drawbacks of living and being educated on the show circuit?
9. How does being educated on the show circuit compare to going to boarding school or doing correspondence lessons?
10. Do show children have special learning needs? If so, how well does this program meet those needs (how well does it break down barriers to learning)? Could the program be improved in any way?
11. How much control have the show people been able to exercise over the program? Have they had any say in curriculum content or assessment?
12. How much do you think that the writers of the program actually know about show people? How much do they need to know?

13. Would this program be better or worse than boarding school or correspondence lessons for high school students on the show circuit?
14. Has your opinion of the program and itinerant teachers/show people changed during your participation in the program?
15. What other questions should I have asked you about living and learning on the show circuit?