Interrogating the discursive constitution of the ‘normal’ in ‘inclusive’ early childhood education

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Statement of originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

Research within the field of ‘inclusion’ in early childhood education is often explored within the positivist paradigm where the interrogatory gaze falls on the child with ‘special needs’. This approach embedded in developmental and psychological discourses focuses on this child as the problem, their perceived difficulties within the mainstream classroom and the importance of their assessment, diagnosis, and remediation. Offering an alternative view, my thesis questions and challenges ‘practice as usual’ by utilising a poststructural perspective to look otherwise. It turns the gaze away from the diagnosed child toward the including group, the ‘normal’. My study is inspired by previous work that conceptualises, troubles and interrupts the ‘normal’ as a cultural and discursive construct. I focus on the discursive constitution and maintenance of the ‘normal’, a mechanism theorised to exercise power by imposing limitations and conformity on subjects as it individualises, compares and evaluates difference in the classroom. Researching among children, the ethnographic study in three early childhood classrooms employs a Foucauldian discourse analysis along with the concepts of positioning theory and category boundary work to examine the observations and the conversations of human actors as well as the contribution of non-human actors in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. By attending to how circulating discourses are taken up by the ‘normal’ in everyday social practices, I make visible the category boundary and maintenance work performed by the children as they work to position themselves and each other. The children’s words and actions produce inclusionary but also exclusionary effects as they encounter the child with a diagnosis. These effects interrupt taken for granted assumptions about the ‘inclusive’ nature of the classroom. In my reading of them I note how traces of exclusionary historical discursive practices recounted by Foucault (2006) in History of Madness, continue to permeate current medical, psychological and developmental discourses and practices and contribute to the constitution of the ‘normal’ in the inclusive classroom. My thesis illustrates how sanctioned, privileged and ‘naturalised’ everyday practices of the discursively produced ‘normal’ operate, how they silently exclude and problematize difference and for the most part, how they remain unchallenged. My study takes up this challenge and interrogates the limits and exclusions imposed on subjectivities by the ‘normal’. It demonstrates how scrutinizing the discursive constitution of the ‘normal’ and interrogating its power on subjectification present promise for ‘inclusive’ early childhood education.
Chapter 1

‘Inclusive’ early childhood education: turning towards the ‘normal’

My initial motivation and continuing driving force in this research has been the pursuit of new ways of seeing, thinking and doing ‘inclusion’ in early childhood education. My experiences of ‘inclusion’, as a teacher and a researcher, are unavoidably entwined and implicated in this work. I struggled to construct this chapter, as I did not know what story to write, how to represent my and others’ lives. Some years ago I was an early intervention teacher, who felt very passionate and dedicated to identifying and addressing, what I thought were a child’s ‘special’ needs as I helped ‘transition’ them into an ‘inclusive’ mainstream setting. There came a time however when I felt disillusioned and disappointed by the way children with diagnosed disabilities were positioned ‘as ‘problematic’ and ‘difficult’ in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. My study attempts to disrupt and challenge this positioning, by asking questions that produce different knowledges and positioning. In this introduction I write about those knowledges and understandings that helped me to make significant shifts in how I view the ‘inclusive’ classroom. This ongoing transformation in my thinking opened new possibilities and opportunities that produce some “scepticism about the regimes of truth” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.1) that currently dominate the field.

‘Inclusion’ in early childhood education

Looking at ‘inclusion’ in early childhood in Australia, as in other parts of the world, there has been a relatively recent move toward ‘inclusive’ policy and practice (Nutbrown & Clough, 2006). Although written about in the 1970s, ‘inclusion’ for ‘children with disabilities’ in mainstream classrooms only emerged as an option during the 1990s (Odom, 2000). Historically, the moves from the institutional care of ‘disabled children’ to segregated educational settings, and then onto policies of integration of children into mainstream educational environments, opened additional possibilities for children. Inclusion then replaced integration as a preferred model (UNESCO, 1994). This movement towards inclusion was introduced with the view to change existing structures and to potentially change the view of disability in society (Purdue, 2009; Oliver, 2013). My work as a teacher took place in this context. The Australian Government’s Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) introduced
into early childhood education 2009, supports the idea of “inclusive learning communities” (p.15) where ability and disability are viewed as aspects of diversity. ‘Inclusion’ for the most part is taken for granted as appropriate practice in early childhood today.

As an outcome of the disability rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Wong & Cummings, 2010) ‘inclusion’ is constructed as a right in early childhood education (Wong & Cummings, 2010). This right is upheld by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Australian Government, 1992). However, the notion is not well defined or understood in the field. Moreover, as Graham and Slee (2005) explain, ‘inclusive’ practice entails that the practice of ‘inclusion’ is commonly assumed to be already commenced or somehow complete with a shared meaning and understanding. Terming it as ‘benign commonality’ Graham and Slee (2005) warn that it is dangerous as it conceals differences, leading to everyone thinking they know what ‘inclusion’ means. The teachers in my research often spoke of their ‘inclusive’ settings as places of harmony where everyone ‘fits’ in: “We have inclusion here, our ‘special needs’ children just blend in” (Field Notes, S2, p.8).

In my experience, as an early intervention teacher, ‘inclusion’ was often regarded as successful when the ‘child with special needs’ was ‘tolerated’ in the mainstream setting, without causing too much hassle and upheaval. There is a hazardous familiarity about the term that avoids confronting and talking about difference. The illusion of ‘inclusion’ as a finished product (Slee & Allan, 2001) is potentially problematic. For me the term ‘inclusion’ and its associated meanings and practices continue to be challenging, undefined and elusive, but there might be some promise in following other researchers who have recognised and examined the competing discourses in the classroom, that give meaning and understanding to ‘inclusion’ (Graham & Slee, 2005).

**Diagnosing a child**

For almost a decade starting in the late 1990s I was an early intervention teacher. The core of my work was pinpointing to a diagnosis as this ostensibly offered a thorough understanding of a child without spending time with them. A diagnosis drew attention to the child’s deficits and differences when compared to other undiagnosed children. A diagnosis offered explanations and justifications for the child’s unusual or disruptive behaviours. It provided ‘essential’ information for making decisions about planning the child’s ‘necessary’ remediation, therapy programs, and possible transition strategies.
into mainstream settings. Procuring a diagnosis, dispensed by paediatricians or psychologists, occasioned government funding which was crucial for the operation of the service I worked for and for the support teachers needed in an ‘inclusive’ mainstream classroom where the child with a diagnosis was enrolled. My knowledge and teaching practice was built on clinical and ‘scientific’ understandings of the child and was informed by what I have since come to know as ‘the medical model of disability’.

In the course of my work I met David (not his real name) and his family. It was in this relationship that I started to change my thinking about diagnosing children. The effects of the medical model slowly began to unravel. I started to ‘look awry’ (Zizek, 1991), I questioned my knowledge and my practices of ‘inclusion’ (and exclusion). Stronach and MacLure (1997) argue that when a critical incident or ‘turning point’ happens a person must be predisposed for a transformation. I think my many years of disappointment with ‘inclusion’ contributed to my predisposed position for change. David’s story below is told via the medical paradigm and explores my thinking and practices at the time.

**A story about David … the marked child**

In 1999, in rural New South Wales, I took up a position as a teacher in an early intervention service that provided assessment, referral, multidisciplinary networking, therapy sessions and transition to mainstream services for children with a diagnosis or a developmental delay. In this position, with the knowledge from a newly acquired Masters in Special Education, I was now ‘qualified’ to identify and classify disability, make a diagnosis (although not officially as that could only be done by a medical professional) and program for remediation and therapy. I had been informed by the scientific knowledge and ‘truth’ of child development as a mainstream teacher, and now I had acquired the ‘special’ knowledge of the medical and psychological sciences. I positioned myself, with the help of these discourses, as someone who could assist the child with any diagnosis and support the family in understanding the child’s diagnostic characteristics. Giving support to those in need of help was an expected discursive practice for a teacher such as me. Furthermore, I felt sympathy and empathy for the family and the diagnosed child. These were emotions that have not only produced the child as different but also attached a sense of tragedy to their situations. According to Swain and French (2008) in this discourse “disability, or rather impairment … is equated with disability, is thought to strike individuals at random, causing suffering and blighting lives” (p. 7).
David arrived at the early intervention service at the age of three with a diagnosis of ‘severe autism’. A paediatrician had advised David’s parents that he would never function like other children as his disability was profound. They were devastated by this medical pronouncement and were very upset on that first day I met with them. They were told that early detection and intervention were crucial for his development, advice consistent with literature in the field (Macy, Marks, & Towle, 2014; Guralnick, 2011; Dempsey, 2012; Boyd, Odom, Humphreys, & Sam, 2010; Underwood, Valeo, & Wood, 2012; Daniels, Halladay, Shih, Elder, & Dawson, 2014). Over the next few years, David attended the service twice a week. I did regular home visits and supported the family, giving them ideas about ways of ‘helping’ David and their household. The family positioned me as an ‘expert’ and I used medical and special education knowledge to build an understanding of David and his autism. David did not communicate with words, so we set about trying with minimal success to use various social communication strategies and devices. Communication, verbal and non-verbal, have an important focus in special education literature (Kaale, Fagerland, Martinsen, & Smith, 2014). David’s diagnosis attributed many of his behaviours to anxiety often resulting in unpredictable outbursts. Anxiety is commonly reported as a characteristic of autism (Green et al., 2013). I tried to manage this behaviour by identifying his ‘anxiety triggers’ (Ozsivadjian, Knott, & Magiati, 2012) thereby minimising its occurrence. My interventions were expected to somehow remediate David’s differences to the ‘normal’ or at least lessen his diagnostic characteristics and unmanageable behaviours. I positioned David as severely autistic according to the DSM1V (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and I positioned his parents as needing my help and my support as David’s behaviours were very challenging. I continued to read all I could about ‘autism’ in the research literature. I attended conferences and talked to many ‘experts’ in the field. Autism, at this time, was a diagnosis considered to be on the rise (Hertz-Picciotto & Delwiche, 2009) with more children arriving at early intervention with this label. I always thought and hoped that more of this ‘scientific’ knowledge would provide the solution to David’s problems and deliver better ways to help him with his condition.

David’s transition to a mainstream ‘inclusive’ classroom was not questioned at the time. The need for ‘inclusion’ was ‘naturally’ established and expected as prescribed in policy and ‘best practice’ (Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011). His transition occurred over a few months. I assessed David’s needs and the needs of the classroom, and organised the ‘special’ support in advance. Support and preparation for the teachers and the classroom are presented as imperative in the literature (Odom, 2000; Odom et al.,
2006; Diamond, Hestenes, Carpenter, & Innes, 1997). We were all ‘concerned’ about David and the prospect of his ‘inclusion’. My role in his transition program focused on educating the centre’s staff about David and his diagnostic characteristics. A lack of teacher training, knowledge and confidence is reported as one of the main barriers to successful inclusion (Rafferty & Griffin, 2005; Diamond & Carpenter, 2000; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Carrington, 1999; DeVore & Russell, 2007) and so my role was to improve the ‘including’ teachers’ knowledge. I consulted and collaborated with the staff and other professionals regularly and we shared our knowledge and particular strategies in a co-ordinated fashion. Collaboration between professionals in multi-disciplinary teams is regarded as fundamental for the child’s ‘progress’ and ‘inclusion’ (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2009). David’s parents wanted him to have a mainstream experience and have opportunities just like other children. Rafferty and Griffin (2005) contend that parents of children with disabilities want them to have social experiences with their “typically developing peers” (p.174) in ‘inclusive’ environments. As David’s teacher and advocate, I took the position that he had the right to these experiences (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2013).

This narrative represents just one of many similar experiences I had during my teaching years. I share this story because it exposes how embedded I was in understanding my role, according to special education knowledge and practice prescriptions. Sanctioned medical and special education knowledges and practices positioned David and his family, his teachers and the classroom in particular ways. From these positionings we all grappled with our ‘mission’ of trying to remediate David, so that he could be ‘successfully’ transitioned into a mainstream early childhood classroom. This story I hope communicates my strong emotional attachment and the sense of responsibility, obligation and concern that I had for David, and the many other children that I worked with. It also expresses the certainty of the vision that I had for these children in my role as an ‘expert’, where there was no room for uncertainty or other possibilities. My old sense of concern has been disrupted and shifted considerably during this research process as I have come to better understand the knowledge and power of a ‘diagnosis’ and its effects.

In the present study, I grappled with the many terms used in the field to describe children. In my writing I use the terms: ‘child with a diagnosis’, ‘marked child’ or the ‘not normal’ child and alternatively ‘child without a diagnosis’, the ‘unmarked child’ or the ‘normal’ child. I have used other labels up to this point to show how the terminology
such as ‘diagnosis + child’ (autistic David), can also refer to ‘special needs child’, ‘child with special needs’, ‘disabled child’, ‘child with a disability’. The term often changes, but it seems the epistemology remains firmly the same. These labels locate the ‘problems’ associated with inclusive practice in the child. The word ‘diagnosis’ best describes for me how the child is marked by medical and psychological discourses. The child (with the diagnosis) is marked by the diagnosis bestowed on him or her by medical, psychological or educational professionals. These various terms, along with the diagnosis, confer certain ‘truths’ about the child and the ‘inclusion’ process. In order to disrupt the work of diagnosis as usual, I use the terms ‘child with a diagnosis’ and ‘child without a diagnosis’ to underscore the ways a diagnosis positions the child in the setting.

Despite all the knowledge, advocacy and preparation David became too problematic for the ‘including’ classroom and after much consultation with staff and family he was asked to not attend. David was positioned as too unpredictable and too ‘dangerous’ to be in the presence of the ‘normal’ children. The parents of the ‘normal’ children had concerns about David’s presence in the group and their child’s safety and the staff were anxious and apprehensive around David. Parents’ uncertain attitudes about inclusionary practices and staff concerns and anxieties are consistently reported in the literature (Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech, & McConnell, 2008; Gilman, 2007). Even though the medical model provided me with surplus information about David’s diagnosis its deficit-driven perspective (Oliver, 1996; Slee, 2010; Billington, 2000; Purdue, 2009) did not help me to bring him into the group. David continued at early intervention until he was six and then he attended the segregated special unit at his local primary school. At the time I was devastated and saddened for David and his family as his exclusion seemed so unjust. I had let David down, and many other children in his situation needing my help, and I wondered how I could have done things differently. I began to ask myself many questions: What is ‘inclusion’? How does it operate? Who is it for? Who is it not for? How do some children come to be included while others need to be included?

I understand that David’s story of exclusion is not the experience of all children with a diagnosis who attend ‘inclusive’ settings, but my experiences as a teacher and now researcher have raised questions about the notion of ‘inclusion’ and how the classroom might actively contribute to inclusionary and also exclusionary practices. How does it
happen that some children are included without question while others have many concerns and conditions attached to their ‘inclusion’?

**The ‘including’ classroom … the unmarked children**

As I read and pondered over new bodies of literature, I experienced a gradual shift in my ingrained focus away from the individual child who was to be included (Allan, 2008), toward the ‘including’ group. I began to question my narrow, single-mindedness about children like David and their ‘inclusion’ experiences.

My teaching years had afforded me countless opportunities to view young children’s everyday experiences with ‘inclusion’ and their encounters with difference, as they negotiated race, disability, ability, gender as well as other differences, such as age and size which they often like to talk about. I agree with Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2006) that young children are aware of diversity and difference from an early age and are very capable of identifying what they understand as the ‘normal’ or the right way to be. They actively draw on normalising discourses, around their own and others’ identities and the homogenous group. Children adjust their own behaviours and observe the behaviour of others around them and can decide whether or not they might be the same (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Children readily exclude peers based on their differences in their everyday interactions (Connolly, Smith, & Kelly, 2002). Thus, I do not position young children as merely socialised by adults, passive in their encounters with others or simply repeating understandings or descriptions about others they may have heard. I position children as active participants in their own lives and in their interactions with others (James & Prout, 1997; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). Based on this understanding I initially envisaged children as ‘stakeholders’ in the ‘inclusion’ process and I wanted to think about how children could have a voice in ‘inclusive’ practice.

There seemed to be little research in early childhood education on how young children mediate ‘inclusion’. As my thinking about children’s competencies became more robust after my introduction to the ‘sociology of childhood’ (James & Prout, 1997), I wanted to open up a dialogue about the process of ‘inclusion’ with the children. I wanted to investigate how the group of children in a class understood ‘inclusion’, how they experienced it and how they made decisions about it.
Disrupting my knowledge about ‘the child’

My thinking about ‘inclusion’ realised a new direction after reading Gaile Sloan Cannella’s (1997) Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and Revolution. I started to think more critically about the ‘naturalised’ assumptions that had informed my work. Child development theories dominated my practice as a mainstream teacher, understanding development as a linear notion, universal and comparative to a particular constructed norm. Child development places children at the lower end of the human development hierarchy, ‘primitive-like’ (Burman, 2008) with children ‘naturally’ progressing through stages, toward a greater proficiency, as earlier stages have deficiencies compared to later stages. Cannella (1997) argues that the idea of progression has become “so common in our everyday lives that we do not question it as reality” (p.47). This biological and evolutionary understanding of the human condition exists in scientific and developmental discourses and produces a taken-for-granted normalised image of a child. Jones-Diaz, Arthur, and Beecher (2000) confer that “developmentalist and constructivist models have arisen from early childhood’s historical preoccupation with psychological understandings of the individual child” (p.2). Psychological understandings are embedded in early intervention and overwhelmingly informed my work with David. In developmental and psychological thinking any resistance to development or variation is diagnosed as a deviance (Cannella, 1997). David was positioned as an ‘object’ of study, constructed by discourses of developmental psychology, a deviance to the ‘normal’. His diagnosis ‘spoke’ about him, using the language of objective scientific ‘truth’, and offered certainty for me as a teacher and for all those involved in his ‘case’.

After reading Cannella’s work, I began to consider the marginalisation and injustice produced in such discourses and the limiting possibilities for individuals of such a way of thinking. These ideas shaped the path of the present study. Cannella (1997) argues that our society’s’ focus on child development is detrimental to children, as this “positivist, scientific construction has oppressed and will continue to damage children” (p. 94). The power and privilege created in the normalised vision of the child subjugates those who do not fit the vision, producing them as deficient, wrong or abnormal (Walkerdine, 1988). I needed to look to other ways of thinking about children and ‘inclusion’.

As I came to think more about what might be going on in the ‘inclusive’ classroom with the including group and its ‘unmarked’ membership, I came to recognise their
unacknowledged entanglement in the ‘inclusive’ process. The morass of ‘inclusion’, as I had come to think about it, embraced many unquestioned and untroubled assumptions. Following Graham (2006), if ‘inclusion’ signifies a ‘bringing in’ this implies the existence of a dualism, where there are those who are included and those who are not included but are in ‘need’ of including. I continue as I write this, to ask questions about what ‘inclusion’ is in this study. What am I looking for? What would it look like if I saw it? Is it possible? How do children who are ‘automatically’ and ‘naturally’ already included get to be that way?

Thinking with Graham and Slee (2008) who argue for the need to interrogate the ‘normal’, as it has been positioned as the ‘right’, privileged and ‘natural’ way to be, I turn my gaze to the space of the ‘normal’ and the ways in which it is produced in the classroom. Graham and Slee (2008) contend that, “it would be reasonable to argue that there is an implicit centred-ness to the term inclusion for it discursively privileges notions of the pre-existing by seeking to include the Other into a prefabricated, naturalised space” (p.278, author’s emphasis). The centred-ness that I see as the ‘normal’ it seems is privileged in the classroom due to its assumed pre-existence. How does it get to be that way? Moreover, this ‘normal’ centre created in medicalised discourses exercises an invisible power to label and categorise, which is rarely interrogated. It operates to include and exclude (Graham & Slee, 2008). How can we observe this idealised centre so that we can destabilise it and create other possibilities for ‘inclusive’ practice?

Re-theorising the space of ‘inclusion’: turning the gaze toward the ‘normal’

In turning my gaze in this study toward the ‘normal’ I borrow understandings of the ‘normal’ from my readings of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977). He contends that the historical construction of the norm by medical and science knowledges was made possible by the individualising, differentiating and categorising of the subject. Foucault (1977) argues that historically there were very few people who were thought to be the ‘ideal’ or the norm. Most of the population in contrast was thought of as less than ideal.

For a long time ordinary individuality – the everyday individuality of everybody – remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege (Foucault, 1977, p.191).
Historically, individualisation focused on sovereignty and the higher echelons of power. The more power one possessed, the more one was marked as an individual. Foucault's archaeology in *Discipline and Punish* proposes that modern society has cultivated individualising disciplinary methods that have changed the focus of observations, lowering the threshold of the describable individual and making these descriptions a means of control and domination. The creation of the medical and scientific disciplines, particularly the psy-disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, marked a reversal in the "political axis of individualization" (Foucault, 1977, p.192) with power becoming more anonymous and functional (Foucault, 1977) and those on whom it is exercised, becoming more strongly individualised and scrutinised. Individualisation has produced differentiation, which is measured “in terms of an overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum toward which one must move” (Foucault, 1977, p.183). The creation of the norm introduced a “‘value-giving’ measure” (p. 183), producing limitations and a conformity that had to be accomplished.

Foucault (1977) describes the norm as “the new law of modern society” (p.184) as it exercises power and gives muscle to a homogenous social body. The norm has the power to impose uniformity, while at the same time individualising and making it possible to measure the gaps or the difference. Foucault describes how the norm is fashioned via techniques of surveillance, where “inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere” (Foucault, 1977, p.195). He identifies three mechanisms of surveillance that can be observed to shape the subjectivities of the children in the classroom: hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and examination. Hierarchical observation allows for the surveillance of the classroom at all times, a perfect disciplinary apparatus for monitoring and controlling, a view from everywhere as the norm supervises the surveillance of oneself and others. Children in the classroom become objects under observation and scrutiny but they also are capable of scrutinising others. I am interested in how the technique of surveillance creates children as objects of power subjected as the ‘normal’.

Along with the techniques of surveillance and observation, Foucault (1977) notes how normalising judgements entered educational institutions, imposing their own limitations by promoting standardisation and homogeneity, with children being judged in relation to the norm. In the classroom, comparisons and judgements are made in relation to the norm as it is viewed as the privileged way of being while other ways of being are subjugated. The examination as a disciplinary mechanism Foucault proposes
combines normalising judgements and hierarchical observation and “establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1977, p.184). The examination compares one to another and to the norm with any gaps providing evidence of abnormality. Children in the classroom are studied and monitored via “a notion of difference that is itself socially constructed” (Allan, 1996, p.224), creating a subject who is “linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the ‘marks’ that characterize him and make him a ‘case’” (Foucault, 1977, p.192).

In the classroom, I examine how the power of the norm is exercised on the children but also by the children as they encounter others who may not conform as “the Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardised education” (Foucault, 1977, p.184). As educational classrooms measure, judge and value children’s abilities, they also sanction correction and remediation of any ‘lack in ability’ via these normalising judgements (Foucault, 1977). From their position the ‘normal’ or ‘able’ have the power to correct those who do not conform in an attempt to bring them closer to the norm. The power of the norm in the classroom is its ability to re/produce ‘normal’ subjects. Those who ‘measure up’ are categorised as ‘normal’ subjects and those who do not fit the parameters are the ‘abnormal’, the ‘not normal’ subjects. The constructed knowledge of what it might mean to be ‘normal’, or indeed do ‘normal’, however has not come about from studying ‘normal’ children but has come from the examination of the abnormal. It is around the abnormal that the conceptions of the ‘normal’ have taken shape. As Rose explains, “normality is not an observation but a valuation” (Rose, 1999, p.133), it contains a judgement about what is desirable and what should be achieved. The ‘normal’ grants power to scientific truth as an expert authority (Rose, 1999) privileged in Western society.

Understandings of the child in the classroom have been shaped by the ‘normal’ judged in medical and psychological terms, via examinations and tests, that have “enabled human powers to be transformed into material that could provide the basis of calculation” (Rose, 1999, p.7). The establishment of the psychological sciences as disciplines, and their social calling, was tied into their ability to produce the technical means of individualisation. Observation, examination and the creation of an assessable norm have provided these means of measurement (Rose, 1999). The construction of a “developmental norm was a standard based upon the average abilities or performances of children at a certain age on a particular task” (Rose, 1999, p.145). It
has generated in the early childhood classroom a desirable standard. These calculations have presented a picture of what is ‘normal’ and what ‘normality’ looks like, enabling the ‘normality’ of any child to be assessed (Rose, 1999). Psychology as a discipline in association with the norm, Rose (1999) argues, has the power to reshape subjectivity as we “our selves are defined and constructed and governed in psychological terms” (Rose, 1999, p.xxxi). The classroom is a place where psychological judgements and comparisons are made about children by their teachers and by children about each other.

My study interrogates the re/production of the ‘normal’ and how its discursive construction creates a homogenous and ‘desirable’ way of being. The ‘normal’, and its power to shape subjectivities in the ‘inclusive’ early childhood classroom, have not been explored in educational research. The knowledges that create and describe the ‘normal’ produce ways through which subjects come to understand themselves and others. This study in early childhood education turns towards the ‘normal’ making its production visible, scrutinising its power and asking questions about its positioning in the ‘inclusive’ education process. And so using Foucauldian theorisation, I wish to disrupt the created and fictional ‘normal’, its power, the knowledge that produces it and the subjectivation it effects.

I also reflexively examine my own positioning in the discourses that re/produce the ‘normal’, as the dominant normalising discourses of the classroom both inform my past as a teacher, and my present as a researcher. I acknowledge that remnants of my previous positivist thinking remain and occasionally reappear as the systems of thought that produced my subjectivity as a special education specialist, still sometimes move into the way I understand situations. With this study I hope to destabilise and challenge positionings, particularly my own, remaining mindful of the limitations of my own understandings and meaning-making in attempting to do this.

And so for my study I pose two overarching research questions: 1) How is the ‘normal’ in the ‘inclusive’ early childhood classroom discursively constituted and how is it reproduced and maintained? and 2) What effects do discourses of the ‘normal’ have as children take up these discourses and perform themselves and position others?

**Organisation of my thesis**
Chapter 2 presents my conceptual framework and methodology, including my understanding of poststructural theory and its application in my research. I will discuss my experience of ethnography among children, my data creation and how I went about analysing the ‘thick and rich’ descriptions I produced. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 attend to the analysis of my data detailing both the discursive constitution of the ‘normal’ and also the effects of this production. Chapter 3 examines the multiple discourses that circulate in the classroom and how they produce and reproduce the ‘normal’, via inclusionary and exclusionary practices. Chapter 4 explores the way non-human actors in their entanglement with human actors contribute to the production of the ‘normal’. Chapters 5 and 6 reflect on the noteworthy effects of the children’s work in maintaining the category of the ‘normal’, with Chapter 5 interrogating the acceptable discourses of tolerance and Chapter 6 investigating how different forms of silence are taken up as a sanctioned way to maintain social order and the ‘normal’. Chapter 7, as the final chapter, poses questions and raises attention to other possibilities in the ‘inclusive’ classrooms where young children’s ways of being might be no longer fixed and compared but instead fluid and diverse.
Chapter 2

Conceptual framework and methodology

My study sets out to trouble taken-for-granted assumptions of the ‘normal’, and to explore how multiple discourses and discursive practices in the classroom constitute the ‘normal’, the space for inclusion, and how children take up these discourses, to know and position themselves. With the help of poststructural theory, I question well-established ‘scientific’ knowledges that categorise, label and position individuals and are privileged in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. I aim to trouble various discourses and binary constructs that are attached to a diagnosis.

From a poststructural perspective, the knowledge created in this study does not propose to deliver any certainty or new ‘truth’ to be applied but instead expose the limitations of current discourses and open up to alternative possibilities. Stronach and MacLure (1997) assert that we should not give up the project of knowing and producing new knowledge even if we are no longer looking for certainty. Moreover, not knowing completely or truly does not mean that we can know nothing at all (Lather 1991). My position as knowledge producer, is implicated in the multi-dimensional nature of the knowledge I have created and it is “understood as constitutive of my ‘somewhere’; of the ways I see and meet the social world, my experiences” (Petersen, 2004, p.70).

Foucault and poststructural theory

Engaging with the work of Foucault (2006, 1967, 1977) has been pivotal to my study. Applying his theorisation about the role of discourse and power in the constitution of the subject has guided my work. As Foucault (1982) contends, discourse both constructs and constrains subjectivities and it is through discourse that “human beings are made subjects” (p.326). Power is exercised through discourse in shaping particular ways of being that are more desirable and privileged than others. I am concerned with how discourses in the classroom create various ways in which the ‘normal’ as subject positions could be taken up, and how they shape and reshape children’s subjectivities, while they negotiate with each other.
Discourse, subjecthood and power

The concept of discourse for Foucault (1972) is broader than just language but is understood as social, material, historical and linguistic practices. As Foucault writes, discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p.49). Discourses are the ‘regimes of truth’ that formulate how an object or subject is understood, supposed to be and also the correct or favoured ways to be (Millei & Petersen, 2014). From this perspective, the classroom is ordered through the ways discourses lead individuals to attend to the world, the way children and teachers learn to speak these discourses, and the way the available discourses position the individual in the classroom (Alvesson, 2002). Sense-making in this community is made available and acceptable within the operating discourses (Davies, 2004). I am interested in identifying and examining how the available discourses are taken up and shared, giving meaning to the actors in the classroom and their positioning of themselves and others. I focus on the children’s words, and their silences, their actions, and their lack of actions examining them as socially, culturally and historically constituted. I am also attentive to their engagement with the non-human actors in the classroom, as they take up sanctioned discourses that create social categories, and give meaning to their lives in the classroom.

Underpinning this work is my interest in the constitution of subjects in the ‘inclusive’ early childhood classroom, that is, the subjectivated subject (Foucault, 2008; Butler, 1997b). I pay attention to the constraints and the possibilities of subjectivities in this space. I focus on the processes of how individuals become subjects, the negotiation and renegotiation of the multiple discourses and the power relations in the classroom that are continually shifting over time, space and contexts (Davies, 2004). How do the children in everyday life participate within the constraints and possibilities that are offered by the discourses that circulate? From a poststructural perspective “the human subject is produced in the discursive practices that make up the social world as opposed to a pre-given psychological subject who is made social or socialised” (Walkerdine, 1999, p.4). Understood in this way, the subject is not fixed by a category, but fluid and changing, within multiple discourses (Butler, 1993).

Building on the notion of discourse and subjectivation, Davies (2006b) contends that discourses govern which kinds of subjecthood might be possible or impossible in the
classroom as they provide subject positions that the children draw on or reject. Moreover, the conditions of subjecthood in the classroom are not found in discourses alone but in the children’s actions and performances in what Davies (2006b) describes as “mutually constitutive social acts” (p.426). These acts make visible the ways in which children re/produce and maintain their ‘normal’ position through their shared meanings and action. I examine these actions as ‘performativity’ (Butler, 1993) which is not understood as a one off act but can be viewed as citational and reiterative practices that the children engage in in the everyday life of the classroom.

Thinking with Butler (1997b), I extend further on the concept of subjectivation, and give consideration to the subject’s recognisability and their capacity to act and exercise power in the social world of the classroom. Her work emphasises that while subjectivation is continually going on in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, subjects and the discursive practices they engage in, have to be recognisable in the discursive terrain in which they are situated. In the classroom, recognisability is acted out by both the children and the teachers, and the meaning of this is shared by them. Recognisability suggests that the children and teachers are not only constructed and constrained in this environment, but they act and engage in what Butler terms performative politics of re-inscription (Butler, 1997a). It is in the performative acts of recognisability and re-inscription that the children do the work around the ‘normal’. Children thus maintain themselves (and others) as particular kinds of subjects, positioning and maintaining themselves through various categories, in order to become culturally intelligible beings and acceptable subjects (Millei & Petersen, 2014).

In the classroom, subjecthood is always situated in and constrained by relations of power. It is the form of power that makes individuals subjects but also marks them that I am interested in; a power that is productive but also subjugates, a power that circulates within discourses and is exercised by discourses in the classroom, as there is nothing outside of power or free from power or the effects of its “discipline-normalisation” (Foucault, 1975, p.52). Foucault contends that power disciplines as it produces, imposing a truth about the subject. I apply Foucault’s understanding about the productivity of disciplinary power for my analysis.

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a truth of law on him that he must recognise and others have to recognise in him (Foucault, 1982, p.781).
I am concerned with a form of power that makes individuals subjects in the classroom and following Foucault I examine this form of power that can both subjugate the individual but also produce the individual as a subject. I am interested in ‘how’ power is exercised and its “capacity” (Foucault, 1982, p.337) in relations between individuals.

By bringing together conceptual ‘tools’ from Foucault (1977), Butler (1997a) and Davies (1989), I endeavour to make sense of the ways in which the ‘inclusive’ classroom and within it subjects are constituted. This approach enables me to examine and question the constraints and limitations of normalising discourses and subjectivation while aiding the possibilities of thinking otherwise and opening up to a new politics of becoming (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011).

Poststructural theory provides me a way of dislocating the press of ‘more usual’ discourses and a way for unravelling old realities/perceptions, as it promotes the questioning of the disciplinary power of ‘normal’ in the classroom. As a discursive construction (Davies, 1989), poststructuralism helps me to think outside my ‘old’ truths and dividing practices of binary pairs and the fixed categories, that have limited the possible ways of seeing and thinking about my own and others’ subjectivities.

Entering the field as a novice poststructural researcher, with new ways of thinking about the ‘inclusive’ classroom, I made use of MacLure’s (2006) notion of ‘fracturing the familiar’, taking nothing (or at least less) for granted, seeing things with surprise and wonder, “to unsettle the still core of habit and order in the uncertain hope of shaking things up, asking new questions, estranging the familiar” (MacLure, 2006, p.224). My ‘familiar’ habits in ‘inclusive’ practice required troubling but were not so easy to trouble. The habit of scrutinising the child with a diagnosis and ‘naturalising’ the ‘normal’ needed to be disrupted and exposed. As Haraway (1991) asserts the ‘regimes of truth’ that claim the power to see but not to be seen, to gaze upon but not to be gazed upon and to become legitimate from nowhere, need to be made visible.

**A poststructural ethnography**

The early childhood classroom is a ‘familiar’ place to me and spending time in a children’s centre seemed like the best way for me to view ‘inclusion’ in action. Ethnography, as a methodology, was selected initially as it seemed an ‘obvious’ method for creating data. In the sociology of childhood literature, ethnography is cast as a suitable methodology for researching with young children and examining their social worlds (James et al., 1998; Christensen, 2004; Alderson, 2008). My early understandings of ethnography were closely aligned to anthropology, which I had
studied as an undergraduate. The idea of an existing ‘reality’ out there waiting to be found or uncovered seemed attainable. However, in my reading and researching of poststructural theory and ethnography I came to new understandings about ‘reality’ where its pre-existence was no longer a possibility. As a poststructural ethnography my study is “designed to move away from scientism and the appropriation of others” (Lather, 2008, p.20).

Poststructural ethnography, a ‘new’ ethnography (Lather, 2008) has come about after the ‘crisis of representation’. Representation in poststructuralism is “always in crisis, as knowledge is constitutive of power, and agency is the constitutive effect, and not the originator, of situated practices and histories” (Britzman, 2000, p.30). In other words the ‘old’ ethnographic ‘real’ is contested. I look instead at the theoretical and narrative decisions I made in creating the data as I identified discourses and analysed them. This construction is an interactive process where as the researcher I shape and am shaped by my history, gender, class and ability. Being reflexive of my position, as knowledge producer, has been important to my study. Acknowledging my work as my own construction and not of a ‘reality’ of how Others might be has continued to be at the front of my thinking. As the ethnographic researcher, I made the decisions about what I ‘saw’, what I thought about and what I represented of the research sites. I came to see myself as part of the data I was creating not separate from it.

Ethnography as a research method made it possible for me to spend months “within the patterns of the community life, moving in the spaces shaped by the community and taking part in its activities on its terms” (Traweek, 1988, p.10). The data I have created in three Australian early childhood classrooms could not have come from one off interviews as ethnographic fieldwork “offers a wide range of interaction possibilities” (Warming, 2011, p.48). I needed to spend the time to collect firsthand accounts to better understand how the classroom community and the subjects in that community produced and reproduced themselves in their everyday space and over time (Marcus, 1995). Thinking with Traweek (1988) it was important for me to “discover what counts as being the right kind of person in the community one studies” (p.8). I sought to understand how the classroom discourses shaped what the children might find interesting and challenging, boring and funny, different and strange, ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’ ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’, and how people and things fit together or don’t fit together (Traweek, 1988). I wanted to know about the possible ways of being in the classroom and how these might be discursively constituted.
As an ethnographer I wanted to gather “information about how the group [or groups] maintains its boundaries and guides its own members toward acceptable behaviour” (Traweek, 1988, p.10). How did the group – the ‘normal’ – maintain itself? I explored how the discourses of the ‘normal’ were “lived and fashioned” (Britzman, 2000, p.31) and how the boundaries of the ‘normal’ were challenged and maintained in the early childhood classroom. I observed the details of conversations and the social actions of the children and their teachers, to get a sense of what discourses were acceptable and sanctioned, and what informed their actions. I also explored how they took up or resisted discourses and included and excluded each other in their social and discursive practices (Petersen, 2004).

The multi-sited nature of this ethnography in three classrooms allowed me to examine the connections, associations and relationships across the different sites (Falzon, 2009). Marcus (1995) contends that a multi-sited ethnography creates a postmodern alternative to the traditional single-sited fieldwork as it aims to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space (Marcus, 1995). This study not only investigates and ethnographically constructs the everyday lives of the children as situated subjects, but it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites (Marcus, 1995). In other words by examining more than one site it became possible to construct a view of broader systems that produce the ‘normal’, and as an effect, inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the classroom. It was possible to examine the shared cultural production and negotiation of the ‘normal’ across sites.

Reflexivity

Poststructural ethnography demands a rigorous questioning by the researcher of themselves as the knowledge producer. Reflexivity demands of the researcher a personal critical consciousness, a continuing approach of self-analysis and political awareness (Callaway, 1992). However, it is more than merely reflecting on oneself or recognition of self. To be reflexive demands some consideration of the Other as well as a self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny (Pillow, 2003, p.177).

Reflexivity became a way for me to demonstrate my awareness of some of the problems of my research (Pillow, 2003). As the lives of young children are always under scrutiny and surveillance (Laws, 2004; Foucault, 1977) I found the idea of further examining their lives somewhat problematic. I make mention of the awkwardness I felt
around observing others’ lives and found that I positioned myself as a kind of ‘voyeur’ which felt very uncomfortable at times. I wanted to know how I could be a non-exploitive researcher. Was it possible? I tried to deconstruct my authority by “hearing, listening and equalizing the research relationship” (Pillow, 2003, p.179) with the children and by being reflexive of my positionality through self-disclosure (Macbeth, 2001). I tried to question the politics of how I was performing as the researcher. However I often still thought of myself as engaging in an “obscene prying into the lives of others in the name of science” (Lather, 1993, p.678) and being part of the “the commodification of one set of human beings for the consumption of another” (Quinby 1991, pp. 104-105).

Reflexivity can be used to expose and interrupt representations and positionings of the Other (Villenas, 1996). ‘The child with a diagnosis’, is a concept produced in dominant societal discourses as a ‘tragic’ one, “failing, incomplete and inferior” (Shildrick, 2005, p.756) and therefore it invokes empathy. Empathy, entrenched in my previous teaching experience and practice in early intervention, merely reinforced and legitimised these categories and knowledges maintaining this dominant normative view. However on reading Lather (2008) my thinking about researching altered somewhat as she warns against the appeal to ‘empathy’ as a solution to these issues, suggesting that empathy actually solidifies the structures of discrimination and/or subjugation. Empathy is not helpful in unfixing categories rather it maintains them. Elsworth (1997) also speaks against empathy, advocating counter practices of queering, de-familiarising and denaturalising which she argues produce an appreciation of differences rather than of sameness and homogeneity. Using the tool of reflexivity I attempted to interrupt categories and common practices in the classroom. However by expressing empathetic attitudes toward children with and without a diagnosis I was inadvertently complicit in hegemonic positionings of children (Choi, 2006).

I hope to address my own complicity in contextually framing other people’s lives as my framing conceals my position of power and privilege (Pillow, 2003). I have included reflexive notes in my data analysis as I deconstructed my own subject formation and my practices as a researcher and previously as a teacher. I reflect on how these contributed to my data creation and attempt to disrupt to some extent the categories produced and my complicity in producing them. Reflexivity as a methodological tool has provided practices that interrogate the truth of the narrative I have created, providing multiple possibilities and enabling me to tell more unfamiliar and perhaps more uncomfortable tales (Trinh, 1991). It exposes and voices my discomfort as a
researcher as I trouble the comfortable familiarity of my observations and analysis. This is necessary work so that existing notions and understandings can be challenged. I am mindful of remaining “reflexive, careful and humble” (Ailwood, 2010b, p.211) about what I create and my own claims to ‘truths’. As a consequence, my “reflexivity of discomfort” (Pillow, 2003, p.192) is messy and offers no certainty but nevertheless allows me to engage more critically as I examine my part in producing, sustaining and disrupting my position within the discourses interrogated here.

**Research classrooms**

When initially looking for research sites, I contacted more than a dozen community-based centres in and around Newcastle via email asking them to participate. I selected community-based centres as opposed to private or for-profit centres because I felt they might have more interest in being research participants due to their community focus. The three centres in the study are the ones that agreed to partake. Two of the centres were preschools and the third was a long day care centre. I did not at the time have other centres to choose from. One centre was located on the central coast of NSW and the other two in the Newcastle area, NSW, Australia. I selected a classroom in each early childhood centre. The data was created from June through to December 2012. Approximately 75 children, aged between two and six years old, and 12 teachers participated as human actors in the study. In addition, a number of non-human actors in the classroom were also implicated.

I visited each centre for 8 weeks, 2 mornings a week, for about 4 hours each time. The centre directors’ requested the morning visits as they felt this would be the best time to interact more with the children as ‘free play’ was scheduled. While each centre was somewhat different, they all provided for the most part what might be described as a ‘standard’ preschool experience. A ‘child-centred’ pedagogy operated in all classrooms with adult planning, daily schedules and orchestration, all managed for the most part by the teachers and staff. To participate in the research, the classrooms needed to have a child with a diagnosis attending. As it turned out they each had several children with a diagnosis enrolled. Overall, in the three classrooms there were 10 children with a diagnosis in the study. I do not include any commentary on the children’s diagnostic labels. In my data analysis and representation, I also do not differentiate between the sites, except to reference them as S1, S2, or S3 at the end of each data excerpt, and do not attempt to ensure that the classrooms or individuals in the classrooms are equally represented. In exploring the data, what emerged as notable were the
processes in the classrooms and the discursive commonalities and continuities across the sites.

Consent was obtained from all adult and child participants with parents also giving consent for their children to be involved. An information statement for the children was prepared in a ‘picture story’ format providing the children with information about my role and their possible participation. All names used in the research are pseudonyms. I am very grateful and indebted to the centres for welcoming me into their classrooms and allowing me to do this research. The staff and children were very hospitable during my time with them.

Data generation strategies

To enable my data generation I paid attention to the unmarked children’s encounters with and around each other and the marked child/children.

The marked child – a catalyst

Although not the focus of this research, the child with a diagnosis became conceptualised and viewed as a catalyst for examining how the constitution of the ‘normal’ happened, and how the children reproduced and maintained themselves that way through inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the classroom. Looking reflexively at this strategy, I acknowledge my complicity in re/producing these limiting binaries and my regrettable, but unavoidable contribution to the marked child’s positioning. Yet this was nevertheless a useful strategy, as it helped to make more noticeable the work being done by the unmarked children, as they maintained the borderlands of the ‘normal’.

To investigate this I asked questions about the marked child, their actions and their relations in the classroom. How the marked child was positioned by the unmarked children in the context was important to establish in order to view the inclusionary and exclusionary work the unmarked children did to maintain the ‘borderlands’ of the ‘normal’. Nevertheless, I became aware that in all the classrooms the children often seemed awkward about my questions around the marked child, so I moved my focus onto other topics that the children wanted to talk about while still focusing on identifying normalising discourses. This remained a complex but I think necessary negotiation. Foucault (1982) argues that in order to find out what a society means by ‘sanity’ we need to investigate what is going on in the field of ‘insanity’ and to borrow that idea I would argue that it would be difficult to investigate inclusion without investigating
exclusions (Hedegaard Hansen, 2012) and the marked child seemed to be often at the centre of exclusions and Othering. As I wanted to explore what was going on to produce and reproduce the ‘normal’ there was an imperative to look at the ‘not normal’ or at least in their vicinity.

**Observations – field notes**

Angrosino (2005) uses the term “descriptive observation” (p.732) and defines this level of observation as ‘child like’ where the observer comes into the field, taking nothing for granted. For me, seeing the ‘inclusive’ classroom anew, using poststructural theory was like a new beginning, like seeing things for the first time and what Angrosino meant by the term ‘child-like’, not lacking but full of potential. Observation is considered to be “naturalistic” (Angrosino, 2005, p.729) and the mainstay of ethnography. For me, the goal of observation was to create a “thick description’ of settings, language, tone of voice, posture, gestures, clothing, distance, arrangement of movable objects and how all this changes from one interaction to another” (Traweek, 1988. p.9). Classroom observation allowed me to describe the children’s connections and exchanges with each other, with their teachers and with the non-human surroundings I discuss in Chapter 4. I created ‘sense’ data on children’s embodied performances through the use of all of my senses beyond making note only of the verbal.

**Conversations – spontaneous and audio recorded**

The conversations recorded in my field notes were mostly spontaneous. I resisted using normalised interviews (Rhedding-Jones, 2006) and tried to leave the conversations open and fluid. In the classrooms I joined conversations and listened in on them. I made notes and sometimes asked the children about the things I had written down or took a photo of to start the conversation. I often asked questions about daily routines, rules and activities and the involvement of the marked and unmarked children. I did not take children into separate spaces to ‘interview’ them and if we sat at a table to have a conversation, the children were always free to come and go (Hill, 2005). I asked for children’s consent each time I used the audio recorder (Gallagher, 2009). The recordings were sometimes a way of negotiating conversations. My field notes were a crucial adjunct to the recordings as they could provide data on the children’s embodied understandings, including gestures, facial expressions and their involvement in the conversations. Over 600 pages of field notes, transcriptions and reflections were created over the six-month period.
Photographs

I took photographs of the children as part of my data creation and used them often to start and sustain conversations. The photographs allowed for ‘unstructured’ and open-ended comments (MacDonald, 2008). I photographed the children engaging in their everyday activities and in particular around the marked child. The photos were shown to the children on a laptop computer and were not reproduced due to ethical considerations. I found that the visual representations supported the children in verbalising their thoughts as they stimulated discussions on issues that might be more difficult to articulate (Zartler & Richter, 2014). On many occasions the photos ‘broke the ice’ and opened up a more comfortable ‘chatter’; at other times they were received with silence. Cappello (2005) suggests that photos provide an insight into children’s thinking and encourage conversation about things that are not normally instigated by children. With some of the photos the children wanted to move on and not discuss them. I noted avoidances as data as well.

As the knowledge producer, using the data-producing strategies outlined, I thought about my position as the data creator before, during and now after my time in the classroom. How did the children position me and how did I position myself? My position as the researcher effected the data including the field notes I created.

My position in researching among children

Before entering the classroom I read a substantial body of literature that offered ideas about how to go about doing research with children. Over the past decade there has been a consensus that we should move away from research on or about children and move instead to research with or for children (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Mayall, 2002; Punch, 2002; Christensen & James, 2008). Researchers have pondered different methods and ways of offering children a participatory role in research (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008) so that researching with children can be achieved. The child research paradigm (O’Kane, 2008; Alderson, 2008) has made attempts to redress adult-child power relations in research by attempting to ‘empower’ children by engaging them with prescribed participatory techniques. The notion that power is a commodity that can be acquired or relinquished (Gallacher &Gallagher, 2008) is challenged in thinking with Foucault (1982) as power exists in action and what occurs in research is often beyond the control of the researcher. I also found that the children were capable of performing “beyond the limits prescribed by ‘participatory’ techniques” suggested in the research literature (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p.507).
I came to think of myself as not researching *with* children but researching *among* children as this term better reflected the sense I had of myself in the field of ‘hanging out’ amid the children and being a *part* of the study. I found researching in the field unpredictable, messy and complex and thought of myself as ‘always becoming’, always changing. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) describe an “immature methodological” (p.511) positioning that explains how an attitude of immaturity, not in a developmental or negative way, can give a sense of ‘becoming’ and in terms of a potential which moves away from more fixed adult-child binaries in research. In my research *among* children I positioned myself as somewhat incomplete and at times quite dependent on the children for their direction and support. The notion of ‘immaturity’ and a sense of fallibility (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008) seemed to also fit with my ontology as I engaged amongst the children in a “present continuous sense” (p.510).

The researching *with* children literature also considers the notion of building relationships or developing a level of rapport with children to be a responsible and ethical approach (Sumsion, 2003; Christensen & James, 2008) for researchers. Dockett and Perry (2005) propose that in building relationships with children the researcher needs to take time to gain trust and respect. O’Kane (2008) suggests that by establishing rapport children become positioned as subjects in the research rather than ‘objects’ of research. Springwood and King (2001) argue that rapport “engenders notions of trust, empathy, understanding, mutual respect and possibly friendship” (p. 405) and is central for researching with children. While I have no problem with these ideas generally, after all mutual respect is important for all encounters, I would suggest that this special positioning of children creates them as ‘needy’ and ‘less’ capable than adults. I would have to agree with Punch (2002) in thinking that those who call for the use of innovative and special research techniques for working with children are also those who underscore the competency of children. As Punch (2002) explains, “if children are competent social actors, why are special ‘child-friendly’ methods needed to communicate with them?” (p. 321).

The following observation from my field notes shows how Matilda seemed to become an active and enthusiastic research participant without time or relationship building.

As I sat in the sandpit several children approached me asking, “Who are you?” I replied that my name was Karen and that I was a researcher. I asked them if they had seen a letter at home about a researcher. Some of the children recalled the letter. Matilda joined the group on her arrival and announced that she had seen my photo on a letter that her dad had read to
her. She said, “Ok, I’m ready to get talking to you right now, what do you want to know?” (Field Notes, 16/10/12, S3, p.2).

Matilda positioned herself as a research participant on her arrival that day. She was informed by the ‘Participant Information Statement’. I had produced Information Statements for the children to obtain their consent that included photographs of me and my work along with written information about the study. Matilda reported her informed consent and positioned me as a researcher. It seemed there was no ambiguity for her about who I was or what she needed to do. The children were positioned by me as the gatekeepers of their participation and therefore consent (Danby & Farrell, 2005; Warming, 2011). Consenting remained open for negotiation and renegotiation. Matilda seemed to have some ideas about what research might be and wanted to get on with it. Rapport or relationship building between us did not seem necessary for her.

The children in the classroom made their own decisions about who I was to them, as they positioned and repositioned me over the time I spent with them. The ways that I tried to position myself were often counteracted by the way the children positioned me. Childhood researchers have suggested a variety of roles that a researcher could perform with children in the field. Christensen (2004) contends that the researcher should position themselves as an ‘unusual type of adult’, who displays a different level of interest in the children’s social world and their perspectives. Whereas Corsaro (1985) and Mayall (2008) promote the notion of ‘least-adult role’ where the researcher makes an effort to get involved in the children’s everyday lives while renouncing any adult privilege and authority (Warming, 2005). These positionings assume the researcher has a choice. The children positioned Ailwood (2010a) in particular ways that she labels as a “visiting adult of obscure status” (p.24). However, these positionings still present un-clear power relations. While in the field I did not feel that I had much choice in my positioning with the children as they actively negotiated that for me as a researcher in their classroom and I was comfortable with this.

However, I did try to downplay my hierarchical power as an adult in my interactions (Mayall, 2008) with the children. I positioned myself as a researcher and not a teacher and so when the children asked for my assistance on matters that related to rules or equipment or other children’s behaviours, I would always say that I did not know or I was not sure. The teacher in the early childhood classroom is positioned as the ‘boss’ (Field Notes, S3) and so I tried to be ‘less than a boss’ following the advice on power relations. As a consequence there were many times when the children positioned me as ‘less than a teacher’.
As Amelia arrived at preschool she walked up to me sitting on a platform in the middle of the yard. I was taking notes at the time. Amelia: “You’re really getting to be a teacher now” (she said as she patted me on the back). Me: “Why do you say that?” Amelia: “Because you write stuff and take pictures.” (Field Notes, 15/8/12, S2, p.134).

Here Amelia seemed to be praising my efforts in trying to ‘become’ a teacher. She deconstructed my authority by positioning me as a teacher in training. Her actions in patting me on the back expressed her authority over me showing me that she positioned me as not quite the same as other adults in the classroom. She seemed to acknowledge that I was practising for something (perhaps the only other adults she had seen in the classroom before had been either parents or prac students). I had told the children on many occasions that I was not a teacher in their classroom, but Amelia had observed that I had been performing some teacher-like tasks, such as writing stuff and taking photographs, and so she positioned me as a practicing teacher: “You’re really getting to be a teacher now”.

Spending an extended time with the children allowed for an ‘informality’ to develop and as my ‘less than a teacher’ positioning evolved, the children became more ‘cheeky’ towards me, burying me in the sandpit or allowing me to hear them use ‘naughty’ words. Initially the children would wait to gauge my reaction, thinking that as a teacher/adult I might make a corrective comment about their words or actions, but when no corrective comment was forthcoming they perhaps started to think of me as different to a teacher.

Corsaro (1985) suggests that the researcher should let the children define and shape the ethnographer role. How to go about this changed all the time for me. I think often I had no choice as the children ‘played’ with my ambiguous status:

During morning indoor activity time Fleur and Frances asked me to record their song. They were playing with taping sticks and creating the song as they went along.
Frances: (singing) “Star tastic is some fun, makes me happy, makes me laugh.”
Fleur: “And the sea and you swim in the sea with lights.”
Frances: “Makes me happy if I catch a fish.”
Fleur: (giggling) “And her hair looks like wee.”
Me: “And the hair looks like wee, that sounds funny.”
Fleur: (more giggling) “I want to do a funny bit.”
Frances: “Star tastic is a poo haircut.” (both giggling loudly now)
Fleur: “And your eyeball looks like paint.” (looking at me)
Frances: “Your eyeballs fall out of the paint.”
Fleur: “And your nostrils look like a pig.” (giggling but directing this at me)
Frances: “Star star tastic I do a wee.” (laughing loudly)
Fleur: “Sea sea tastic if you poo in the sea.”
Frances: “Sea sea sea, if you do a poo in the sea.”
Fleur: (talking not singing) “I always wee in the pool and I wee in swimming class.”
Frances: (singing) “If you swim in a class you do a poo in your pants and go to the toilet and ask your dad.”
Me: “This song is not getting any better.”
Fleur: “Ok star star tastic if you vomit out your nose and poo comes out of your bottom.”
Me: “I think I’ll turn off my recorder now, it’s getting too rude.”
Fleur: “No no we need it to be rude.” (Field Notes, 8/6/12, S1, pp.146-147)

I do not think the children positioned me here as a teacher or as an authority. They created the song as they went along perhaps to test my position. I felt like they were trying to see if I would stop them or correct them or ask them to sing another song. As I took a less authoritative position they positioned me as someone they could ‘play around with’. I had been in the centre two days a week for about five weeks, so Fleur and Frances had become familiar with my presence and had come to think of me as different to their teachers. Fleur sums it up at the end when she says “we need it to be rude”. Their words exercised their power as these words might be considered in this discursive context ‘forbidden’ or at least not said in front of adults. I was positioned by them as less than a teacher able to exercise less authority. The way the children positioned me was not fixed but constantly changing. Similarly the way that I positioned them was fluid as our engagements remained open-ended and always uncertain.

From this fluid, ‘becoming’ position as a researcher among children and via my data generation strategies around the marked child using observations, photographs and conversations I produced more data than what can be analysed or presented in the pages of this thesis. The analytical strategies outlined below were used to guide me through the hundreds of transcriptions and pages of field notes.

**Analytical strategies**

My analytical approach employs the tools of Foucauldian discourse analysis (1972), positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) and category boundary and maintenance work (Petersen, 2004; Davies, 1989). These tools are interwoven in my analysis as the discourses provide the subject positions that the children take up or
reject, and all the while the children as positioned subjects, produce and maintain the category membership in their encounters with each other.

According to Foucault (1972), “each discourse contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings” (p.118). My task as the researcher is to “reveal and describe” (Foucault, 1972, p.49) what discourses say or give ‘voice’ to and what they do. Writing up and adding to the field notes at the end of each day, and transcribing the children’s conversations, while time consuming, offered me an entry point into the analysis of the texts, drawing my attention to utterances and practices that were shared and reiterated. Thinking with Foucault (1972) the statement is not studied as a linguistic unit. What is of greater interest is what the statement does, how it creates effects and what function it performs.

The first part of my analysis examines the multiple discourses that constitute the ‘normal’, shared across the three classrooms. These discourses, taken up and performed by the unmarked children, show how they work to make themselves recognisable as a member of that category. The discourses produced and reproduced statements about the category, which both excluded and included individuals. However as Foucault (1972) contends, statements are “collected in unifying totalities and the meanings to be found in them are multiple” (p.120). The regularities exhibited by statements and their relation to other statements of the same and other types is what Foucault refers to as discursive formations. Discursive formations have multiple meanings that go beyond words. In analysing the texts I came to see how the discourses operated both with and without words. Foucault (1972) argues that the analysis of statements and discursive formations involves the principle that “everything is never said” (p.118) and so in my analysis I was aware of not only statements or the rarity of statements, but also the lack of statements and the silences.

Hook (2001) describes Foucault's notion of discourse analysis “as a powerful means of enabling forms of critique and resistance” (p. 2). The purpose of this analysis is to “disrupt that which is taken as stable/unquestionable truth” (Davies, 2004, p.7) and reveal the power and privilege of what is said and unsaid, who speaks or has voice and who does not, who is heard and who is silenced. My research questions on the discursive constitution of the ‘normal’ and its effects can be addressed using these strategies, disrupting the unquestioned ‘normal’ and revealing how it positions the children in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. In the second part of my analysis I examine the
way some statements are replaced by other statements, how silence manifests itself in multiple ways, and how what is acceptable and sanctioned becomes what is shared. In this part of the analysis I look more at what the discourses ‘do’ and what effects they have on the subjectivities of the children. I had to “weigh[s] the ‘value’ of statements” (Foucault, 1972, p.120); a value that is not defined by a ‘truth’, but instead characterises the place of the statement and the capacity of the statement for circulation, exchange and transformation. In the analysis some statements seemed to have a huge capacity for circulation and exchange, and seemed to become a shared ‘truth’ among the children, while other statements or conversations were left unsaid, silenced or said in other ways.

Further to applying a Foucauldian discourse analysis, I use positioning theory in my analysis. The word ‘position’ is used here in “the analysis of fine-grained symbolically mediated interactions between people, both from their own individual standpoints and as representatives or even exemplars for groups” (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p.1). I analyse the negotiated interactions between the children, as they take up their position from their own standpoints and also that of the ‘normal’ group. Positions are relational (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) and so for a subject to be positioned as ‘normal’ and privileged, another might be positioned as ‘not normal’ and subjugated. By examining the constitutive discourses in the classroom positionings can be analysed as “discourse make available positions for subjects to take up” (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, p.16). One can position oneself, and having taken up a position as one’s own, a subject sees the world from that vantage point drawing on the position’s storylines, images, metaphors and concepts (Davies & Harré, 1999). One can also be positioned by others. The development of one’s sense of self in the world involves, according to Davies and Harré (1999), learning the partitioned categories to which you might belong, participating in discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to the categories, positioning oneself in terms of these discursive categories, and also recognising oneself as having the characteristics of the category and a sense of belonging to that category. In my analysis I use positioning theory to identify how the unmarked children come to know themselves, their own positioning in the categories and their positioning of others and how they make sense of their world. Importantly a positioning is not static, not a fixed end product, but one that is constituted and reconstituted through the many discursive practices in which a person might participate.
Taking up their position as a member of a particular category, the children work to become a particular kind of person who knows how to belong and how to be correctly located as a member (Davies, 1993). Knowing how to belong, and how to perform as a member, and how to maintain oneself that way, involves category boundary and maintenance work. In poststructural theory belonging to one category or the other of a binary pair and the inevitability of the power relations in such a pair is called into question, however binary categories have become a “habitual pattern of meaning making” (Davies, 1998, p.132). In order to disrupt and challenge these categories they need to first be identified. In identifying the categories I take note of the boundary work performed by the children in the classroom as they learn the discursive practices of the classroom in which they and others are positioned and as they position themselves. Within these practices children also learn to position themselves in multiple ways, including opposing the ways that others decide to position them (Davies, 1989).

I am interested in how this category boundary work is performed and maintained by the children as they take up these discursive practices and in particular how it might exclude the Other (Petersen, 2004). As the children perform category maintenance work they work to sustain their membership and also their recognisability as a member. Following Petersen (2004), boundary work is used as a “conceptual shorthand for situated discursive in- and exclusionary practices” (p.28). The concept of category boundary work is used to analyse the discursive inclusions and exclusions that are performed by those positioned as ‘normal’ subjects in social practices in the classroom. This boundary work “involves relative legitimisations of some acts, articulations and subjects and relative delegitimisation of others” (Petersen, 2004, p.28, author’s emphasis) effecting not only the subject’s membership and recognisability but also the ineligibility of those positioned outside the category.

Member categorisation provides a powerful resource for investigating the ways in which the children in the classroom were inducted into the behaviours that characterise a good student and the sanctions and exclusions that could arise for children who failed to ‘pass’ as the proper child (MacLure, Jones, Holmes, & MacRae, 2012, p.452).

Membership categories and the work performed to maintain them are made visible in the activities, actions and the forms of conduct that are taken for granted as characteristics of the category’s members (MacLure et al., 2012). By examining membership categories the sanctions and exclusions in the classroom effected on
those who ‘fail’ to be the ‘proper child’, the significance of constitutive force of the
discursive ‘normal’ and its relative delegitimisation of others can be recognised.

Writing about some of the effects of the category boundary work produced a sense of
discomfort for me and a concern about how my narrative might position participants.
The ‘discomfort’ I often felt researching in the field has now moved to become part of
this representation. How would my narrative in its telling position and represent the
lives of the children and the teachers in this study?

**Representation**

I am aware that there are potentially multiple readings of this data. I have made every
effort in my study to be mindful that representation is a privileged space from which to
work (Pillow, 2003, p.185). As the author, I am “not the final arbiter of meaning”
(Davies, 2004, p.6) and working with poststructural theory I can only use and develop
ideas that make up a set of possibilities. I agree with Davies (2008) who explains: “I do
not presume to represent their lives as if my words could” (p.197, author’s emphasis).
In representing the lives of others, my ethnographic account is not about the ‘real’ but
attempts to theorise the politics of recounting while being accountable (Britzman,
2000).

My representation, I hope, shapes a narrative that expresses a concern with
experience as a discourse (Britzman, 2000). In writing about the children’s lived
experiences I have not wanted to individualise or psychologise them but have wanted
to move beyond the ‘real story’ (Britzman, 2000) of how ‘inclusive’ classrooms operate
and instead look at how the children are produced as discursive subjects. I wanted to
track how the children came to be particular kinds of beings.

I realise that my own ‘telling’ is limited and regulated by discourses of my time and
place, and I have attempted to disrupt “any desire for a seamless narrative, a cohesive
identity, or a mimetic representation” (Britzman, 2000, pp.31-32). My use of the notion
of positionality or standpoint epistemology (Lincoln, 1995) recognises the poststructural
argument that texts are always partial and incomplete and socially, culturally and
historically contingent and can never represent any absolute truth. In researching, there
is the ‘inescapability of representation’ (Derrida, 1978) but in poststructural knowledge
sharing the shift of responsibility moves from representing ‘things’ in themselves to
presenting a web of structures, signs and the play of social relations (Lather, 1993).
The question of validity

Research representations need to address the continuing question and controversy (Cho & Trent, 2006) of authenticity and validity. Following Lather (1993), I do not think about validity in terms of a disciplining of my work, or following a prescribed way of creating or presenting the data, but rather see the importance of opening new lines of discussion and possibilities for research in the social sciences while at the same time contributing to the “unjamming” effect in relation to the closed truths of the past, thereby freeing up the present for new forms of thought and practice” (Bennett, 1990, p.277). Lather views validity as a ‘limit question’ of research which imposes its own regime of truth. Validity as a positivist construct implies a truth or a reality to be discovered that is verifiable, however in poststructural research a ‘real’ does not exist as “the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). Poststructural thinking rejects positivist and interpretivist views of validity looking critically on the idea of both ‘correspondence’ (positivism) and authenticity (interpretivism). I do not seek to produce complete texts that rely on correspondence notions of validity, or that can be widely applied to all others, or present myself here as an unbiased researcher who can capture true accounts of children’s experiences with objective instruments.

Validity for me is not something that can be achieved by way of certain techniques but requires an emphasis on a high degree of reflexivity (Cho & Trent, 2006). As discussed previously, I employ the tool of reflexivity to deconstruct and examine my positioning in power relations, opening up a critique and questioning of my unmediated access into people’s lives in my representation. I am mindful that the lives of children, with and without a diagnosis, are already placed under scrutiny and surveillance. Already dissected by the workings of dominant medical and psychological discourses, my research adds to the constant inspection of children, diagnosed and undiagnosed. It seems that inspection is inescapable in the pursuit of new understandings. I would hope that it is “through the act of writing that lives are given space to emerge” (Davies, 2008, p.197). As Laws (2004) explains further, by making the constitutive force of discourse visible, it might be possible to think about and work with children in different ways, where uncertainty and flow create possibilities and new ways of being are given space to emerge.
In this representation, and in the analysis chapters that follow, I interrogate the discursive constitution of ‘normal’ and its effects in ‘inclusive’ early childhood education. The writing of research can provide a mechanism of provocation (Britzman & Pitt, 2003) and I hope that this representation gestures towards some form of ‘provocation’. I hope that my writing here “could arouse, persuade and reproach its readers to see something other than their own view of the world” (Allan, 2010, p.613). I aspire to provoke the reader to think otherwise, by moving the traditional ‘inclusive’ educational gaze away from the inspection, dissection and labelling of the diagnosed child, toward the discursive context of the ‘normal’ to view and scrutinise its operation, and examine the multiple effects it produces for children’s subjectivities and their everyday lives.
Chapter 3

Constitutive discourses in the production and maintenance of the ‘normal’

The following analysis examines the multiple constitutive discourses that produce the ‘normal’ in the classroom. Although not all contributing discourses can be explored, I aim to give an account of the ones I have identified as the more pervasive. What are these discourses and how do they constitute the ‘normal’ in the inclusive classroom? How do the children in taking up these multiple discourses produce the ‘normal’ as they position themselves in the prevailing developmental and psychological discourses? Do these discourses and the subject positions they provide produce inclusionary practices or are exclusions visible and what are the effects on the subjects produced?

Developmental and psychological discourses

Developmental discourses are widely accepted and proliferated in early childhood classrooms (Cannella, 1997; Robinson & Diaz, 2006; Burman, 2008). These discourses promote a ‘universal’ child that develops in a ‘normalised’, prescribed and predictable way. Any deviations in this development are usually described as deficits as they are compared to the constructed and prescribed ‘normal’.

In the early childhood classroom, the children use the terms ‘big’ and ‘little’ to describe and position themselves and others. These subject positions, made available in child development discourses, are taken up by the unmarked children as they come to understand themselves and others. These discourses actively contribute to the production of the category of the ‘normal’. The ‘normal’ position themselves as ‘big’. To be ‘big’ is to be more adult-like, more developed and closer to a prescribed and created norm.

“I am big, he is little”

As Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) arrives in the morning he moves down into the yard towards the cubby house. Hayley (a child without a diagnosis) follows him, calling him. He appears to ignore her. She corners him at the garden seat and moves her arms around him in a smothering way. The way she encircles her body around his is as if he was a much smaller child and she the adult. He tries to move away from her. Two teachers then arrive to ‘rescue’ Hugo from Hayley’s attention. They ask Hayley to give him some space. She moves away while they continue to talk to Hugo saying to him how much Hayley likes him. He then moves away from the teachers.
I approach Hayley shortly after this and ask, “Why did you cuddle Hugo?” To which she replies, “Cause he’s my little best friend, because he’s cute, and I’m five and he’s three.” (Field Notes, 30/10/12, S3, p.25).

Hayley moves in on Hugo as soon as he arrives. Hugo appears to ignore her calling his name but she persists and then smothers him, coralling and cuddling him. She positions herself performing an ‘adult-like’ role, possibly mothering or trying to be the teacher, following him and attempting to keep him close. Formative discourses move around in the early childhood setting and it is through these discourses that young children are subjected (Laws & Davies, 2000, p.207). They shape young children’s understanding of the right way to be, one way of being is to be ‘big’. Child development discourses produce subject positions via numerous stated binaries: big/little, helper/helpless, to know/ to not know, already learnt/just learning, rational/irrational, dependent/ independent, able/unable, rule follower/rule breaker, play with others/play alone.

How can Hayley’s actions be explained? Hayley does not interact with other unmarked children in this way. She positions herself as the ‘motherly carer’ for Hugo on his arrival and makes comments about Hugo being her best ‘little’ friend, referring to him as ‘cute’. Hayley talks about being five and says that Hugo is three. Being five in the early childhood classroom is significant. To be older in this development-focused environment is produced as more powerful and more desirable. I would argue that ageism is rampant, as age brings privilege and prestige. Age can function as a resource to get what one wants and is used most often to mark out power and social positioning (Löfdahl, 2010). Children will sometimes mention their age as soon as you meet them.

Chloe: “I’m five and I only have four and a half months till I finish preschool.”
Hunter: “I’m four, nearly five…..no not really five.” (Field Notes, 18/7/12, S2, p.22).

Age gives one credibility and legitimacy in the classroom.

Daniel: “I’m five and a half, five and a half is older than five.”
Noah: “I’m four and half, yeh, four and a half, that’s older than four.” (Field Notes, 25/7/12, S2, p.44).

In another conversation the ‘battle’ to be the ‘oldest’ transpires amongst the unmarked children.
Jenna: “I’m 12.”
Elliot: “I’m 4.”
Faith: “I’m 48, 60.”
Me: “You’re what?”
Faith: “48, 60.”
Jenna: “I’m 13………no I’m 100.” (Field Notes, 28/5/12, S1, p.87).

Looking back to Hayley’s comment about Hugo, she states that he is three. Hugo is not three, he is five. Hayley positions herself as older and more capable. The way Hayley moves in to try and hold Hugo might indicate that she positions him as ‘little’, vulnerable and needy. Her body is much smaller than Hugo’s but she positions herself as the bigger and older one. How is Hugo subjected in this classroom? Hugo is discursively produced as ‘younger’, marked by the diagnosis bestowed on him by developmental and psychological knowledges and expertise.

In early childhood education, child development knowledge and understandings for the most part seem to go unquestioned (Walkerdine, 1993; Cannella, 1997; Soto & Swadener, 2002). There has been a century long domination of these perspectives in the field of early childhood (Soto & Swadener, 2002), however more recently there has been a growing recognition for alternative theoretical viewpoints (Burman, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005; Bloch, Swadener & Cannella, 2014). Nevertheless, developmental and psychological discourses are deeply embedded and sanctioned and are readily taken up by the unmarked children. Cannella (1997) reminds us that child development has been constructed within a particular social, political, cultural and historical context and has been used to legitimise the surveillance, measurement, control and categorisation of groups of people as normal or deviant (p.158). In child developmental discourse, performing being ‘big’, ‘older’, or more mature is considered more adult-like. The unmarked children recognise what it means to be ‘big’ and perform this positioning to remain recognised as ‘big’. The adult position in the classroom in relation to the child is typically endowed with power. Cannella (1997) argues that child development “is an imperialist notion that has fostered dominant power ideologies and produced justification for categorising children” (p.158) rendering children in need of adult support and among children creating categories of those who need help and those who do not. Those who position themselves as being ‘big’ understand that they are different to those they position as being ‘little’.

Developmental and psychological discourses contribute to the ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1977) that govern the ways educators think about children and consequently
deliver early childhood practice. These ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1977) generated in these disciplines produce an authoritative consensus about what needs to be done and how it should be done (MacNaughton, 2005) and what is of value and is not of value.

The conceptual systems devised within the ‘human’ sciences, the language of analysis and explanation that they invented, the ways of speaking about human conduct that they constituted, have provided the means whereby human subjectivity and intersubjectivity could enter the calculations of the authorities (Rose, 1999, p.7).

Developmental psychology as the authoritative discourse delivers a way for adults to ‘speak’ about children, while also providing a way for children to ‘speak’ about themselves and each other. This discourse depends on the constructed knowledge of the ‘human’ sciences and in particular “the role of psychology, psychiatry and the other ‘psy’ sciences” (Rose, 1999, p.7). Available and circulating ‘psy’ science discourses provide the unmarked children with the sanctioned language to talk about others who are different; the younger child or the child with a diagnosis as they “provide the means for the inscription of the properties, energies and capacities of the human soul” (Rose, 1999, p.7). Developmental psychology informs the unmarked children of their position as the measured ‘normal’ and the position of others. Big and little, as developmental binaries, are discussed openly and ‘naturally’ by the unmarked children and their teachers and are instantly drawn upon to enhance their understandings and explanations of each other. The Other is younger, deficient and sometimes pathological. This binary thinking is expressed in the following statements made by the children; “He’s not a kid, he’s a little boy” (Field Notes 21/5/12, S1, p.57), “We’re big kids, when the little kids scream and scream and scream they get a turn on the guitar to keep them down.” (Field Notes 21/5/12, S1, p.60), “What about the big kids in the little room and the little kids in the big room” (Field Notes 21/5/12, S1, p.62), “No I’m a big girl and I stay inside.” (Field Notes 28/5/12, S1, p.81), “He can’t talk and he’s little” (Field Notes, 28/5/12, S1, p.82).

These above statements, made in conversations and noted in observations, show how the ‘normal’ position themselves as the older. They refer to themselves in one example as ‘kids’ and not ‘little’. They position themselves as more mature as they do not show unbridled emotions, such as screaming in the classroom. They ‘know’ their place and what classroom they belong in. They also position themselves as rational ‘rule following’, self-disciplined and autonomous subjects who have developmentally
appropriate skills. As ‘big’ kids in these statements, they produce themselves as different from and superior to the ‘little’ kids.

I asked one group of children to tell me what ‘big’ kids can do and they replied, “They can run, they can talk, they can scream, they can climb a tree, they can eat yoghurt and they can play together, they can play nicely.” “Little kids don’t play nicely” (Field Notes, 28/5/12, S1, p. 83). These statements disclose how they position themselves as competent, by using their social skills that are more developmentally appropriate than their younger counterparts. Children explain how they sit at group time, “He sits at the front because he’s little. All the ‘big’ people sit at the back.” (Field Notes, 31/7/12, S2, p.61). To sit at the front in the group might translate into needing support to stay on task. ‘Big’ kids don’t need that kind of support because they ‘know’ how to do this.

There is also a hierarchy, described in this developmental understanding, as Daniel talks about the different class group in the centre. “The beetle room teaches more than the caterpillar room, they’re lower…they’re lower and this is higher (he uses his arms to show the levels of the hierarchy). The baby’s room is lower, then the beetle room is higher and the caterpillar room is higher” (Field Notes, 8/8/12, S2, pp.108-109).

The comparisons the children make above establish the ‘normal’ and comparisons to it. However, following Rose (1999), I would reiterate that “normality is not an observation but a valuation” (p.131). The constructed ‘normal’ provides the guide and judgement about what is desirable also extrapolating that it is a goal that needs to be achieved. The criteria for what is considered ‘normal’ continues to be “elaborated by experts on the basis of the claims to a scientific knowledge of childhood and its vicissitudes” (Rose, 1999, p.133). The ‘norm’ is established via multiple discourses and provides the ‘expertise’ and knowledge for understanding the individual, for diagnosing and categorising them and providing for vocabularies to speak about them as ‘normal’ or ‘not normal’. It designs the technologies for remediating. While establishing the norm, developmental psychology is a formative tool through which children are subjected (Burman, 2008). It is a tool for classification and surveillance, constituting and legitimising subjectivities and power relations (Laws & Davies, 2000). As a science, psychology has produced taken-for-granted practices that have been considered as ‘facts’ (Walkerdine, 1989) and these substantially contribute to the created conditions and possibilities for the becoming subject, their relational power and agency. The measurement and categorising achieved by the discipline of psychology inevitably constitutes “subjects who can have no access to legitimate forms of power or agency” (Laws & Davies, 2000, p.207). What does this mean for Hugo and
Hayley in the classroom? How does Hugo’s positioning as ‘helpless’ and exercising less power shape his subjectivity? How does the developmental discourse shape Hayley’s subjectivity as the helper, with access to legitimised power?

Hayley performs her category membership of the ‘normal’ drawing on multiple discourses. As the more adult-like being, drawing on developmental discourses, she takes on a caring role offering to help the ‘younger’ child. Her positioning marks Hugo as in need of ‘help’. Hayley performs her own category boundary work producing Hugo as a marginalised Other. ‘Helping’ the Other is a performance enacted by many of the children in this classroom, and is mostly supported by the teachers. However, the teachers’ actions here show some concern about Hayley’s ‘over-the-top’ greeting and Hugo’s rejection of her attention, as he tries to get away from her. The teachers watch Hayley and Hugo and then act on their understandings of Hugo’s discursively constructed needs, rescuing Hugo from Hayley’s ‘over-caring’. In doing this, however, they possibly reinforce Hugo’s marking as not capable of looking after himself and in need of their help. Hugo appears to reject Hayley’s ‘helping’ attention. He may not wish to be positioned as the ‘little’ one in need of her help and ‘mothering care’. As the teachers separate Hugo from Hayley they too engage in category boundary work reinforcing the ‘normal’ and the ‘not normal’. How does this act of separation by the teachers contribute to the construction of the children’s subjectivities?

Using reflexivity….

I observed and noted the children’s persistent statements about being ‘big’ and being ‘little’ I considered how I had positioned myself within this discourse and how my previous ways of knowing had positioned children. Developmental psychology positions the adult as privileged and adult ways of ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ as superior and the child as the binary opposite, immature and deficient. My questioning of my position illuminated for me the children’s statements about themselves and others. What once would have been very familiar and acceptable to me now seems undesirable. As development was always presented to me, as a teacher, as a positive and something to be desired and worked towards, it was ‘natural’ that ‘bigger’ was better. Wasn’t it? When I thought about the children that I had ‘diagnosed’ within these discourses as developing more slowly or differently I always made the now dubious assumption that it was important for them to progress and catch up. How does one begin to interrupt these embedded ways of thinking? I was challenged every day in creating data to reposition myself within the discourses.
“We’re big, we can help”

At packing away time the children are divided into their class groups and sent to separate parts of the yard to put things away. Most of the children seem to do some packing away. However Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) is observed to resist this activity regularly. On this occasion he has spent the morning playing in a ‘fire truck’ and has been asked repeatedly to pack it away by a teacher. Instead of following these instructions he takes himself up onto the high fort and lies down in the fort. Leah (a child without a diagnosis) follows Hugo up into the fort trying to encourage him to come down and do his share of the packing up. She bends down next to him touching him gently and talking to him softly. “Come on Hugo, you have to pack up the fire engine that you were playing with”. He wriggles away from her touch saying “No” several times each time with increasing volume. She repeats similar words of encouragement. One of the teachers calls to her, “Leah, are you going to get out of packing up?” Leah explains that she is trying to get Hugo to help. After a few minutes she gives up, comes down from the fort and starts to pack away the fire engine. She is told by the teacher to leave some for Hugo to do. Eventually Hugo comes down from the fort and with the teacher standing over him he puts one thing away (Field Notes, 6/11/12, S3, p.48).

The unmarked children try to ensure that everyone does their share at ‘packing away time’ as they follow the routines and rules (Davies, 1993). Drawing on regulatory discourses they seem to have a desire to keep order and maintain the normative way of ‘being’. Doing some of the packing away work maintains their membership in the ‘normal’ category. Hiding from doing the packing away might be viewed as being quite usual for some children who could be considered naughty. Hugo’s hiding on the fort is not the usual or ‘normal’ due to his pathologised positioning. When I asked a group of children why Hugo did not appear to pack away, Tyler’s response was: “Cause he’s just learning”. When you are ‘just learning’ you are presumably not expected to do the same as everyone else, the ‘normal’. How do the unmarked children then position themselves if they see the ‘other’ as ‘just learning”? How does their knowledge bestow privilege? The statement, ‘just learning’, seems to be used in addition to, or sometimes in place of the alternative description of ‘little’. What are the effects of these discursive positionings on both the marked and unmarked children?

The ‘just learning’ label, bestowed on the marked child, is authorised as legitimate. Early childhood classroom and educational institutions more generally have established ways of observing children, regulating their conduct, while creating norms that enable them to scrutinise any deviations by charting and measuring them (Rose, 1999). The children under this regime measure themselves against each other. The carefully selected words, ‘just learning’, infer that they will learn, but at the moment they are not yet there. ‘Just learning’ however assigns the marked child with deficits within
the network for norms that have infiltrated children’s spaces (Rose, 1999). These deficits are identified, labelled and codified and in this discourse require obligatory remediation. The unmarked children take it upon themselves to become ‘remediators’ referring to themselves as ‘helpers’. ‘Helpers’ remediate the Other, by guiding and teaching them and bringing them closer to the more desirable superior discursively produced ‘normal’.

Guidance, or the helping/remediating performances of the unmarked children, are actions that serve as a means of control, keeping order and maintaining category membership. While I consider helping each other a worthwhile pursuit, I would like to bring to light the way that this imagined less coercive move to help is also an exercise and deployment of power (Millei, 2011). In thinking with Millei (2011), guidance, as helping, enacted by the children is envisaged as emancipatory as it involves a lessening of sovereign power where the teacher explicitly instructs or coerces the child about what to do. Early childhood classrooms have come to be seen as more democratic places as children are guided not disciplined. This discursive practice of the children in guiding/helping each other is visible and regarded as a more ‘egalitarian’ approach however “‘the child’ in guidance is a constitution” (p.92) and this has implications for power and the positioning of children by each other, as it assumes certain ways to be and act. Guidance discourses, not only foster the child to understand themselves as a considerate (Millei, 2011) and helping individual, but also fosters an understanding of the Other who needs that help or guidance.

Leah positions herself as a ‘helper’. She has fashioned herself as patient and caring with the marked children. Leah attends the preschool on a full time basis and seems to know all the children, the routines and rules of the classroom. Leah was observed to often follow Hugo around the playground. She also keeps a close watch on Molly, another marked child. She watches them play, shows them how to use equipment or do activities and encourages them using teacher-like phrases, such as “that’s right”, “well done” and “good work”. She positions herself as ‘adult-like’ and tries to ‘help’ the marked children to do the ‘right’ thing. The marked children are usually accompanied by or closely ‘shadowed’ by a teacher, but Leah enthusiastically adds her support to the process of remediation and guidance.

The unmarked children are often encouraged by the teachers to engage in the practice of helpfulness. MacLure et al. (2012) argue that while this practice might be well intentioned, it positions the marked child in a subordinate position and perhaps as “a
resource upon which the other children can exercise their developing social and moral competence" (p.458).

Leah, takes up normalising and guiding discourses, in her relentless performance as the ‘helper.’ In the previous example where Leah wants to conduct Hugo’s packing away, she is gentle and caring with him, but nevertheless producing him as subordinate. Do these caring and guiding discourses create an egalitarian and inclusive classroom? At the end of the scenario Leah leaves Hugo alone on the fort as his “No” becomes louder and more resolute. Her reaction to his resistance might be read as her understanding of a potential disruption and moving away could avoid this. Hugo’s increasing volume let her know that he was becoming more annoyed by her ‘help’. Hugo rejects his positioning as one who needs help and the teacher steps in and encourages the separation of the marked child from the unmarked child. Are the teachers positioning themselves as helping Hugo by encouraging Leah to separate from him or are they perhaps working to avoid any potential ‘disruption’?

“We like helping, we can because we’re big”

I used a photograph of Leah on the fort with Hugo to instigate a conversation with her and Hayley (child without a diagnosis) about ‘helping’.

Me: “Why are you helping Hugo in this photo?”
Leah: “Because I like helping Hugo.”
Hayley: “Me too.”
Leah: “Oh we help….I help Molly too.” (child with a diagnosis)
Hayley: “Me too.”
Me: “Why do they need help?”
Leah: “Cause they are liddle……and …..and”
Hayley: “They are small.”
Leah: “And they need help by the teachers and us and Sarah helps them too.”
Me: “Do you need help?”
Both: “No!”
Hayley: “We are big girls.”
Me: “Hugo doesn’t look little to me.”
Leah: “But he still needs help, he always wants to play with fire trucks but he has to do some climbing and some and some things else.” (Field Notes, 13/11/12, S3, pp.65-66).

Leah describes Hugo as ‘little’ and in need of ‘help’. She also states that she likes to help Molly (a child with a diagnosis). ‘Helping’ it seems, positions Leah as important. Hayley (a child without a diagnosis), also identifies herself as a ‘helper’ and a ‘big’ girl and they both position themselves alongside the teachers, saying that Hugo and Molly are small and that is why they need help. When I comment that he doesn’t look little,
referring to his physical size, Leah says that he still needs help and refers to other skill deficits, which need remediating. Performing the ‘helping’ and remediation, positions Leah and Hayley as mature and rational, independent and empathetic which are favoured ‘developed’ characteristics in this discursive context and the achievement of these traits is an expectation that is taken for granted.

Using reflexivity…..

I asked the question, “Why are you helping Hugo?” I wanted to find out what the children thought about Hugo and in asking this question I became complicit in also marking him as I positioned him as being helped. I positioned myself as not knowing, perhaps in need of ‘help’ myself even though I could probably have predicted what the children might say. As an adult I was also positioned as a helper but at times I attempted to redress power relations and presented myself as somewhat vulnerable and in need too. My questioning however wanted the children to speak about Hugo’s difference and my questions reinforced that. I constructed the data with my questions and possibly limited the conversation to questions and answers that were acceptable in the discourses. I became more aware of the limiting effect of my questioning as I spent more time in the field and re-read and re-wrote my observations. I grappled with trying to ‘mix it up a bit’, in an attempt to ‘do’ things differently during my time in the field.

Helping is like being a babysitter

Me: “Do you like helping Molly (a child with a diagnosis)?”
Chelsea (a child without a diagnosis): “Sometimes if I’m not busy I can do that.”
Me: “But I haven’t seen you do it as much as Leah.”
Chelsea: (laughs a little)...“No!! .... she’s like a babysitter.”(Field Notes, 27/11/12, S3, p.133).

Leah’s unswerving performance as a ‘helper’ has, in Chelsea’s view, elevated her to the position of a ‘babysitter’, possibly someone who does this caring and helping in a more full time and responsible capacity. Chelsea, on the other hand, likes to help sometimes but concedes that she has other things to do. Leah, while doing all the ‘babysitting’, has no time for other things. Leah’s own positioning as a ‘helper’ with the marked children is reinforced by how the other children, like Chelsea, position her as well. The ‘helper’ is the responsible, more adult-like rational way to be. Sometimes the children use developmental comparisons, in a more detailed way, to position the marked child, describing them with multiple deficits and ‘needy’.
“We don’t need help, we’re big”

Me: “Why do you think Molly (a child with a diagnosis) needs help?”
Chelsea: “She needs help to do stuff like sitting over there (she points to Bonnie sitting at a table with the teacher next to her)
Me: “What else?”
Chelsea: “Like saying different words because she’s only young.”
Me: “Why does she need that help?”
Chelsea: “Cause you can see how little she is and that’s how they know she needs help and stuff.”
Me: “What other things might tell you that she needs help?”
Chelsea: “Yeah like cause she can’t she doesn’t know a lot of words she doesn’t know how to say different words.”
Me: “Anything else?”
Chelsea: “How to play fair?”
Me: “Can you tell me why Molly gets help and you don’t?”
Chelsea: “Cause I’m bigger than her.” (Field Notes, 27/11/12, S3, pp.131-132).

“You can see how little she is”, Chelsea points out. Molly however is not physically small, as Hugo was not either. How do the unmarked children come to know her as ‘little’ and in need of ‘help’? From within child development discourses there are ‘truths’ about appropriate physical and cognitive growth and social and emotional maturation. There is an imperative in developmentalism, to closely examine what might be considered ‘inappropriate’ or ‘delayed’ growth, when compared to the norm. Historically the study of the child in psychology was made possible by the ‘nursery school’, as these sites enabled the observation of numbers of children of the same age. Clinical observations “allowed for standardization and normalisation” (Rose, 1999, p.145). The standards created were based on the ability of the average and performances of children of the same age. The ‘normal’ created during the child study period of the 1930s “provided new ways of thinking about childhood, new ways of seeing children that spread rapidly to teachers, health workers, parents through scientific and popular literature” (Rose, 1999, p.153). The notion of deficits or delays then was produced in the gap between what ‘real’ children actually do, and what they are supposed to do, according to the constructed ‘normal’. New expectations and anxieties (Rose, 1999) on the developing child have created an imperative to remediate, ‘help’ and ‘fix’ those who are deemed not to meet the required standard.

The members of the category of the ‘normal’ are unified as a homogeneous group. Homogeneity works to measure and judge members and non-members, exercising its power to reduce any gaps by correcting difference. The unmarked children in their correction work with the teachers try to ‘fix’ the difference by imposing the ‘normal’. Chelsea states that Molly needs ‘help’ to sit at the table and needs the teacher to
contain her there. Molly is positioned as in need of correction and also some degree of containment. ‘Help’ is produced as desirable intervention, to maintain social order, to prevent “maladjustments” (Rose, 1999, p.159) and to correct ‘early’ what might become “bad habits” (p.156) that might last a life time. The marked child’s difficulty is considered a ‘developmental error’ (Millei, 2011). The child, if not ‘fixed’, could run the risk of becoming a troubled child, possibly a ‘delinquent’ child. The image of the deprived child, created in post second world war Europe, was one who was considered to be at risk of a future criminal life and potentially dangerous to the community (Rose, 1999). The imperative to ‘help’ and ‘fix’ is shaped by historical discourses of maintaining order and protecting the ‘normal’ (Foucault, 2006). In early childhood classrooms this imperative is deeply rooted in the long history of the early childhood movement (Gordon & Browne, 2007).

Molly is described as not knowing lots of words and needing to learn how to play fair. Words and their use create a privilege in the classroom. ‘Use your words’ is a phrase that teachers and children use in communicating and as strategy for managing conflict resolution (Blank & Schneider, 2011). ‘Using your words’ promotes an egalitarian approach in disciplining and controlling others (Millei, 2011). This phrase positions the child who can use their words as an autonomous subject who can self-regulate, a desirable and privileged subject position in the early childhood classroom. Conversely those who do not have words or do not use them are created as Other, younger, less able and perhaps undisciplined (even uncivilised). Molly as an individual in need of ‘help’ is described by her deficits and her lack of words.

How do children come to see themselves with or without deficits? How do they position themselves developmentally? This positioning affects not only what they believe they are capable of but also what they believe they might deserve and where they might belong in the social hierarchy (Graham & Grieshaber, 2008) and whether they are in a position to help or be helped. The deficits identified when comparing one child to another “through statistically derived age-based norms and arbitrary benchmark standard[s]” (Graham & Grieshaber, 2008), lead to educational practices that produce subjectivities through a controlling logic of ableism or the ‘normal’.

Although limiting in its possibilities for children, alternatively, developmentalism could be viewed as a convenient and useful discourse in this context, as it provides the children and adults with the words and a way of describing the often undescrivable marked children, in an acceptable/sanctioned way. Moreover, these discourses give
authority to the also acceptable notion of ‘fixing’ or remediating the marked child. In the next section I ask the questions: What are the ways the children position the marked child as they enact practices of assessment and remediation and perform ‘helping’ tasks as they draw on special education discourse? How do these sanctioned medical and diagnostic ways to speak about the Other contribute to discourses of the ‘normal’? Do these discourses contribute to exclusionary practice?

Special education discourses

Developmental discourses are reinforced and upheld by the authority of special education discourses, which dominate the classroom. Inclusion is supported in policy and practice, set down in the Inclusion and Professional Support Program Guidelines 2013-2016 (Australian Government, 2013), and via an Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) which is to “provide eligible ECEC services with practical support that will help services to build their capacity to provide a quality inclusive environment for children with additional needs” (Australian Government, 2013, p.22). This funding aims to increase educator to child ratios when a child with high ‘needs’ attends. The supplementary educators/aides employed with this subsidy closely support and supervise. They often constantly shadow the child with a diagnosis and use every opportunity to remediate the child’s skill deficits. Subsidy approval which relies on diagnosis and special education support is expected as part of the ‘inclusive’ intervention.

In the following scenario the teacher’s interaction with Molly is a remediating intervention and it is explicit and visible for all to see. The children, perhaps in solidarity with the teachers, draw on special education discourses to help ‘fix’ the marked child, however, it is also apparent that this remediation further marks and marginalises the child.

“The teacher doesn’t help us and we don’t need ‘help’”

Molly (a child with a diagnosis) is sitting at the table with a teacher. The table is being used for a craft activity and the children are making binoculars out of cardboard toilet rolls. The teacher is holding Molly’s hands around her two rolls. Molly is looking around the yard not looking at her hands. The teacher’s voice is loud so all at the table and nearby can hear what she is saying. “Hold this”, “put it there”, “scissors down, scissors down, scissors down”, “white piece, white piece, white piece”, “on the paper, on the paper, on the paper”. When the binoculars are finished being made by the teacher, Molly tries to leave the table but the teacher holds her trying to get her to look through them. Molly reaches across the table and the teacher says: “You have to tell me more, more,
say more" and then pointing to pieces of coloured paper says: “This one or this one? Blue? You tell me blue”. To which Molly replies: “Blue”.
Teacher: “Good girl Molly, tell me, what to do, cut, cut?”
Molly: “Cut.”
Teacher: “She’s doing very well with the sticky tape” (the teacher comments to a child at the table).
Jonathan (a child without a diagnosis): “She’s doing very well at that.”
Alexis (a child without a diagnosis): “She’s trying hard.” (Field Notes, 30/10/12, S3, pp.30-31).

The unmarked children align themselves with the teacher, which positions them in the category of the ‘normal’, mature and adult like. They praise Molly for the work she has done with the teacher. They have completed the activity without the teacher’s intervention, unlike Molly who is subjected as needing help by the children and the teacher. They are positioned as competent and Molly as the binary opposite. Molly’s marking is reinforced by the teacher’s actions, holding her hands in place, talking to her loudly, slowly and repetitively. This child-directed and repetitive instruction is considered by speech pathologists to bring about more expressive language and increased vocabulary (Weisleder & Fernald, 2013). Vocabulary acquisition is believed to be an important indicator of later reading and academic success (Biemiller, 2003). It is viewed as essential for later school achievement and so providing endless opportunities for children to develop their language skills by repetition. Repetition is seen as an important part of effective intervention (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006).

Molly’s lack of interest in the activity is perhaps expected due to her diagnosis and so the intervention is considered essential to improve her concentration and school readiness skills. Her level of interest would be attributed primarily to her delay and deficits, her ‘inability’ to concentrate and stay on a task and the ‘inadequacy’ of her fine motor skills to manipulate the materials independently and ‘correctly’. School readiness discourses promote particular skill requirements (Boivin & Bierman, 2014) in early childhood and children who fail to measure up to a standard level are often given tasks to practise these skills. School readiness is seen as central to the work that children ‘do’ in the early childhood classroom, involving not only pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills, but also learning how to function in an institutional setting (Ailwood, 2003). These readiness skills are developmentally defined and divided into ‘developmental’ domains; the cognitive, the social/emotional and the physical. Judgements are made about a child’s skills in their early years, using developmental and psychological parameters, and are seen as an indicator and predictor of the child’s future academic and school achievements (Boivin & Bierman, 2014).
Special education has been produced and continually legitimised by the rise in the authority of the medical and ‘psy’ sciences (Rose, 1999). The knowledge of physicians, psychologists and psychiatrists is powerful in creating descriptions and judgements of normality and abnormality in the early childhood classroom, with all children undergoing continuing examination, assessment and surveillance (Rose, 1999). The marked child’s activities and interactions are often teacher-directed, with a focus on remediation and containment, and marked children are under constant surveillance to reach and maintain prescribed and ‘normalised’ levels of development.

Supplementary teachers often ‘shadow’ the diagnosed child (Field Notes, S1, S2, S3). Slee (2011) contends that mainstream teachers often think about ‘inclusive’ education as an extra to their classroom practices and identify the need to enlist the help of supplementary teachers to achieve ‘inclusive’ practice as it is separate from their work. Slee (2011) argues that ‘inclusive’ education “needs to be decoupled from special education” (p.155), as the child with a diagnosis in the mainstream classroom is exposed to an almost relentless program of remediation, and as in special education, the assumption of individual defectiveness and need is ever present (Slee, 2011).

The rise of early intervention programs in recent years is associated with a focus on the importance of the first five years of a child’s life and the need to support the education and welfare of children with identifiable disabilities (Odom & Wolery, 2003). Early intervention is considered to be most effective when it is directed, explicit and intensive (Spencer et al., 2012) and requires assessment and individual programming and documentation of improvements in developmental competencies (Bagnato, 2005). The issue of ‘school readiness’ is often raised to support the intensive nature of early intervention (Spencer et al., 2012). Much of early intervention requires a collaborative approach among the various experts, with early childhood settings performing a principal role in a marked child’s remediation (Talay-Ongan, 2001).

Individual education programs are goal directed and designed to monitor the child’s progress (Dempsey, 2012). Early intervention and special education agree that specialised individual instruction is recommended practice in the ‘inclusive’ setting and that just being in an early childhood setting is not enough to address the individual learning needs of children with disabilities (Odom et al., 2011). The teacher along with the unmarked children in the previous scenario, take up the discursive practices of early intervention as they intensively individualise the focus on Molly’s needs and skill
development. How does the take up of special education discourse promote inclusionary practices?

A multi-disciplinary team of ‘experts’ often managed the marked child who are considered ancillary remediation professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and counsellors providing ‘specialist’ advice to classroom staff about what needs to be done to support and remediate the marked child’s prescribed deficits. In my field notes the teachers discuss the therapies that the marked child needs and they share with me the advice they have been given from the team of professionals. They discuss the use of special equipment for remediation and management, such as roller boards, seating, therapy balls, sensory balls/toys, headphones, communication books, Ipads and many others ideas that they have been given by therapist and specialists (Field Notes).

Laws (2011) postulates that dominant ‘truth’ discourses often constitute children with a diagnosis as “specimens in the scientific laboratory of learning” (p.59). Molly’s remediation was individualised and intensive and at the same time separate from the other children. She was positioned as the ‘specimen’ for others to gaze on. The teacher directed all of her attention to Molly, giving her specific instructions to complete the activity. It seemed that whatever Molly did, or did not do, it had to be treated and modified. It could not just be left alone or simply watched, intervention was the imperative (Laws, 2011). When Molly did not finish the task of binocular making the teacher did it for her.

The ‘help’ afforded to Molly isolates her and confines her activities to teacher-rehearsed pursuits. The children sitting at the table position Molly as ‘helpless’, as they watch this intensive encounter with the teacher who tries to make Molly construct the binoculars. They join in a chorus with the teacher saying “she’s doing very well at that” and “she’s trying hard”. Theorising with Foucault (1977), this system of hierarchical observation of Molly was integrated and functioned “like a piece of machinery” (p.177), to remediate Molly indiscreetly, as the power to discipline her was not just with one individual, but it was everywhere. This mechanism also ensures the constant supervision of the individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising. “Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism” (Foucault, 1977, p.177). The unmarked children discipline Molly, as she does not perform as a subject in the prescribed way according to the norm, she cannot sit at the table, she cannot follow the binocular building process, she cannot use the
scissors, she cannot communicate appropriately, she cannot do the things that the ‘reasonable’ can do. The judgements and comparisons to the ‘normal’ have rationality as one aim for the management of subjectivities (Rose, 1999). The unmarked children are unified with the teachers in constructing their own, and Molly’s subjectivities, in accordance with the creation of a being who can ‘be’ and act in the prescribed way.

Using reflexivity…..

In interrogating the discursive practices of special education, I am questioning my years of knowledge and my teaching experiences. Watching this scene with an altered perspective I felt very uncomfortable. As a teacher I had worked to ‘make’ children more ‘normal’. The teacher is positioned as supporting the child and ‘armed’ with the legitimised power and knowledge of special education tries to ‘fix’ them. What does the teacher become when they position themselves with the task of ‘fixing’? Who does the teacher become in this mutual co-constitution with Molly? The interactions between Molly and the teacher were very familiar to me, and they reflected unambiguously, my previous practices with children. In the context of the ‘inclusive’ classroom I would have viewed this scene as an appropriate pedagogical interaction, a teacher working one-on-one with a child to remediate their deficits. This would have been an intervention that I would have encouraged and guided. I continue to grapple with these ideas but I am excited by the possibilities of applying post-positivist ontology and epistemology in the classroom by declaring that there is no absolute or objective truth. How could other possibilities be presented and accepted in the classroom? Is it possible to disrupt and rethink the ways we view the child? What might that mean for the teacher’s position of power in the classroom?

‘Deficit’ based constructions of the child continue to govern how children are viewed, how classrooms are organised, and how assessment, instruction and remediation are implemented (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011, p.819). Teachers in the early childhood classroom create themselves, and are positioned as good and caring people, who value the knowledge of special education, and its power to ‘fix’ or at least remediate, some of the diagnosed characteristics of the marked child. They position themselves as helping to make the child ‘normal’ without questioning the effects. However, in their actions and words, they ‘speak’ ways of being into existence that differentiate and categorise individuals by consulting a common referent (Graham & Slee, 2008). This has been achieved through the human sciences, in the construction of the ‘normal’ (Foucault, 1972), which the children and teachers readily take up in their pursuit of special education, for those who are constructed as needing it. How do these
discourses gain and reproduce their dominance over these subjects? What is it about difference that creates this need to ‘fix’ and ‘normalise’?

Medical discourses

“He has something wrong with him”

Me: “In this photo I have taken a picture of Leah helping Hugo. Why does Hugo need help?”
Hamish: “Because he can’t walk properly and he has different stuff to us.”
Me: “Like what?”
Hamish: “He still has something that’s wrong with him and he can walk but something’s wrong with him.”
Me: “What do you think that might be?”
Hamish: “I don’t know maybe….maybe like Coda, the one that you and me (talking to Tyler who is participating also in this conversation) went to their birthday, it was a hot wheel one, what was that one….and he still had a cord in his tummy.” (Field Notes, 20/11/12, S3, p.102).

Hamish depicts Hugo as physically disabled. He describes him as not “walking properly” and compares him to a child who has “had a cord in his tummy”, perhaps referring to a feeding tube. Hamish draws on medical discourses to position Hugo as different and bestows on him physical characteristics that are not observed. He uses the word “wrong” twice in one sentence and declares that Hugo can’t walk but then corrects himself when it is quite obvious that Hugo can walk. Hamish positions himself and his friends (us) as not like Hugo. He positions Hugo as not able-bodied. Medical discourses privilege a ‘correct’ and ‘able’ body while pathologising a body that does not meet the created ‘normal’ criteria (Shildrick, 2005). Medical models of disability retain an advantaged and authoritative place in ‘inclusive’ education (Kearney & Kane, 2006) while privileging the desirable able-bodied. Medical discourses that validate able-bodiedness are taken up by the unmarked children to differentiate themselves from the Other.

Able-bodiedness provides the binary positionings of abled/disabled. The abled/disabled binary is also produced and reproduced by special education, psychological and developmental discourses. Able-bodiedness is a normative but un-interrogated position which serves to shape the margins and define the ‘not able’ (Smith, 2004). The discourses that provide a diagnosis for the marked child interrogate the characteristics of ‘disabled’ in the binary leaving the ‘abled’ intact and unscrutinised. The unmarked children have only the available deficit descriptions and the language of pathology to describe the marked child as they draw upon medical and psychiatric discourses.
Shildrick (2005) contends that against the prevailing ‘normal’, the construction of physical difference, in historical and contemporary discourses, is fabricated as failing, incomplete and inferior and “marks disabled embodiment as deeply devalued, not so much for what it is but for what it fails to be” (p.756). Hamish might be unsure about what is “wrong” with Hugo but he nevertheless positions Hugo as ‘failing to be right’ and having “different stuff to us”. The “us” is produced by the normative discourses that hold in place the binary power of normal/not normal. The Otherness of the created ‘not normal’, Shildrick (2005) contends, “can be contained only by the strict imposition of normative categories that separate out and hold apart the supposedly oppositional groups” (p.757).

Another reading of this might consider that Hamish, in his description of Hugo as ‘having something wrong’, is drawing on discourses that position Hugo’s discursively created subjectivity as conceivably an issue of morality (Laws, 2011). Being wrong and needing to be made right. Hamish draws on right and wrong moral discourses and positions Hugo as having multiple needs that might be in need of attention or perhaps compassion and tolerance (Brown, 2006).

Using reflexivity…..

I was struck by Hamish’s use of the word ‘wrong’ and his idea that Hugo has “different stuff to us”. Within the discourses Hamish had used appropriate ways of describing Hugo. I felt very uncomfortable that Hamish understood Hugo in this way and I thought about my discursive position as a teacher and how my actions would have positioned children like Hamish with a diagnosis in the same way. To be ‘right’ was to be ‘normal’. Hugo was subjected as the opposite. In my attempt to create data about in/exclusionary practices and the children’s positioning of each other, I became complicit in a conversation that further marked Hugo. I said nothing and did not challenge Hamish’s words. This was the kind of data I wanted (wasn’t it) as Hamish ‘spoke’ via exclusionary discourses. Looking reflexively however by remaining silent I became entwined in the maintenance of the ‘right’ and the ‘normal’ along with the children. My silence among the unmarked children might have signalled to them that I perhaps agreed with them or at least positioned myself in their category. Again I was asking the ‘wrong’ questions. My desire to represent and make sense of the classroom practices remains unchallenged and very uncomfortable when I think about this scene in this way.
Up to this point in the chapter, I have focused my analysis and discussion on child development, psychological and medical discourses that are interwoven with multiple other discourses including special education. These discourses focus the gaze of the ‘normal’ on the child with the diagnosis, showing how the child is produced as Other and different from the taken-for-granted, created ‘norm’. The unmarked children take up developmental discourses to position themselves and others using comparisons of age, abilities, needs, occupation, physical appearance, and by performing ‘helping’ activities locate themselves as the more capable ‘normal’. Children who see themselves as big, a helper, a player or able-bodied position themselves and those like them as ‘normal’. They are amenable to separating themselves from the marked child and this separation augments their category boundary work, reinforcing the homogeneity of the ‘normal’. Developmental and associated discourses produce available ways of describing and labelling children in the classroom, while also sanctioning including and excluding words and actions. These discourses maintain and reinforce who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’.

**Regulatory and disciplinary discourses**

The unmarked children often claim that the marked child does not know the rules and that the teacher needs to help them with the rules. In the classroom, regulatory and disciplinary discourses are taken up by the children as they position themselves as rule followers, but how does this position the marked child if they are positioned as rule breakers? Knowing the rules and following them makes one a recognisable (Butler, 1997a) member of the ‘normal’ category. In the following scenario Jasmine (a child with a diagnosis) is described as not knowing the rules and this ‘not knowing’ is explained by Jasmine’s deficits and differences. The following conversation began after Jasmine is observed to be loudly protesting against a teacher’s instructions.

*“We know the rules”*

Me: “Why does Jasmine have to do what the teacher wants?”
Chelsea: “Cause she has to do what the teacher tells her to do.”
Me: “Do they tell you what to do?”
Chelsea: “No, but we do it…… yeah we just do it.”
Me: “Why do you do it?”
Chelsea: “Cause we know we will get in trouble.”
Me: “And Jasmine doesn’t know that?”
Tyler: “No, cause she’s little.”
Chelsea: “And she’s just learning.”
Tyler: “She’s just learning, she’s five, she’s a big girl.”
Me: “She is just learning and five…Why?”
Chelsea: “I don’t know……she doesn’t know a lot of things…..cause she’s talking really young and she’s talking funny.”
Tyler: “Yeah…she’s talkin funny…..yeah but she can say hello good like bye, bye.”
Chelsea: “She can say my name.”
Me: “Why are you different?”
Chelsea: “Cause my name’s Chelsea and I’m a girl and his name is Tyler and he’s a boy.”
Jackson: “I know why we’re different because……we can talk….ummm……like this and she doesn’t talk….mm…mm…mm (making a sound to imitate). We talk normal but she talks like different.”

The unmarked children ‘know’ that they have to do what the teacher wants. They understand the power relationships that govern in this context and they position Jasmine as not having this understanding. The unmarked children engage here in a discussion about classroom discipline and self-discipline. Millei (2005) argues that discipline in early childhood classroom as a form of control is dominantly based in behaviourist ideals. Disruption to the social order of the classroom by those deemed to be a ‘problem’ often leads to stimulus-response conditioning where rewards and punishments are the consequences. Chelsea’s comments reflect her understanding that in the classroom, children have to execute the teacher’s orders, follow the rules and act in a certain way (Millei, 2005). She understands that doing what the teachers are asking and staying out of trouble avoids punishment. It is the ‘right’ way to be. Classroom discipline, self-discipline and the control of the undisciplined, all play a part in the constitution of the ‘normal’. Chelsea’s response: “We just do it” states her self-disciplined position.

Classroom discourses of control also contribute to understandings of the Other. These discourses focus on the control of disruption or the threat of a disruption. Chelsea says that Jasmine has to do what the teacher tells her and avoid any disruption that might be caused. Jasmine, it seems, needs more management and discipline to control her in the classroom, as she does not always do what the teacher says. Discourses of regulation and control constitute particular ways of being as the ‘normal’ and ‘right’ and desirable way to be (Davies, 1993).

Classroom discipline is enacted on young children in multiple ways, through timetables, architectural and spatial design, rules, routines and expectations. Children are disciplined or ‘civilised’ (Leavitt & Power, 1997) to act in particular ways. However the children are not passive in the construction of the order of the classroom and they
actively cooperate in the establishing and maintaining of order (Davies, 1983). The control of the classroom thus involves collaboration with the teachers and the children.

Disciplinary techniques identified in education institutions and examined by Foucault (1977) in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* are observed in operation here as the unmarked children discipline Jasmine, using normalisation techniques. Foucault argues that the chief function of disciplinary power is to train:

> Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates, analyses and differentiates……..Discipline makes individuals: it is the specific technique of power that regards individuals as both objects and as instruments of its own exercise (Foucault, 1977, p.170).

The children are simultaneously made objects under the disciplinary gaze of the norm and their teachers but also work to exercise discipline on themselves and each other as part of this system. The unmarked children use “normalising judgements” (Foucault, 1977) as an instrument of power to coerce and correct. The children discipline Jasmine via their normalising judgements of her, identifying her inability to understand, follow and maintain the rules.

Jasmine’s actions are again explained, using deficit discourses, measuring and comparing Jasmine to the constructed ‘normal’. Jasmine is described in the conversation as “little”, “just learning”, “she doesn’t know a lot of things” and “she talk’s funny”. Jackson’s final comment completes judgement when he says, “We talk normal but she talks like different.” These normalising judgements discipline the Other, highlighting the need for correction, and reinforce the coercive power of the ‘normal’ and its disciplinary training in the “minute arts of self-scrutiny, self-evaluation and self-regulation” (Rose, 1999, p.226). These disciplinary techniques exercised by the children reflect classroom discipline producing the unmarked children as self-disciplined, self-regulating and ‘able’ to follow the discipline of the classroom. These discourses however also constitute Jasmine as a disruption and a problem for the order of the group.

The unmarked children draw on multiple discourses, to create Jasmine’s subject position as being ‘little’ and ‘just learning’. They discuss her age and do this on numerous occasions. Chelsea’s comment about why she was different to Jasmine, using gender discourses, illustrates how she has only certain ways to speak about
Jasmine, and her difference. Is she unsure about Jasmine’s gender? Possibly her use of gender discourses here shows how the unmarked children draw on sanctioned discourses that identify accepted differences. There is a shared understanding about the importance of doing as the teacher tells you, acting in a certain way, showing a level of maturity. Jasmine’s position as the Other produces her as a subject who is of concern and in need of discipline from the classroom and from the ‘normal’.

*He does not follow the rules*

Me: “I have noticed that Sam (a child with a diagnosis) doesn’t eat his morning tea with all the children. What do you think about this?”
Luke (a child without a diagnosis): “He wants to go outside and run.”
Faith (a child without a diagnosis): “He wants to have a nappy change.”
Frances (a child without a diagnosis): “He doesn’t.”
Jenna (a child without a diagnosis): “And he wants to run out, have morning tea and get his nappy changed.”
Me: “Why doesn’t he have morning tea with all the children, Frances?”
Frances: “He likes to run. He likes to steal people’s food.”
Fleur (a child without a diagnosis): “And he doesn’t talk really.”
Me: “He doesn’t talk?”
Fleur: “No.”
Frances: “He’s very quiet, he only cries.”
Me: “Why do you think he doesn’t talk?”
Fleur: “Cause……people who don’t talk….umm…….”
Tahlia (a child without a diagnosis): “Sam whinge.” (face wrinkled and mouth turned downwards at sides)
Me: “Why does he whinge?”
Tahlia: “Cause he wants his lunch.”
Fleur: “He wants his mum to stay but parents aren’t allowed to stay at school, only teachers.”
Me: “If you are hungry can you eat when you want to eat?”
All: “No.”
Fleur: “You have to eat at morning tea time but he can eat anytime he wants.”
Me: “Why?”
Fleur: “Because …….he ……doesn’t ……talk.” (says this slowly and precisely)
Jenna: “Because…. it’s… not… the… time.” (emphasises each word)
Me: “What about you Frances, would you like to eat when you feel hungry? Why can’t you?”
Frances: “Cause it’s not the time.” (Field Notes, 21/5/12, S1, p. 53).

When the children are asked why Sam did not have morning tea with the group, they again draw on the acceptable and perhaps tolerable regulatory and developmental discourses to explain his position. There is the hint of a potential ‘threat’, and the need for management of risk (Rose, 1999) surrounding Sam, as he likes to run outside, break the rules, and he likes to “steal people’s food”. Running outside, at the ‘wrong’ time, presents a disruption to the timetable and ultimately the social order. Regulatory
discourses are strongly entrenched and coercive in this context. The unmarked children only go outside when it is the ‘correct’ time and those who deviate from this are positioned as different, younger, not knowing or ‘just learning’. Moreover, there is also something morally ‘deviant’ about Sam, as Frances states that he steals food. The unmarked children avow that Sam does not eat with the other children as perhaps he is ‘dangerous’, a thief. Dangerousness is often described as an internal quality of a pathological individual (Rose, 1999). Is Sam produced in this way? Regulatory discourses position someone who ‘steals’ as an immoral and threatening being. How is Sam positioned by this discourse?

Furthermore, Sam is subjected as ‘baby-like’, described as wearing a nappy, not really talking and ‘only crying’. These are not the actions of a preschool child viewed via a developmental profile. They are perhaps the actions of someone without reason or someone who might be failing to make the necessary ‘progress’ (Cannella, 1997) towards a rational and more adult-like being. Fleur says “he wants his mum to stay”, which contributes more to his ‘baby’ positioning, as wanting your mum characterises you as a less autonomous being. Tahlia, is two and half years old, and has only attended the preschool for a month, but has readily taken up the circulating discourses as she declares “Sam whinge”. She positions herself as not like Sam and the tone of her voice expresses some animosity towards him, positioning him as a younger ‘deviant’ and somewhat annoying.

The children seem to grow impatient with my questioning or possibly they think I am not listening to their responses. They talk slowly to get their ideas across about Sam, maintaining their own position, which they make clear is recognisably different to Sam’s. The children definitively argue here that Sam is not like them the ‘normal’ but they do not use this particular language. They draw on the legitimate discourses of development, rules, regulation and ‘time’ to describe his deviations. In this conversation it seems that they are quite overwhelmed by all his differences and he is positioned as an enigma.

The unmarked children seem to know things about Sam, they have scrutinised him and his actions but they rarely, if ever, engage with him. They have come to know him via the discourses that subject him. They maintain a distance from him, as his actions position him as a ‘threat’ to them, as members of the ‘normal’, and guardians of the social order. Their comments illuminate their shared understanding of Sam and his actions.
Using reflexivity……

During the conversation or should I say my relentless questioning, I think I wanted the children to say the things that they said. I asked lots of why questions to provoke particular answers. Positioning myself as a researcher with an agenda “in the process of seeking to know” (Schneider, 2002, p.461) I reflect on how I limited the possibilities as I tried to obtain certain knowledge. Again by asking different questions I may have disrupted these positionings. Researching in the field I did try to be aware of the power of my questions but in these more spontaneous conversations I often became complicit in drawing on the ‘normal’ and positioning myself as part of the ‘normal’ I think without even realising it.

Both scenarios in this section reveal, how regulatory and disciplinary discourses in the early childhood classroom, produce limited subject positions and create subjectivities around being a rule breaker, one who disrupts, or a rule follower, one who conforms. Classroom disciplines work to control and manage the children in the classroom and the unmarked children position themselves as compliant with the regulations. Disciplinary techniques, using ‘normalising judgements’ (Foucault, 1977), are reinforced by the unmarked children’s performance of their ‘normal’ status, in the vicinity of the marked child. Drawing on these available and authorised discourses the unmarked children create Sam and Jasmine as unreasonable and rule breakers. Rule followers are constructed as the ‘normal’. Not understanding the rules and acting erratically is constructed as ‘not normal’ and the unmarked children position the ‘not normal’ as out of step with the way they see themselves.

Play and friendship discourses

Discourses of play and friendship are entrenched in early childhood education, constructing play as a beneficial activity, however, as they are taken up by the children in the classroom, can they produce exclusionary practices?

Virtually all early childhood educators (and many others) espouse play as a sacred right of childhood, as the way in which young human beings learn, as a major avenue through which children learn to be happy, mentally healthy human beings (Cannella, 1997, p. 124).

What might be the effects of play as a discourse and its authoritative position in the early childhood classroom in the construction and maintenance of the ‘normal’? How do the unmarked children draw on play discourses in their category boundary work and
what are the effects? How does this discourse create inclusive and exclusive actions? Following Ailwood (2003), this analysis ruminates on the idea that play functions to manage and organise relationships between children and groups of children.

“I play with others”

Me: “I’ve noticed that Ethan (a child with a diagnosis) plays a lot on his own. Have you noticed that?”
Chloe (a child without a diagnosis): “Max (a child without a diagnosis) plays on his own too.”
Me: “Why do they play on their own?”
Chloe: “Maybe…?” (voice rises as if thinking)
Daniel (a child without a diagnosis): “I never play on my own.”
Chloe: “Me neither.”
Daniel: “If I stay at home I can play with my sister and sometimes if my dad stays home, I can play with my dad.”
Chloe: “Sometimes my big sister only likes sporty games so I don’t offer her other games I only offer her sporty games.”
Me: “Do you think children like to play on their own or with others?”
Daniel: “I just think some people play on their own and most people play with some other people.” (Field Notes, 8/8/12, S2, pp.105-106).

‘Playing on your own’ Daniel says is something that “some people” do but he also says that “most people play with some other people”. Daniel’s statement positions him in the ‘normal’ category, a member of the “most people” group, the homogenous body. Daniel recognises that ‘some’ people, those outside this discursive category, play on their own. Daniel is quite certain about play, saying: “I never play on my own” and Chloe joins him to show the solidarity of her category membership by saying: “Me neither.” They make a clear statement that they do not like to play on their own.

Play has become an essential constituent in policy frameworks (DEEWR, Australian Government, 2009) and the notion that children learn through play is accepted in play-based pedagogy and practice (Nolan & Kilderry, 2010). Play is thought to underpin learning and observations of play can provide evidence of progress and achievement (Wood, 2010). Play is thought to promote a democratic society and respond to the ‘natural’ development of children (Cannella, 1997). As a discourse, play has been shaped by developmental understandings, where play is individualised, and ages and stages created to explain how it progresses (Macintyre, 2012). Playing alone is labelled as solitary or parallel play and associated with younger children. ‘Co-operative’ play or playing with others is viewed as an important milestone (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007) and regarded as ‘typical’ or ‘natural’ for children in the early childhood classroom.
Daniel and Chloe take these discourses up as they understand that solitary play is ‘not normal’ and they want to avoid being positioned in that way. What might be the effect of these statements, made by Daniel and Chloe, for children who play alone?

The effects of play discourses, and how they construct play as an almost compulsory and ‘natural’ activity for children ‘separates’ Ethan from the unmarked children as his way of being, playing alone, is not recognisable (Butler, 1997a) as the ‘normal’ way to be. Playing alone, as a form of ‘social withdrawal’, has also been pathologised in psychological discourse. Coplan and Armer (2007) speculate about long standing concerns for children who refrain from social interaction in the presence of their peers, and they make the claim that it is widely accepted, that children who do not interact with their peers are “at risk of social and emotional difficulties later in their lives” (p.26).

Play as a sanctioned discourse is regarded as a central feature of a young child’s life and a child’s right (Wood, 2010; UNICEF, 1989). Play has emerged from the hegemonic discourses of developmental psychology. The historical influence and widespread uptake in early childhood education of Developmental Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) has turned the focus on play as a primary vehicle for a child’s mental growth as “play enables children to progress along the developmental sequence” (p.3). Play is described as a ‘leading activity’ and a driving force in children’s development (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). However, play has been discursively produced uninterrupted until recently, as ‘natural’, ‘innocent’ (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010) and essential.

Cannella (1997) argues that “constructions of play assume linearity, universal human behaviour, unidirectional progress, and standards of normalcy” (p.124). Play is now questioned as a taken-for-granted and discursively constructed ‘norm’ in childhood and is problematised and interrogated in research (Ailwood, 2003; Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). Research in the area of gender and play (Davies, 1989; Ailwood, 2003; Blaise, 2005) has found that, when scrutinised, children’s play can produce oppressive gender relations (Walkerdine, 1981). As children position themselves and others within and through the available discourses, they engage in invoking a set of rules of what might be possible to think, feel, say and do as a subject (Campbell, 2005). This set of rules produces recognisable categories that the children work to maintain. “Children’s play perpetuates the status quo” (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010, p. 77) reinforcing social and cultural divisions, strengthening those who are already in powerful positions.
Thinking more critically, I would argue along with others, that play is not developmental but contextually and discursively produced and not always ‘natural’, fun and fair (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). Play “reproduces what exists in society in terms of relations of power about race; gender; social, economic and cultural capital; ethnicity; heteronormativity and proficiency with English” (p.75). Ability can also be added to this list, as children through play marginalise and isolate for any or all of these reasons (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010).

“I do not play alone”

I am sitting at a small round table with several children, about to open my computer to look at some of the photos I had taken at the preschool the previous day. Some more children arrived wanting to join in but I asked them if they could come back in a while as we could not all see the photos at once. Ethan (a child with a diagnosis) approached the table but hearing my words turned around saying: “I will come back in a while” repeating my words several times as he walked away. Amelia: “He’s a funny.” Me: “Why do you say that?” Amelia: “Cause he doesn’t play with anyone.” Me: “Why is that?” Grace: “Maybe because he’s shy.” Me: “Ok.” Grace: “Maybe he will when he grows up.” (Field Notes, 21/8/12, S2, p.151).

Grace suggests that Ethan could be shy. These discourses produce a pathologisation of Ethan and his actions. Shyness is also researched as a form of social withdrawal and as Coplan and Armer (2007) contend, shyness refers to a level of wariness and an anxiety in the face of some social novelty, which can create particular behavioural inhibitions. These traits are considered “biologically based” (p.27) potentially decreasing with maturity. Shyness has been pathologised as ‘not normal’. It is however an acceptable way to talk about Ethan’s difference, as the word also has links to personality traits that are not pathologised (Copler & Armer, 2007) and part of the ‘normal’ discourse. Grace continues in her conversation clarifying her positioning of Ethan as younger, while positioning herself as older. She says that maybe he is going to play with others when he grows up. She already plays with others and so positions herself as already grown up.

“We can do stuff, he does nothing”

Amelia, Grace and Penny (children without a diagnosis) look at a photo of the volcano-making in the sandpit and the following conversation transpires. Me: “Do you think Ethan (a child with a diagnosis) was building the volcano?”
Penny: “Nah.”
Grace: “No.”
Me: “Why not?”
Penny: “Because he can’t build much stuff……. he doesn’t do much stuff.”
Me: “Is he little?”
All: “Nah.”
Amelia: “He’s five.”
Me: “So why doesn’t he do the stuff that others do?”
Penny: “I don’t know.”
Amelia: “I don’t know either.”
Me: “What does he do?”
Grace: “He walks around and does nothing.”
Penny: “He just talks to his self.”
Me: “Do you ever talk to yourself?”
All: “No.”
Grace: “Er…well…sometimes at home I do.” (Field Notes, 21/8/12, S2, p.156).

In the early childhood classroom, there are expectations that young children engage in both independent and social activities, as they learn by doing and ‘playing’ (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). The early childhood classroom is constructed as a place where children ‘do stuff’. The unmarked children here position Ethan as not doing stuff and they say he “can’t build” and he walks around doing nothing. Playing is contextually produced as a ‘natural’ thing to do and children are created as being ‘naturally’ interested in doing things at preschool (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). Doing nothing positions Ethan as outside the ‘normal’ and the ‘natural’ discourses.

The unmarked children discuss how Ethan talks to himself. They draw on normative discourses where talking to yourself is not particularly acceptable, just like playing alone, as they say in chorus “no” when I ask them if they talk to themselves. Grace finishes the conversation admitting she does sometimes talk alone, but with the qualification that she does it only at home, or perhaps home alone when no one hears. With this statement perhaps she infers that this is not an ‘appropriate’ thing to be doing at preschool. The early childhood classroom is discursively produced as a place for socialisation (Epstein, 2009) where the norm expects children to be developing their social and emotional competency in their interactions with each other. Ethan’s actions, or what is recognised as lack of actions, position him outside the ‘normal’ category of how to ‘be’ and what to ‘do’ as the ‘right’ kind of pre-schooler. Ethan is subjected as someone whose performance sets him apart, as he does not operate within the boundaries of the discursively produced ‘normal’.

Those who are positioned as ‘normal’ throughout history have tried to disassociate and separate themselves from the behaviour of talking to oneself (Foucault, 2006) which is
conceived to display ‘madness’. ‘Talking to yourself’ in psychological and psychiatric discourses could be considered the performance of someone who is without reason (Birchwood, Spencer, & McGovern, 2000). Talking to oneself is described by child development theorist Piaget (1959) as ‘egocentric speech’, regarded as an indicator of a child’s level of development. Vygotsky (1986) regards this behaviour as ‘private speech’ arguing that children talk to themselves before they internalise thinking (Verenikina, Vialle, & Lysaght, 2011). Nevertheless Ethan’s actions position him as unreasonable and the children drawing on normative discourses categorise him as different to them. His actions bring into question his position as a rational being.

“*We play games with friends*”

Jack and Noah (children without a diagnosis) are in the sandpit. Each has a large plastic tip truck which they fill and empty. I move toward the sandpit and sit down on the edge. Ethan (a child with a diagnosis) has been following me for several minutes. He dances in circles dancing away from me and then back again. He is singing as well as telling a story with melody. He returns and stands in front of me each time and waits for me to say something. This goes on for many minutes. Jack and Noah look up each time Ethan returns. Their faces show surprise and bemusement. They look at me for a reaction.

Me: “Why does he keep dancing?”
Noah: “Probably cause he likes it?”
Me: “Do you like to do that?”
Noah: “Nah.”
Me: “Why not?”
Noah: “Cause I like playing with my friends.”
Me: “What about Ethan? Does he like playing with friends?”
Noah: “No.” (Field Notes, 29/8/12, S2, pp.195-196).

As Jack and Noah ‘do’ their kind of play in the sandpit they take note of Ethan’s play. This play scene with children playing in a sandpit with trucks could be regarded as ‘typical’ and normative in the early childhood centre. Ethan does not join the normative sandpit play but dances around in circles, moving toward and away from the sandpit while singing ‘a story song’. Jack and Noah look at him and then look at me somewhat perplexed. Ethan is not observed to play in the sandpit at all. He does not appear to want to play with the others.

When asked why Ethan dances, Noah states that he probably likes it. In the child-centred pedagogy of the early childhood classrooms there are prevailing notions about autonomy and democracy (Burman, 2008; Walkerdine, 1988), where children are thought to be able to and encouraged to make choices and self-regulate. A desirable level of self-direction in play, as an innocent and enjoyable endeavour, has shaped pedagogical practices (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010) for children in the classroom,
ignoring the possibility that play and its interactions can sometimes be coercive, cruel and dangerous (Burman, 2008). Play is discursively produced with some degree of ‘free choice’ and self-initiation, but as Cannella (1997) argues, “choice for children is an illusion” (p.121) and adults control the choices that surround children. The unmarked children take up the idea that they have choice and can make decisions about what they do in this context.

Historically, children’s play has been considered as a self-initiated spontaneous activity, an act of ‘freedom’ (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010) where children can do what they want and can follow their interests in an uninhibited way. This emanated from the thinking of philosophers and educators from the eighteenth century and nineteenth century, such as Rousseau and Froebel, where understandings about childhood were constructed as a romantic, natural and boundless time (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). The image of the young child as ‘innocent’, playing happily and harmoniously with others, has been produced and reproduced in historical discourses and permeates present-day approaches to child-centred early childhood education (James et al., 1998). Contemporary pedagogical discourses encourage children to show self-initiative and follow their interests. Even though choice might be limited, the idea of deciding what and where to play is seen as both a privilege and an obligation. Playing is regarded as an imperative for the young child; it is thus expected and normalised.

Noah stated that Ethan was probably doing what he liked to do. Early childhood classrooms are produced as places where choices can be made, and children are positioned as “autonomous choosers” and “decision makers” (Millei, 2011, p.89), and are trusted to direct themselves (Porter, 2008). Classroom discourses have replaced adult control and discipline with more egalitarian and democratic ideas for managing children and their behaviours using a ‘guidance approach’ thought to empower students (Millei, 2011). These humanistic discourses present the appeal of democratic relationships where teachers offer choices and children are ‘free’ to make them (Millei, 2011). This discursive move from adult control to more ‘guiding’ practices however, has shifted the regulation that adults once performed, to the children, who now regulate their own conduct and the conduct of others (Millei, 2011). Ethan is positioned by Noah as a choice-maker, but makes it clear that Ethan’s choice is not one that he would make.

The obligation to ‘do’ something and not be ‘idle’ is tacit. To be ‘idle’ is viewed as unconstructive and possibly suspicious. The notion of play has been created as “the
work of childhood” (Ailwood, 2003, p.293) and being ‘idle’, it could be suggested, is like being ‘out of work’ and unproductive to society. Idleness has an historical connection with the irrational in psychological and psychiatric discourses identified by Foucault (2006). Being occupied therefore is regarded as necessary and essential for being rational. Being ‘idle’ is undesirable. Noah positions himself as someone who plays with friends ‘constructively’ and appropriately, while Ethan’s actions are unproductive and irrational. Dancing around alone and being idle positions Ethan outside the membership of the ‘normal’.

Play discourses create a category binary and subject children in particular ways excluding those children who ‘do’ things differently. It could be argued that the discourses of playing and playing with friends provide only limited possible ways of being.

“We are all friends”

This piece of data came from a longer conversation about friends. When talking about Hugo (a child with a diagnosis), the children (without a diagnosis) make these comments.

Jon: “He doesn't do anythink.”
Jake: “We don't play wiff him.”
Me: “Is there any reason why you don’t?”
Jon: “Yeah... you have to be friends but you don’t have to play with them.” (Field Notes, 21/11/12, S3, p.116).

For these boys ‘being’ friends with everyone is compulsory and is one of the rules that children follow in the classroom. The distinction made here by Jon is between ‘being friends’ and ‘playing with friends’. Jon describes Hugo as not doing anything and Jake explains that they don’t play with him. In what ways does Jon imagine that Hugo does nothing? Hugo is positioned as somewhat ‘idle’ as Ethan was in an earlier scenario. Jon may consider that Hugo doesn’t do the kinds of things that other unmarked children do, and as he doesn’t ‘do’ what is recognised as the ‘normal’ things to ‘do’ at preschool and what he does ‘do’ is perhaps seen as ‘nothing’ or not valued from Jon’s position as a member of the ‘normal’ category. Hugo’s ‘idleness’ also positions him outside the rational ‘normal’ membership.

The unmarked children name Hugo as a ‘friend’ but they do not play with him. Nevertheless regulatory friend discourses circulating in the classroom inform them that
they must call him a friend. However, playing with friends is taken for granted as the norm. Co-operative play with friends is developmentally appropriate and progressive (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Friendships however are dynamic and sometimes volatile (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010) but having friends, knowing who your friends are and performing friendship by playing together is central to category production, maintenance and recognisable membership.

“We are all friends here” is a statement voiced regularly in the early childhood classroom by both the teachers and children. Social competency is judged on one’s ability to play cooperatively with others, as the capacity to understand the emotions and thoughts of others is considered to develop during the preschool years (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003), along with the development of theory of mind (Robson, 2012). The ‘we are all friends’ imperative and instruction in the classroom, shepherds children to become cooperative peers (Wohlwend, 2007) who can conceivably, with guidance (Millei, 2011), develop perspective taking and moral reasoning (Piaget, 1965). How do children position themselves and others in this discursive context where everyone is a friend? What work does this statement do? What are its effects? These words, used by children and teachers, have a particular meaning but what is observed in actions suggests that the statement ‘we are all friends' has multiple meanings and modes of practice in the classroom. ‘We are all friends’ is not taken to mean that friends necessarily ‘play’ together. The words are created to promote ‘inclusive’ practice but the children’s actions are not always ‘inclusive’.

Jon’s comment: “You have to be friends but you don’t have to play with them”, could be understood to mean that you have to include but at the same time you can also exclude. It is the ‘act’ of ‘playing’ that produces the ‘normal’ subject and category membership. It is in the performativity (Butler, 1997a) of playing, where friends become recognisable members of the category, and from that position ‘do’ their maintenance work. Friendship, in this sense, is a performance that “must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act but rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler, 1993, p.2). In many ways friendship comes from the ‘act’ of ‘doing’ friends. The act is political and the subject is discursively produced, not just in utterances but also in bodily performances of belonging to a particular discursive group.
Jonathan (a child without a diagnosis) is standing next to the see-saw as Joseph and Angus (children without a diagnosis) are having their turn. Jonathan is waiting for his turn. Abbey (a child without a diagnosis) approaches the trio asking for a turn on the see-saw. She asks, “Who’s in charge?” No one answers her. Jonathan seems to notice Abbey’s unhappy face as she turns to move away and he calls to her: “Ok you can have a go.” Abbey waits. Jasmine (a child with a diagnosis) approaches the see-saw and she places a hat from the dress ups on Angus’s head. He immediately throws it away a little annoyed. Angus and Joseph then get off the see-saw and move away and Jonathan gets on. Jasmine quickly gets onto the other side and Jonathan says to Abbey: “You missed out.” After a quick turn Jonathan gets off and moves away. Abbey gets on the see-saw hesitantly opposite Jasmine. Jasmine enthusiastically starts up the see-saw. Abbey: “Stop…..Stop…….I don’t want to do it with you I want……. Jasmine….Stop.” Abbey calls out to Angus nearby saying: “I don’t want Jasmine on here with me.” Her face contorted with anger, her checks flushed and her eyes narrowed. As noise levels rise a teacher arrives and says: “No one else is here waiting. She’s your friend too. Jasmine is a great friend to everyone here.” Abbey: “I don’t want her! Jasmine go and get someone.” Jasmine is not listening to Abbey she is enjoying the see-saw going more quickly up and down and laughing. The teacher says: “Just gentle Jasmine it will hurt you if you go down too hard.” Abbey then says to the teacher: “Can you count to ten so she can get off.” After the count Jasmine gets off and Henry joins Abbey on the see-saw. Soon after the incident I asked Abbey why she did not want to ride on the see-saw with Jasmine and she replied: “She’s not my friend.”(Field Notes, 30/10/12, S3. pp.33-34).

Sometimes the ‘compulsory’ ‘we are all friends’ discourse is resisted and disrupted. As the see-saw scenario unfolded different subject positionings became visible. When Abbey moves to the see-saw and waits her turn, asking who might be in charge, she is drawing on regulatory discourses around the socially expected norms of turn taking and sharing at preschool (Dunn, 1988). She seems to understand that she is entitled to have her turn but must wait for it. Jonathan, also drawing on this discourse, reassures Abbey that she can have a turn.

However, when Jasmine moves to the area and jumps onto the see-saw ahead of Abbey, the sanctioned social practice of turn taking is interrupted. Turn taking is considered developmentally appropriate and those who do not engage in turn taking practices are routinely pathologised and measured as socially incompetent and immature (Burman, 2008). Jasmine’s action, in not waiting for a turn, is not disciplined or challenged by Jonathan even though the children were constantly observed to be negotiating a turn on the see-saw. Jasmine’s ‘unruly’, rule breaking behaviour is
conversely not confronted by Jonathan as she is positioned as Other, socially immature and incompetent and directly addressing Jasmine’s unreasonable action is avoided.

Abbey and Jonathan tolerate Jasmine’s actions at this time and keep quiet about her transgressions, maintaining the social order of the classroom. Jonathan comments to Abbey: “You missed out.” Jonathan’s statement of resignation communicates to Abbey that she should just endure Jasmine’s action. By waiting for her turn Abbey takes up the position of the recognisable ‘normal’.

Subsequently, when Abbey finally gets a turn on the see-saw, she does not want to ride the see-saw with Jasmine, saying that Jasmine is not her friend. The ‘friend’ discourse taken up here appears to permit some level of exclusion, even though the statement ‘we are all friends’ seems to be a mantra. The normative ‘friend’ discourse produces all children as friendly, good humoured, and getting along together (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010). However, as mentioned before, it is in the playing and interacting and the performance of friends that the belonging and the category membership is created.

Jasmine however is produced here as what Butler (1993) refers to as ‘abject’; “those who are not yet ‘subjects’ but who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject” (p.xiii). The ‘abject’ is produced in the category boundary work; the ‘abject’ represents what it is not possible to be. The abjecting of another is thought to be a way of establishing an “I”. Kristeva (1982) contends that in order to establish an “I” – one’s own subjectivity, there is a separation of a part of oneself that is considered the “not-I”. The available discourses provide the ways of being the “I” and also ways of being that are the “not-I”. “This expulsion is thought of as an expulsion of some aspect of the self” (Davies, 2004, p.74). Jasmine’s way of being, rushing in and not waiting her turn is rebuffed by the unmarked children as not a part of them.

The teacher attempts to guide Abbey saying that Jasmine is a friend, but this does not change Abbey's desire to ride the see-saw with someone else. Abbey’s actions do not position her as a ‘cooperative peer’, and the teacher acts as a neutral guide providing support (Wohlwend, 2007) for Abbey in learning this cooperation, but this does not appear to work at this time. Abbey’s response to Jasmine was very loud and visceral, her actions and forceful words created Jasmine as the ‘abject’ (Butler, 1993). The ‘we are all friends’ discourse is openly challenged here by Abbey and Jasmine is loudly
excluded. Jasmine is positioned as unpredictable and undesirable and best avoided. Abbey moves to separate herself from Jasmine at this time. Abbey did not seem constrained by the prevailing discourse and by her actions may have been positioned as unsocial or immature in the classroom. Abbey unsettled and challenged the boundary of the ‘normal’ and instead of giving in or moving on silently she resisted her positioning by this performance.

*Using reflexivity*....

*There were very few times in my field work where an unmarked child expressed so loudly and vehemently that they did not wish to ‘play’ with a child with a diagnosis. Did Abbey exclude Jasmine or was she just upholding the rules of the classroom? Viewing the classroom via ‘inclusive’ discourses, the exclusion of Jasmine seems very obvious as I myself position Jasmine as the other. However reflecting on my position and viewing the encounter differently via the ‘rule’ discourses, Jasmine had broken the rules and Abbey’s role in loudly reminding everyone could be viewed as possibly ‘inclusive’ as the rules apply to everyone. Thinking within other discourses I may have viewed Abbey’s actions as immature or perhaps cruel towards Jasmine who is positioned as the marked child. Both girls could alternatively be presented as exercising power and struggling to represent themselves by resisting the positionings bestowed on them. When thinking otherwise Abbey’s claim to ride the see-saw with a partner of her choice might be viewed as acceptable and Jasmine’s spontaneous desire to ride the see-saw understandable. My construction of this note however illustrates the multiple possibilities for interrogating what seemed ‘immediately’ and ‘naturally’ like an exclusionary act. I was drawn to this encounter as I think I saw it this way. Multiple ways of viewing and making meaning are not explored as only the familiar tales are told as they work to re/legitimise the authority of the ‘normal’.*

Play and friendship discourses are actively re/produced in the early childhood classroom. They constitute cooperative play as developmental and do not challenge the power relations that include and exclude. They constitute certain subjects positions, such as ‘playing with friends’ as the norm and ‘playing alone’. Interplaying with this norm is the expectation to play in ways that are predictable, acceptable and in line with rules, which marks the boundaries of this category and establishes the criteria for category membership. Those who fall outside the boundaries are produced as not yet subjects (Butler, 1993) and assigned other positions. The position of the Other is described by the unmarked children as substantially different from them, the Other is
‘not normal’ and somewhat curious, ‘unruly’, and lacking reason. The Other, is created in friend discourses as undeveloped as a friend, without the skills needed to be a friend, a loner in play, pathologised as ‘shy’, unpredictable and unruly in their actions and best avoided, as they are not a friend, since their unreasonable actions set them outside the domain of the rational subject.

**Competitive hegemonic discourse**

**“I can make a better eel than you”**

Ben (a child without a diagnosis) has built, from a construction toy, what he calls an electric eel. The other boys make comments about how good it is and then try to make one the same. James (a child with a diagnosis) approaches the table and standing next it, waits silently. The boys tell me that there is a rule that only four people can play at a table activity at one time. As I am sitting at the table I stand up so that James can sit down in my place. He sits down next to Ben. Ben’s immediate response is: “I don’t want to sit next to James!” (his face wrinkled and eyes narrowed)

He gets up off the seat and stands at the end of the table, now standing and building. Ben continues to move his electric eel in front of the others. James now tries to make an eel like the one Ben has made.

Charlie (a child without a diagnosis) now starts to stare at James, narrowing his eyes and wrinkling his face. Charlie stands and moves away from the table saying that he doesn’t want to play this anymore and that he wants to play Zombies (Field Notes, 10/7/12, S2, pp.3-4).

Being ‘able’ to create a recognisable object, and make things with your hands with the equipment available, and label your creation using interesting and ‘mature’ language, produces Ben as a member of the ‘normal’ category. The early childhood classroom is a competitive place where being capable and competent is desirable. When the other children admire Ben’s creation and try to copy it, his membership is powerfully reinforced and their desire to show themselves as similar members is made visible. By their actions it seems they might wish to be recognised in the ‘same’ group as Ben.

Access to the friendship group created around this table, involves positioning oneself as skilled within these competitive hegemonic discourses. Fixing these positionings is also important through repeated performances (Butler, 1990).

Hegemonic discourses are taken up by the unmarked children as they show their own groups’ domination over another group. As Blaise (2005) explains, “Hegemony is a process that perpetuates the status quo” (p.57) and is a characteristic in the social construction of gender, class, race, ability and so on. The domination of one group over another, the ‘able’ over the ‘not so able’ and the maintenance of this domination,
governs and subordinates other ways of being (Blaise, 2005). ‘Whiteness’, as identified in critical race theory exercises power over other ‘racial’ groups. In the same way as able-bodiedness is privileged over the non-ablebodied, perpetuating the status quo and superiority of the ‘normal’. The hegemony of ‘ablebodiedness’ is visible in the previous and following scenario. This discourse prevails in the classroom coercing and competing “to attain this type of ‘normal’ and a desirable way of being” (Blaise, 2005, p.58).

When James arrives at the table and stands next to it silently, the unmarked children quickly draw on acceptable and sanctioned regulatory discourses to prevent James from joining the table game. They discuss the particular rules about the number of children allowed at any one time at an activity. These rules inadvertently countenance exclusionary practices. The unmarked children take up and promote the rules to display and maintain their category membership. By telling me, as the closest adult, the rules about the number of play participants, the unmarked children draw on the ubiquitous regulatory discourses, performing their rule-following selves while revealing the authority of their ‘normal’ group membership. It seems here, that the rules take priority, and are more powerful at this table, than the notion of including James. The power in this relation is in the knowledge of the rules and how they can be exercised. James is excluded using promoted and sanctioned regulations. When I offer James my place at the table, Ben expresses loudly, verbally and non-verbally: “I don’t want to sit next to James”. Ben moves to regain his category membership by standing up at the end of the table away from James who is now seated. Ben’s move from sitting to standing leaves one seat vacant. His actions show his desire to almost disassociate himself from James created here as the ‘abject’ (Butler, 1993). By moving his electric eel in front of everyone at the table Ben reminds them of his eel building ability and his continuing presence at the table, maintaining his category membership by not sitting next to James who is considered outside this group.

James, it appears, tries to ignore the others’ acts of exclusion as they maintain their category membership. He constructs his own eel in an attempt to become recognisable as a member of the group. However another child at the table, Charlie, joins Ben and protests against James’ presence at the table. He gets up and moves away expressing his disconnection with James via his facial expressions and actions, and at the same time his association with Ben and the category of the ‘normal’. Charlie and Ben’s association and separation from James is made clear in this move. The effect of this
association is the obvious exclusion of James. Being able to perform your category membership, and have everyone recognise it by displaying your hegemonic positioning in the classroom, creates the exclusionary practices for those positioned as Other.

Charlie and Ben’s actions could also be read as an act of ‘bullying’. Bullying as suggested by Davies (2011) reflects an overly fervent maintenance of the dominant normative and moral order. Bullying here is not considered as an individual characteristic but as a social process (Søndergaard, 2012) and is produced as a result of the negotiation and struggle for positioning in the social hierarchy of the peer culture. The unmarked children’s recognisability (Butler, 1997) depends on their actions and performance of being a member of the ‘normal’ and this could be read as ‘bullying’. By critiquing the accepted thinking around bullying as an individualising and pathologising act, Davies (2011) offers an alternative view as she considers bullying to be discursively constructed via the normative order. It is the power of the hegemonic ‘normal’ that is ‘put under the spotlight’ here and not the individuals.

Using reflexivity…..

I felt repeatedly concerned about James and the relentless rejection he received from the children. They were just upholding the ‘normal’ weren’t they? I felt empathy for James, I felt sorry for him as he was continually rejected and no one seemed to disrupt this. The children positioned him as not worthy of playing with. The adults in the setting seemed to consider that the boys had the right to make decisions about who they played with. They were not asked to play with James and their unkind words and actions were not spoken about. Keeping the ‘normal’ intact meant that sometimes James had to be excluded. My feelings of empathy merely reinforced the hegemony of the ‘normal’. I wondered if I had created the data this way as I was so constrained within this empathetic discourse.

“I’m the king of the castle”

Ben (child without a diagnosis) and Jack (child without a diagnosis) are in the sandpit digging and piling sand. They are covering up ‘treasure’. Jack: “If the baddies come we keep still……..stay still so they can’t see us. Stay still……………..go. Stay still……………..go” (they are still in-between the digging and heaping)

Ben: “Stay still…………..go dig…………..stay still……………..go.”

This interaction continues for several minutes.

James (child with a diagnosis) approaches the sandpit to join in the play. He looks for a large spade like the ones Ben and Jack are using but can only find a smaller one as Ben and Jack have buried the rest during the game. He begins to help cover the toys with his small spade.
Natalie (a teacher and James' mother) moves toward the sandpit and corrects the way that James is using the spade. She comments: "Use both hands James............yes that's better." James follows his mother's/teacher's directions. Natalie then moves away. This spade work continues for less than a minute more. Jack then stands on the top of the mound of toys covered in sand, raising his spade triumphantly above his head saying: "I'm the king of the castle.............I'm the king of the castle." Ben quickly joins him on the top of the pile and he says: "I'm the king of the castle........and James is the dirty rascal." Ben and Jack repeat this several times with James standing next to the sand pile. James stands there very still looking at them. He waits and they stop the chant. He waits again for only about 30 seconds and then he leaves the sandpit. His eyes cast downward and his shoulder slumped. Ben and Jack keep playing as they had been before (Field Notes, 25/7/12, S2, pp.47-48).

Ben and Jack are observed to play together often. In this scenario they are burying treasure and drawing on their knowledge of baddies, who they understand are capable of stealing their treasure. To avoid the baddies they are trying to be still, as they imagine the baddies are watching. This play scenario of ‘baddies’ and ‘goodies’ is built on culturally produced stories of good versus evil. In these types of play, “children use dominant cultural storylines such as goodies and baddies as a vehicle to produce their own identities” (Giugni, 2006, p.97). The children perform their identity as ‘goodies’, hiding treasure from the ‘baddies’, in order to consolidate and maintain their relationship with each other and the category they identify themselves in. They seem to understand each other and the game they are playing and their friendship is built on these mutual understandings. This shared experience illustrates their mutual 'normal' membership and their actions illuminate their boundary work to maintain their positioning in the category. Giugni (2006) contends that the performance of one's identity is enriched by the amount of 'cultural capital' one has, knows about, recites and can access (p.99). Power is linked and woven through these performances and here the performance of gender is linked to what is culturally and socially acceptable.

When James approaches the sandpit he takes the available smaller spade and starts to dig. Ben and Jack make no comment. A teacher nearby, who also happens to be James' mother, comments on the way James is holding his spade. Her comments are informed by developmental and pedagogical discourses that produce knowledge about how children ‘should’ perform particular activities. James is marked and under surveillance and in need of remediation at all times. I note that the teacher makes no comment to the other children about their spade-holding technique.

The unmarked children stand on top of the mound of sand and reinforce their hierarchical positioning, taking up accepted hegemonic discourses, as no challenge is
made against them. These discourses support a knowledge and culture of dominance and have the effect of exclusion and silence on those who are not constituted as the same (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). The unmarked bodies are raised up to be taller than James. They show their power using the space to give them superiority over James and mark a boundary between them and him. Higher and taller are enhanced positions and more powerful in this developmentally focused hegemonic context. The king stands above his subjects and looks down from his castle. Here Ben and Jack use their imagination, something encouraged in the early years classroom, however as Davies (1997) cautions “the power of imagination is not just to shape what is real, but to lend power differentially to real players, with very real effects” (p.123). Jack and then Ben start to chant a traditional, centuries old rhyme, “The King of the Castle”.

Ben and Jack use the rhyme to position themselves powerfully; they reinforce their domination and the protection of this territory just as a king would do. They “take up these subjectivities within the discursively produced, patriarchal spaces available to them” (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997, p.56). When they personalise the rhyme by including James’ name they emphasise his subordinate position as the ‘rascal’. They repeat it several times staring down from their ‘castle’ at James.

In the preceding analysis a spatial boundary of the ‘normal’ is demarcated. There is power invested in the children’s boundary work of the territory around the sandcastle. The boy’s spatial positioning or spatial tactics are techniques of discipline (Foucault, 1977) and these tactics are productive of particular subject positionings (Pike, 2008). The spatial terms illustrate how Jack and Ben use the space as a part of a battle for power via the surveillance of James. The spaces taken up and occupied both productively and negatively produce subject positions for the children. As the unmarked children at the top of the sand pile look down on the marked child, they can discipline, they can keep their position of surveillance and maintain their position and order by these spatial tactics.

The tradition of the rhyme has been explored by Opie and Opie (1959) and they write, “The scraps of lore which children learn from each other are at once more real, more immediately serviceable, and more vastly entertaining to them than anything which they learn from grown-ups” (p.1). Children use these rhymes, which pass from generation to generation, to both regulate their games and their relationships with each other, while contributing to their ‘cultural capital’. Opie and Opie (1959) suggest that rhymes are more than playthings to children and are a means of communication with each other. They recognise that traditional rhymes can have particular effects. Some
are described as ‘just for fun’, others provide ‘parody and impropriety’, and yet others produce jeers, torment and guile. They argue that these rhymes are distinct from the ‘nursery’ rhyme, which is recited to young children and approved by adults. These are not particularly intended for adult ears and are not encouraged (Opie & Opie, 1959). These rhymes and chants are also often associated with the traditional ‘innocence’ of childhood. The children’s understanding of the words and their meaning is underscored by the inherent value of knowing a rhyme, using the language, and reciting the words. The rhyme is considered as a ‘harmless’ recitation and a part of tradition and folklore and, as such, becomes active in the approved discourses of the classroom.

In following up on this scenario I asked some of the children about this rhyme and other rhymes that are used in the classroom. I asked Jack about what the rhyme meant and he replied that he did not know and he appeared uncomfortable with my questioning (Field Notes, 1/8/12, S2, p.75). Jack however seemed to understand the effects of the rhyme during the chanting of it. When I asked Ben about it he said that his brother sometimes says it. He said: “He says it to the ground” (Field Notes, 1/8/12, S2, p.78). In another conversation when I asked Ruby about what the rhyme meant she said: “I tell you……umm……because it’s not a nice word, I forgot but ummm…, that’s not a good thing to ………um….the teacher might saw it when they were goin’ um…..when we were there we won’t steppin’ on it (the mound of sand), they’re not appropriam (appropriate?) to do it.” (Field Notes, 1/8/12, S2, pp.79-80). Other children in other conversations also shared this sentiment. There was a feeling of something that was allowed but not allowed. Rhymes were regularly heard among the children. “Eeeny meany, miney, mow” was used to remove unwanted players or extras from a group activity (Field Notes S2, 1/8/12). “Inky pinky ponky” was another rhyme used to make a choice. A group game “Duck, duck, goose” was played in all classrooms where some children remained ‘ducks’ as they were never chosen to be the ‘goose’. Sometimes a teacher intervened to ensure all were included (Field Notes, S2, 21/8/12). The effect of the rhymes seemed to be understood by all the children but to talk about these effects and their exclusion produced a silence.

In reciting the rhyme and performing their hegemony on top of the sand pile, how can Ben and Jack’s actions be read as anything but ‘bullying’ and exclusion? Davies (2011) contends that within any moral, normative order, categorical difference and relations of power can become fixed and when they are fixed by the normative, the relations of power “instead of being mobile, allowing the participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen” (Foucault, 1997b, p. 283). This ‘fixedness’ in the
relations of power was observed in many of James’ encounters with the unmarked children; he was often excluded on arrival, particularly if the other boys had arrived first and were already playing. He was often left out of competitive games, and on several occasions called a ‘loser’, as they said he couldn’t play a game as well as them (Field Notes, S2, 22/8/12). Davies (2011) identifies that the bully is supported by the normative order creating a fixed “state of domination” (p.283). Power in this discursive context, is produced by the hegemonic discourses, taken up by the unmarked children. This enacted power remains unchallenged, as it excludes and subordinates those who are positioned as not belonging.

Chapter review

As developmental and psychological discourses produce a pathologisation of the Other, they are taken up by the unmarked children as they regulate and position themselves as the ‘normal’. The ‘normal’ are bigger, older and mature, they know the rules and how the preschool day operates, they position themselves as ‘able’ to have friends and play well with friends and share an understanding about how they are the same in many ways. These same discourses then produce another subject position that is in opposition to the ‘normal’, as the available categories produce binary positionings. The classroom discourses position the ‘not normal’ as a concern, needing remediation and intervention.

As the ‘normal’ engages in this “coercive assignment”, a disciplining (Foucault, 1977, p.199) is imposed on the ‘not normal’. My analysis highlights some of the disciplinary effects on the excluded and the re/production of the included, particularly bringing into focus the creation of the ‘not normal’ as a potential ‘threat’, characterised as ‘unruly’, ‘unpredictable’ and possibly even dangerous, at the very least to the social order. Foucault (1977) argues that the mechanisms of power that uphold the ‘normal’ produce a constant division between the normal and the abnormal to which every individual is subjected. The effect of the maintenance of the ‘normal’ in much of my data seems to shape an avoidance of those individuals positioned as ‘unreasonable’ or ‘irrational’, the ‘not normal’ because of their discursively created unruliness and unpredictability.

In the following chapter, the analysis of the ‘inclusive’ classroom turns to the non-human constituents of the ‘normal’, as my time in the field raised many questions about the role of non-human actors, and their contribution to the re/production of subject positions. An example is a ‘wristband’ worn by teachers to identify their responsibility in
caring for a marked child. This seemingly innocuous non-human actor seized my attention as a researcher as its presence on a teacher's wrist made a statement that needed to be interrogated. What discourse informed the wearing of it? How did they contribute to the 'normal'? How did this small non-human actor affect the children’s subjectivities? How was the meaningfulness of the non-human actor created? How did its role as a mechanism of surveillance operate? It was during the data analysis that the performance and meanings of this and other non-human actors became noteworthy and so the inclusion of the ensuing discussion became unavoidable.
Chapter 4

Non-human actors and their contribution to the discursive production and maintenance of the ‘normal’

Attention to the non-human actors in the early childhood classroom and how they contribute to the construction of the ‘normal’, and at the same time to the further marking of the diagnosed child, is the focus of this chapter. Foucault’s (1977) consideration of the effects and the disciplinary power of architecture and other created physical spaces brings into focus the material and the non-human world and the power in its relations with the human. From Foucault’s perspective, physical things and actions only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse and its context (Hook, 2001). As Foucault (1972) argues, nothing exists outside discourse where meaning and meaningful practice is constructed (Hall, 2001). Continuing with this theorising, Foucault appreciates that we can only have knowledge of ‘things’ if they have meaning which is constructed in discourse as it is not the ‘things’ themselves that produce the knowledge. Discursive formations produce the objects about which they speak (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p.61). These objects or ‘things’ are discussed in this chapter, more specifically how they produce meanings within the ‘inclusive’ early childhood classroom. “Attention to non-human others – the physical world, the materials – that mingle in early childhood practices is the key” (Paciﬁni-Ketchabaw, 2012, p.155) to this chapter. Non-human actors produce meaning about subjects, creating a network that actively and powerfully shapes particular subject positions.

In this chapter I examine the discursive constitution and practices of the classroom and I ask the following question: How do non-human actors contribute to the re/production of the ‘normal’? When I started to read my data in the initial stages of analysis the discursive productivity and meaning making of the non-human actors and their discursive power in shaping subjectivities became illuminated and consequently critical for any discussion of the production of the ‘normal’. In this chapter both ‘everyday’ non-human actors as well as ‘special’ non-human actors will be given consideration.

As a starting point in this process I examined the work of Latour (2005) and the ideas provided by Actor Network Theory (ANT). While using the ideas of ‘ANT’ as a ‘toolkit’ or a ‘sensibility’ (Law, 2004, p.157), I do not intend to present a complex consideration of this field and I am not presenting myself to be an ‘ANT’ researcher. I am merely
drawing on some of the theorising involved. I do wish to think about shifting understandings and “open up the possibility of seeing, hearing, sensing and then analysing the social life of things – and thus of caring about, rather than neglecting them” (Mol, 2010, p.255). ANT is critiqued by Mol (2010), who argues it is not a theory in the true sense as it makes no “attempt to hunt for causes: the aim is rather to trace effects” (p.261). Its adaptability lends itself to the tracing of effects here by examining both human and non-human actors, as they act in the world, their associations with other actors and their acquired meaning through the relations in the networks in which they are engrafted. As Mol (2010) suggests researchers involved in ‘ANT’ are amateurs of reality, who in their theoretical repertoire, allow themselves to be attuned to the world and learn to be affected by it. ‘ANT’ helps to train “researcher’s perceptions and perceptiveness, senses and sensitivity” (Mol, 2010, pp. 261-262). Actors act, they can make a difference, they do things. They join with other actors to form networks acquiring meaning through associations and relations. They are afforded the ability to act by what is around them in the network and if they are not being enacted by others they will stop working (Mol, 2010). I intend to illustrate this enactment in this chapter.

Following also the work of Barad (2007), I consider how the “intra-activity of the material-discursive relations that encompass early childhood education” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p.155) creates meaning. In the field of early childhood education, the human and material world has been considered by Lenz-Taguchi (Taguchi 2010; Hultman & Lenz-Taguchi, 2010) who shares Barad’s (2007) thinking about the intra-activity of relations and the formed assemblages that intermingle between “all living organisms and the material environment such as things and artefacts, spaces and places that we occupy and use in our daily practices” (p.xiv). Lenz-Taguchi (2010) asserts that it is not only humans that have agency. Objects and materials can also be appreciated as being a part of the “a performative production of power and change in an intertwined relationship of intra-activity with other matter and humans” (p.xiv). Materials then become important in the examination of the social world as they are to be considered active agents, constructed in discourse and contributing to the construction of discourse and of ‘reality.’

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stress that bodies, both human and non-human, work concurrently to form assemblages, which are an arrangement of bodies in constant relation (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). Using Barad’s (2007) concept of intra-action we see that these bodies form assemblages as they relate to each other and importantly the “elements of the assemblage do not necessarily precede the assemblage; they emerge
through it” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p.156). Barad (2007) theorises that in intra-action there is a mutual entanglement.

Non-human actors, as they form assemblages produce, relations of power and connections in the classroom and perform some of the category boundary work around the ‘normal’. The non-human actors to be examined here, are just some but not all of the non-human actors in these networks. It is not possible to consider all the possible non-human actors in the complex settings of the research sites, but I wish to make visible the particular actors that affected my encounter and the encounters of others within this space.

Non-human actors are made knowable and meaningful through the discourses in the classroom (Foucault, 1972). Without the lens of post-structural theory the constitutive power of actors and their networks could be passed over as unremarkable. The non-human actors could be taken for granted as ‘just things’ that have no effect. But as Latour (2005) and others argue, studies in social sciences need to see objects and things as “interesting, variegated, uncertain, complicated, far-reaching, heterogeneous, risky, historical, local, material and networky” (p.158).

To begin this analysis I consider the ‘everyday’ non-human actors that are produced by and at the same time contribute to, the discourses that produce the ‘normal’ in the classroom. These non-human actors are produced within this discourse and work to maintain it. In the early childhood classroom material things are performative, acting with other things and humans to ‘do’ things, include and exclude, and regulate participation. These material things compel activity.

‘Everyday’ non-human actors

The timetable

The ‘timetable’ compels and denies activity at particular times in the classroom day. Foucault (1977) describes this organisation of the child’s institutional life as ‘disciplinary time’. The timetable, as a non-human actor, performs disciplinary work by establishing rhythms, imposing particular activities and regulating with cycles of repetition. The timetable allows and controls activity of subjects in the classroom. The discipline of time requires both the correct use of time and the correct use of the body (Foucault, 1977). The teachers’ task is to ‘civilise’ children and their bodies, as the child’s body is
considered unruly, disruptive, in need of direction (Leavitt & Power, 1997). Time can be used to ‘normalise’ the child, move them as individuals in a group and create homogeneity in the classroom.

The classroom’s daily practices are dictated by the timetable and revolve around routines. Leavitt and Power (1997) argue that routinised control of children’s bodies “is crucial to the order and efficiency of the classroom” (p.44). As well as monitoring and restraining a child’s body, the timetable enforces that children must learn to defer gratification, as the timetable ‘tells’ the children that they cannot always do what they want. The timetable teaches rules of management and codes of conduct that contribute to the social order (Leavitt & Power, 1997). Time to arrive, time for toileting and washing one’s hands, time to eat, time to play outside/inside, time to nap: “Children must adapt their bodies to the temporal order of the day” (Leavitt & Power, 1997, p.46). The timetable as a non-human agent produces and regulates how to act ‘normal’. The clock-educator-child assemblages are coupled with the operation of practice. The practice moments of the timetable presented in the data are assemblages of ideas, genetic material, things and matter (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012) and they connect in their intra-action and are transformed by it as a “mutual constitution of entangled agencies” (Barad, 2007, p.33).

Bodies are not always ‘civilised’ in the same way and at the same time and the timetable is not always appreciated by all the children in the same way. Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012) examined how the clock structures the classroom day and both produces and enables certain kinds of practices. Timetables produce a ‘norm’ by regulating actions. The assemblages of human and non-human emerge as connections are made in an “ongoing materialisation” (Barad, 2007, p.151). The timetable in this intra-action produces the becoming subjectivities of those who deviate, or do not follow time, as outside the ‘normal’. In the early childhood classroom, children whose bodies are subjected as ‘uncivilised’ by the disciplinary power of the timetable are often under the surveillance of teachers with the aim being to remediate and normalise them. This occurs via the enactment and re-enactment of the timetables and its routines.

Time informs everyone in the classroom about what they should be doing and where they should be doing it. In the data the unmarked children refer to the ‘right time’ to do things, to play, to pack away, to have story, to listen, to wash hands, to toilet, to eat and so on. Time is central to how the classroom is understood, structured and enacted (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). The marked child however is often talked about as not
knowing or adhering to the ‘right time’. The subject who can follow the time is produced as the ‘normal’. There are also times when some members of the ‘normal’ disregard the time. They are quickly disciplined by fellow members of the category. This disciplinary act involves using the authority of the teacher and by telling the teacher about a ‘naughty’ child who does not follow the clock. In this way, order can be re-established and the ‘normal’ maintained.

The child with a diagnosis however is not regulated by the group in this way. The ‘rule of time’ is enacted differently for the marked child. As the timetable intra-acts with the marked child, it “emerges as something different and it affords the conditions for the emergence of certain bodies and not others” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p.158). The timetable affords different rules for the marked child and in their intra-action different subjectivities materialise and others are excluded. Sam, a child with a diagnosis, has time outside when others cannot and he eats at times when others do not. Michael, a child with a diagnosis, can have more time to prepare for pack away time (Field Notes, S1). Ethan, a child with a diagnosis, can have time in the morning inside while others must play outside (Field Notes, S2). The time to pack away is often not adhered to by Hugo, a child with a diagnosis, and this is not disciplined in the same way as the unmarked children discipline each other (Field Notes, S3). The timetable produces practices that enable and constrain and its ongoing materialisation with other bodies, human and non-human, is a process creating differential effects on different bodies in the classroom (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012).

**Morning tea time**

Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is created as following a different timetable.

Me: “If you are hungry can you eat when you want to eat?”
All: “No.”
Fleur (a child without a diagnosis): “You have to eat at morning tea time but he [Sam] can eat anytime he wants.”
Me: “Why?”
Fleur: “Because ……he …….doesn't …….talk.” (says this slowly and precisely).
Jenna (a child without a diagnosis): “Because… it’s... not... the... time.” (emphasises each word)
Me: “What about you Frances? Would you like to eat when you feel hungry? Why can’t you?”
Frances (a child without a diagnosis): (shakes her head) “Cause it’s *not* the time.”
(Field Notes, 21/5/12, S1, p.56).
Here the unmarked children discuss Sam’s deviation from the routine of the timetable. They talk about morning tea time and how it has nothing to do with being hungry. The timetable as a disciplinary practice is taken up by the unmarked children as they position themselves as knowing that you cannot eat when you are hungry you must wait for the ‘right’ time, “You have to eat at morning tea time”. The timetable, as a non-human constituent, intra-acts with Sam differently positioning him as Other because “he can eat anytime he wants”. As a non-human actor the time, while regulating the ‘normal’, can also mark the ‘not normal’. The tyranny of time has been discussed for centuries (Rose & Whitty, 2010). Foucault (1984) discussed the “governance of time and its perpetuation of normalised subjectivities” (Rose & Whitty, 2010, p.260). Time could be considered as “an invasive standardisation of people” (Rose & Whitty, 2010, p.260). Early childhood classrooms, along with school systems, where a modern industrial conception of time (Rose & Whitty, 2010) exists, employ timetables to keep people and things ordered, regulated and normalised. Time and keeping time, are discursive cultural orientations that produce particular subjectivities, which are individualised and disciplined.

Sam emerges in this process, as he materialises in the intra-action with the timetable, as disruptive and resistant to ‘business as usual’ and as the timetable gives meaning to the discursive context and “is involved in making and remaking boundaries” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p.158). Sam is positioned by the unmarked children as not conforming to the ‘tyranny of the timetable’; he does not seem to be disciplined by it in the same way they are. The ‘normal’ can be viewed when the timetable is taken up as a fundamental element of appropriate classroom practice; the timetable is a marker of belonging (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012) and those who do not follow the timetable emerge in the process as not belonging. Belonging and not belonging could be considered a concern for inclusive education.

**Packing away time**

Packing away time is an authoritative time of the preschool day. Time governs actions and forms assemblages with the human actors, positioning them as a certain kind of being.

Me: “Can you tell me what is happening in the photo?”
Patrick: (a child without a diagnosis)”I know…….well it’s time to pack, it’s time to pack up and Michael (a child with a diagnosis) likes playing with his computer and he won’t pack it away and Gail’s (teacher) getting him to pack it away and he’s sad.”
Me: “Why doesn’t he like packing away?”
Patrick: “Well he doesn’t like packing away his note book, he doesn’t like packing away the computer, he doesn’t like packing away his trains. He doesn’t like packing up every, anything.”

Me: “Do you cry if you don’t like to pack up?”

Patrick: “No.”

Me: “So why do you think Michael cries?”

Patrick: “Cause he doesn’t want to get his stuff packed up. One time he cried when he wasn’t using his shop and he went ‘Oh no where’s my shop?’ (using a whining voice) and the teachers told him that Anne (teacher) had packed it away.”

Me: “Do you think all children are sad at packing away time?”

Patrick: “Well some are….. (thinking)….. well no, no only Michael.” (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, pp.72-73).

Patrick positions himself as being able to perform the pack away routine. In contrast he has experienced Michael’s distress when he is asked to pack away. He says that Michael is the only one who has trouble with this time of the day, “well no, no only Michael”. The prevailing discourses, about time and timetables that are taken up by Patrick at pack away time, have the effect of subjecting Michael as different and unnecessarily emotional. Patrick, it seems, is interested in Michael's response to pack away time as he can give many examples of the things that Michael does not like to pack away. Michael’s response positions him as Other, not following the timetable and being over-emotional and perhaps unreasonable at the same time. Patrick, as the member of the ‘normal’, considers that being ‘sad’ is unwarranted, as no one else responds this way in this situation and this positions Michael as immature and unruly.

The timetable, as a ‘time/people regulating’ non-human actor, and its associated discursive practices, forms an assemblage here with the two children, and in this intra-action, become mutually entangled and transformed in the process. Michael and Patrick’s subjectivities are materialised and constituted by the timetable, as it shapes certain bodies, meanings and boundaries (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). As the timetable forms an assemblage and intra-acts with Patrick, he emerges as the ‘normal’, a disciplined body, a body who can pack away. However, in its assemblage with Michael, he emerges as the unreasonable and in need of correction.

**The physical space**

Foucault’s consideration of physical spaces and regulatory practices in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) provided significant insights for my analysis. The early childhood classroom is an institutional space, and an architectural structure, that is designed with the surveillance, control and regulation of the young child in mind. Young children are deemed to be in need of civilising and disciplining. This ‘civilising’ work reflects what
Foucault (1977) refers to as “the means of correct training” (p.170) where disciplinary techniques such as hierarchical observation, normalisation and examination are employed. The preschool classroom is a mechanism for training, allowing surveillance at all times to maintain this ‘civilising’ and ‘normalising’ work. Disciplinary techniques require enclosure, a place “closed in upon itself” so it can produce uniform individuals within its bounded space (Foucault, 1977, p.141). The preschool is enclosed, surrounded by high fences and the classroom designed to contain its occupants within its walls and closed doors if needed. The physical space is considered a non-human actor here, as it plays its part in the disciplinary machine, using enclosure, partitioning and surveillance (Foucault, 1997a), as a place where occupants are on view, to be gazed upon and regulated.

Preschool classrooms are divided into various activity areas, which are said to encourage individual or small group encounters. Areas are partitioned with low shelves to allow for supervision and surveillance. This partitioning controls the movement of bodies around the room and also allows for the individual to sometimes be on their own so that they can be analysed, assessed and compared. These areas also assign ways to act and to be as “teachers unceasingly use the power of the gaze to ensure that children are doing what they should be doing and when they should be doing it (Leavitt & Power, 1997, p.67). This could also include where they should be doing it. Leavitt and Power (1997) refer to the teacher’s panoptic urge to control everything that goes on in the classroom. The disciplinary power of the architectural space of the preschool supports this control, as it ‘makes’ individuals and works to ‘train’ individuals (Foucault, 1977, p.170) who can be compared, normalised and corrected if necessary.

Spatial practices in the classroom are regarded as disciplinary techniques that are underpinned and legitimised by specific rationalities (Pike, 2008, p.414). What are the rationalities that legitimise the spaces and their use? How can spaces shape the way children position themselves and others? How do the classroom spaces add to understandings and meaning? Classroom spaces are produced by and produce social meanings derived from rational ‘norms’ (Goodfellow, 2012). The space, and the physical equipment in the space, assign particular ways of being and doing that are sanctioned in child development and pedagogical early childhood discourses; so toys are age appropriate, furniture is size specific, spaces are designed for smaller bodies and movement is monitored by barriers, doors and gates. Rationalities of safety, child development and child centeredness prevail and inform the social construction and
reconstruction of the space. How do these rationalities affect the children’s subjectivities and how are those who ‘resist’, or do not conform, positioned?

The organisation of space shapes and interacts with the conduct of the children and the teachers (Pike, 2008). The space of the preschool, including the fences, the walls, the doors and the partitions as non-human actors are discursively produced and act to discipline and control. Each space is created with its own and multiple meanings and there are no neat and single or fixed narratives about space as “spaces are encountered in and through embodiment, in and through practices, in and through particularly located everyday lives” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006, p.85). There are discursively produced ways to be and act in the spaces in the early childhood setting; inside, outside, on the story mat, in the bathroom, at the activity tables, in the block corner, in the home corner, in the sandpit, up the tree, on the climbing frame. It is in the intra-action of the human and the multiple non-human spaces of the classroom that subjectivities emerge.

As children intra-act with the space they build relationships with the material and the social spaces in which they live (Millei & Cliff, 2014). The space provides for a host of animate and inanimate things and is both a producer and enabler of certain ways of being and practice. In these spaces bodies are transformed as they become entangled agencies (Barad, 2007). The spaces are enacted by the actors and not pre-existing, they emerge as they create meaning and subjectivities. The classroom ‘story mat’ emerges as a place of quiet attention, and the children who form an assemblage with this non-human actor, emerge from the process as attentive story listeners. The physical space of the preschool as “an actor does things” (Mol, 2010, p.255) producing ways of being in that space. Spaces can both enable and inhibit action by de/mobilising particular discourses and prescribing certain actions.

The role and function of space in the production and reproduction of difference became an important point of interest when examining inclusionary discourses. Spaces are not neutral places as they are considered to be closely associated with the governing values and norms of the classroom and society (Armstrong, 2003). Space works to sustain ruling discourses by reinforcing the “spatialisation of otherness” (Masschelein & Verstraete, 2012, p.1194). This space, created for the Other, has been observed in the history of the West where “intentionally designed spaces were created for people who were considered refractory, special or abnormal” (Masschelein & Verstraete, 2012,
These spaces work to legitimise the circulating discourses of the ‘normal’, while confirming the difference of the Other; they are not neutral places.

The timetable, and the physical spaces, work together to produce and discipline the ‘normal’ in the classroom. The unmarked children take up the discourses that produce and are produced by the timetable and the spatial ordering, maintaining the rules and trying to regulate others who may deviate from the timetable routines and temporal spatial arrangements (Davies, 1983). However, as discussed with the timetable, the unmarked children rarely try to regulate the marked child and their use of classroom spaces. The unmarked children seldom enact an explicit ‘disciplining’ on the marked child as they do with members of the ‘normal’. Instead membership of the ‘normal’ is maintained by separating from or avoiding the marked child. The marked child is out of place in this space and out of time/rhythm in this timetable. Their intra-action with the non-human actors creates them outside the material-discursive apparatus (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012) of the timetable and the organised spaces that constitute certain boundaries of ways to ‘be’. The spaces and the timetable are not considered external forces, that operate on the children’s bodies from the outside, rather, they are components of the material-discursive practices that are “inextricable from the bodies that are produced and through which power works its productive effects” (Barad, 2007, p.230). The child with a diagnosis emerges in this process, subjected and positioned as Other, in and through their encounter with the spaces of the classroom and the practices regulated through the timetable.

Category boundaries are maintained by the children as they talk about the when, what and where things happen in the preschool day. These are important things to ‘know’ and if you ‘don’t know’, or don’t follow, you are subjected as different either as younger, ‘little’ or less experienced perhaps being ‘new’ to the preschool. The timetables and spaces for activity, as non-human actors, provide the children with meaning about themselves as the ‘normal’ and Others. Producing subject positions that emerge in this relation, the timetable and the spatial arrangements make and remake boundaries that include and exclude. Subjectivities that emerge in the process, know when and where to do things, they become the attentive subjects, quiet and agreeable subjects, docile subjects (Foucault, 1977). But other subjectivities are not produced or are produced differently and as they emerge in this intra-action they are Othered.
‘Special’ non-human actors

These ‘special’ non-human actors are so named, as they are operate in the classroom, as objects specific for the child with a diagnosis. They are part of the special education mechanism that functions in the inclusive classroom. These ‘special’ actors actively produce knowledge about the children and about how to be the ‘right’ or ‘not so right’ subject. They construct the conditions of possibilities, as they structure the arrangements in the classroom for the children and the teachers, and they give meaning to how humans in the setting are understood, organised and how they are expected to act. In the analysis of the data to follow I present how these objects can produce, enable and maintain certain positions within the discourse. My interest lies not in the objects themselves, by themselves, but in their performative aspects (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). What do these objects do, what is their function in this context, how do they form assemblages and relationships with other non-human and human bodies and what are the effects on the formation of subjectivities in the classroom?

The wrist band

It is indoor activity time and I move into the room. Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is crying loudly and moving restlessly around the room. He moves to the door banging on it and trying to open it. The teacher picks him up and moves him back into the room. The director informs me that Sam needs to have a teacher with him always as he has tried to escape. The teacher responsible for him must wear a wrist band to show that they are ‘with’ Sam at that time. The band is transferred from teacher to teacher every half an hour (Field Notes, 30/4/12, S1, p.3).

Sam’s loud crying and restlessness in the classroom positions him as ‘disruptive’, concerning and different. Loud noises and lots of uncontrolled movements are discouraged in the early childhood classroom. Settled work and focused activity play are fostered as practices that promote learning. Sam appears to be attempting to leave the classroom to go outside when he should be inside. The unmarked children know they should be inside.

The director of the centre described Sam to me as a ‘flight risk’ and an ‘escapologist’ (Field Notes) and, informed by safety discourses, enlisted the support of staff to act as ‘guards’ for Sam. They wear a plastic coloured wrist band to signify this position. This wrist band has a legitimised authority, as it protects Sam from his potential erratic actions and protects the teachers from the risk of losing him. The teachers engage in a ‘hand-over’ of the wrist band and the associated responsibility, every half an hour.
during the day. In my field notes there were times when the teachers expressed their reluctance to take up this position as Sam’s ‘guard’.

Edith: “I have had him for half an hour.”
Chris: “I had him just before you.”
And later another teacher comments after being given the wrist band:
Anne: “Odette, how come every time you hand him over to me he has a dirty nappy. Don’t you have a sense of smell?” (Field Notes, 11/5/12, S1, p.35).

In this discursive context Sam is positioned as a responsibility that the teachers do not wish to have. They seem to resist being his ‘guard’ and they seem to avoid other responsibilities like changing his nappy. Sam is produced as an ‘abject’ object, unhappily passed around from one teacher to another.

The wrist band represents Sam’s dangerous status as a ‘flight risk’. As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, dangerousness has been historically constructed as an internal quality of the pathological individual (Rose, 1999). Rose (1998) proposes however that more recently the notion of dangerousness has been replaced by the discourse of risk, as risk is thought to not harbour derogatory connotations. The wrist band has been introduced to reduce the risks associated with Sam, as he has been assessed as a risk to himself and to others. The wrist band manages the risk as “risk thinking tames chance, fate and uncertainty” (Rose, 1998, p.180). But does this risk management of Sam keep everyone safer? Rose (1998) argues that “it not only generates but exacerbates the very fears it claims to secure against: a population suffused with fears about ‘the risk of risk’” (p.181).

Regulatory and pedagogical discourses inform the teachers of the importance of children learning to be contained by routines and timetables (Leavitt & Power, 1997). Teachers regard the adherence to daily timetables and routines as important and position themselves as responsible for encouraging all children to follow the routines. Sam does not appear to follow routines and timetables. His resistance to inside time/space and outside time/space is observed regularly during the field work. The inside space, the walls and the locked door, provide a space to contain Sam. His actions need to be contained, as he needs to learn to follow the timetable, like the ‘normal’, and the ‘inside’ space performs this role. He needs to remain on time and in place for the inclusion to work.

The wrist band contributes to Sam’s ‘learning’, training and containment. In the classroom adult-child discourses produce binaries (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005) and children are positioned as ‘learners’ and adults as ‘knowers’. Along with the
space of the classroom and the outside yard, the wrist band worn by the teacher, creates a composition of bodies (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012), human and non-human, that act to restrict, contain and separate Sam, ‘shadowed’/‘guarded’ by a teacher at all times. In this intra-action, Sam emerges as the unpredictable and unreasonable, a risk to the classroom and the teachers, particularly if he were to escape.

It is not just Sam’s actions that position him in need of correction and containment but also his diagnosis. The wearing of the wrist band is enabled by the diagnosis and his stated (Field Notes) escaping behaviours. The wrist band contributes to Sam’s management, as characteristics of his diagnosis judge him to have behaviour problems, making him difficult to control (Maskey, Warnell, Parr, Le Couteur, & McConachie, 2013). The wrist band signifies the careful containment of Sam, ‘for his own safety’, while at the same time suggesting his unruly, unreasonable and irrational positioning. As an actor it communicates the risk posed by Sam to the social order of the classroom and to others, the risk of disrupting the routine, the teaching and learning, and others’ safety. The teachers and the wrist band work together to keep Sam in check, while also powerfully contributing to his positioning as Other.

The need for order and predictability is shaped by developmental discourses as children are thought to require a kind of civilising (Tobin, 1997). Sam’s ‘disruption’ in the classroom, his loud crying and banging on the door and the ‘threat’ of his escape, are read as a ‘control’ problem and this notion is embedded in teaching discourses (Millei, 2005). Sam’s ‘behaviour problems’ require the teachers “to develop practical competencies to better ‘manage’ disruptive behaviours” (Millei, 2005, p. 129).

While the wrist band provides powerful validation of the teacher’s position as a ‘guard’, responsible adult or safety custodian, the teacher responsible for ‘watching’ Sam at any one time, is positioned as different from the other teachers, with different responsibilities, as their sole focus is this one child. The band-wearing teacher is solely responsible for Sam and for him alone. Their mutual entanglement transforms bodies and gives them meaning. The wrist band in this entanglement is legitimised as the authority and power for disciplining and correcting Sam. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault’s (1977) consideration of the disciplining work of prisons extends to educational institutions as he regards them as similar establishments of training and correction where surveillance and supervision are hierarchical, continuous and functional techniques of control.
A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency (Foucault, 1977, p.176).

The teachers’ gaze of surveillance rests heavily on the individual who needs training as their deviation from the norm must be corrected as “the power of normalization imposes homogeneity” (Foucault, 1977, p.184). The wrist band, along with the teacher, does some of this surveillance work. Sam is disciplined, isolated, and judged and his remediation and reformation individualised. He is to be taught new habits and new ways of being under the constant surveillance and judgement of his ‘guards’ (Foucault, 1977).

The wrist band and the assemblage it forms with the guarding teacher and Sam provides for a potential and genuine re-education of the delinquent (Foucault, 1977). However I would argue that Sam is imprisoned by the entanglement created in the intra-action of the human and non-human, separated from the ‘normal’ and under constant scrutiny. Sam is made subject to the ‘truth’ and the power of psychopathology (Harwood, 2006). Foucault (1977) challenges us to think not only about the ‘truth’ of these pathologising discourses but importantly the effects of them. The wrist band might provide for Sam’s safety, but in the assemblages it forms it also contains and separates, and contributes to his and others’ subjectivities. What are the effects?

The wrist band, and its assemblages with the teachers and Sam, create a visual reminder of Sam’s categorisation outside the ‘normal’ and the authority and power of the knowledge that produces him in this way.

The wrist band and separation

Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is on one end of the see-saw. The teacher Anne (wearing the wrist band) is at the other end. Dylan (a child without a diagnosis) moves toward the see-saw indicating his interest in having a turn and the teacher offers him the place opposite Sam. Momentarily both seem to be enjoying themselves smiling as the see-saw goes up and down. Sam makes a move abruptly getting off the see-saw and runs off across the yard. The teacher follows without a word to Dylan. He is left on the see-saw his end now on the ground (Field Notes, 7/5/12, S1, p.28).

Dylan (a child without a diagnosis) is observed throughout the morning activity to be following the teacher Anne, staying close by her. Anne had mentioned to me that Dylan was a new enrolment in the centre (Field Notes). He followed Anne to the see-saw and
climbed on the opposite end with Sam. As the see-saw rose and fell the two boys seemed to be enjoying themselves momentarily, until Sam abruptly got off and moved away and across the yard. Dylan was left on the ground as the see-saw went down. As Anne was wearing the wrist band and had sole responsibility for Sam she left too. In her haste to fulfil the obligations of the wrist band, she abruptly left Dylan without a word on the see-saw. The wrist band created in its assemblage an exclusion zone for Sam and also created effects for the unmarked children and the teacher.

The band marks the teacher wearing the band. In this way the other teachers and the unmarked children easily recognise this marked position. The teachers ensure that each teacher does their share with Sam. They constantly transfer this ‘license’ to contain and be responsible for Sam from one to another. The unmarked children know that when a teacher wears the wrist band they must remain with Sam. Some of the children, like Dylan, find this difficult when a teacher they like to be with cannot be with them. They are separated by the power of the wrist band from the teacher and also constrained by it even though the band is not needed for the ‘normal’ subject. The wrist band has power in its relations in this discursive context controlling the ‘disruptions’ of Sam and disciplining his ‘problem behaviours’ via the discourse of control (Millei, 2005). The band’s assemblage with human bodies disciplines the teachers and the unmarked children who are controlled, managed and separated by it.

The wrist band, as a mechanism of control, sustains disciplinary practices. It individualises and disciplines Sam. As Foucault (1977) tells us, it is imposed on the excluded. Foucault (1977) argues that all authorities exercising individual control do so according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal) and that of coercive assignment of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterised; how he is to be recognised; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.) (Foucault, 1977, p.199).

The wrist band contributes to and is a visual reminder to all of the constant division between the ‘normal’ and the ‘not normal’, to which every individual is subjected. The wrist band as a mechanism of power is “disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him” (Foucault, 1977, p.199). As a mechanism for individualising, it communicates to all who Sam is, where he must be, how he must be and how he can be recognised and at the same time tells the story about the ‘normal’. The wrist band actively articulates the importance of the constant surveillance of Sam.
In the following conversation with some unmarked children, I question them about why the teachers need to wear the wrist band. How do the unmarked children talk about the wrist band? What are the effects of the ‘truths’, made visible through the non-human actors, produced in these discourses about the unmarked children and the marked child?

In this conversation I show the children a photo of one of the teachers wearing the wrist band:

Me: “I have noticed that the teachers wear a band like this one.”
Jenna: (a child without a diagnosis) “Cause they have to look after Sam (a child with a diagnosis).
Fleur: (a child without a diagnosis) “Cause he’s naughty and he might hurt someone but he doesn’t.”
Me: “Why do you think they wear the band?”
Faith: (a child without a diagnosis) “Because they have to, because that just because.”
Frances: (a child without a diagnosis) “Cause he just…………That’s why a teacher……………..
Fleur: “Cause he will hurt himself inside.”
Me: “Do the teacher’s wear one like this for you?”
Frances: “Nooo.”
Jenna: “No.”
Me: “Why not?”
Frances: “Because we’re kids.”
Fleur: “And we have to be older.”
Me: “So is Sam not a kid?”
Frances: “Arh………… no?”
Fleur: “No, he’s a little boy........he’s.............I’ll tell you how old he is..............he’s two.”
Jenna: “No…not two year old……he looks bigger …..umm………”
Me: “How old is Sam?”
Jenna: “He’s three….he’s really three, he’s really three.”
Michaela: (a child without a diagnosis) “He’s one………..no he’s three.” (Field Notes, 21/5/12, S1, p.57).

Children often came and went during this recording perhaps due to a level of disinterest, or a level of discomfort with the line of questioning. There were many pauses in the children’s responses as they looked for possible answers to my questions. The children’s explanation of the wrist band shows how vigorously this non-human actor interacts to produce Sam as a certain kind of subject. The wrist band informs the unmarked children that Sam ‘has to be looked after’, perhaps ‘he is naughty’ and ‘he might hurt someone’ and perhaps ‘he will hurt himself inside’. Fleur’s reference to ‘inside’ could reflect her experiences of Sam’s being confined in this space, his crying and restlessness, loud and visceral, more noticeable and inappropriate within the walls of the classroom. Her understandings of Sam have come
from her encounters within the spaces of the classroom and Sam's intra-action and becoming within them.

Fleur positions herself and Sam by drawing on available and speakable discourses, explaining that he is younger, and they are older, and not like him. Ways of speaking about the marked child are limited by these discourses. Sam is not especially younger than Fleur, but they have no other way to speak of him. The limited and ‘normalising’ sanctioned discourses produce Sam as somewhat ‘unspeakable’ as he can only be described in certain terms or sometimes not at all. The unmarked children comment “we’re kids”. They position Sam as a much younger child, a baby, not a “kid”. Fleur comments that he is a little boy, as identifying his gender is a ‘speakable’ discourse in the early childhood classroom. They may want to place him, to some extent, within an available ‘normal’ category which gender provides. The children then have a debate about how old Sam might be, again drawing on the ‘speakable’ discourses. They seem to try to ‘fit’ Sam into an age group, using his size as a guide, saying “he looks bigger” and negotiate a number and seem to come to some agreement over this. In this conversation they wish to establish also that they are older than Sam, “we have to be older”. The children wish to establish with me that they see themselves as older and different to Sam. They are working to maintain this boundary where they are recognisable as the ‘normal’.

Attention to non-human actors creates the possibilities of who Sam is in this classroom. The wrist band, as part of an assemblage, has power in its mutual entanglement with human bodies. Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012) explains that “What emerges, then, is constituted; it is not a static relationality, it is a doing” (p.157). The plastic wrist band as a signifier of the need to ‘guard’ Sam, did not exist before the assemblage came together, and materialised in the take up of these discourses and associated practices. The wrist band, as a material-discursive device, constitutes bodies and conveys meaning. In this context it also does some of the category boundary work in establishing and maintaining the ‘normal’.

**The wrist band transforms**

Anne (a teacher) is sitting on the verandah and Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is sitting on her lap. Fleur (a child without a diagnosis) gets up from a nearby craft table and moves toward the pair. Fleur comments on the wrist band that Anne is wearing saying that she had owned one like it. I am sitting nearby and the teacher is aware of my presence. She starts a conversation with Fleur.

Anne: “Why do we wear it?”
Fleur: “I don’t know.”
Anne: “We wear it when we are looking after Sam so he doesn’t hurt himself.”
Fleur: “You need to look after him so he doesn’t knock them over.”
Me: “Does Anne need to look after you?”
Fleur: (shakes her head) “Because we are older than him and we don’t hurt anyone.”
Me: “Does Sam hurt people?”
Fleur: “Sam hasn’t hurt anyone yet.”
Me: “Do you think he might?”
Fleur: “He doesn’t usually.” (Field Notes, 11/5/12, S1, p.41).

This conversation about the wrist band begins with Fleur who moves over to her teacher and begins the discussion. Fleur remarks that she has one like it at home. The teacher Anne asks the children if they know why she is wearing it. At first Fleur says that she does not know. This could be because she is not sure what to say or she is trying to think about her band at home. She may prefer to position herself as ‘unknowing’ and ‘innocent’, as a child is often positioned in this way, in the adult-child power relations that dominate in this discursive context (MacNaughton, 2005). Fleur in an earlier conversation with me, seemed to have some knowledge about the wrist band, but did not at first want to divulge this to her teacher. The teacher’s explanation of the wrist band described her responsibility for Sam and his safety. Fleur states that the teacher wears the band to watch over Sam as he might “knock them over”. Sam is produced as dangerous and a violent threat to others. Fleur, when asked if the teacher needs to look after her, she again refers to herself as older but also now adds that she does not hurt anyone. Fleur’s category boundary work here draws on developmental discourses, as well as psychological discourses, that render the child with a diagnosis as unpredictable and a risk to others. Sam sits on his teacher’s lap throughout most of this conversation looking around for a while and then wriggling and moving away.

Using reflexivity…….

The wrist band wearing by the teachers challenged me. I tried to understand the director’s position and safety concerns but I could not see that these concerns outweighed all others. The director’s position was clear as her knowledge of Sam’s diagnosis rendered him a ‘risk’. How did safety concerns come to be privileged in this way over all else? I had used many non-human actors like the wrist band in my work as a teacher. In special education specialised equipment for the diagnosed child abounds. I used in my work various physical and sensory therapy equipment as well as visual communications devices and aids. These non-human actors had authority within the
discourses of remediation and as an intervention teacher my legitimacy was reinforced in my assemblage with various non-human actors. I saw my work at the time as crucial in changing and ‘improving’ the children I worked with. The non-human actors in their intra-action with me powerfully legitimised me as an ‘expert’. ‘Experts’ are often subjected as more ‘expert’ if they have extra special equipment that they can perform with. In this context I was not sure if the wrist band created the teachers as ‘experts’ or merely produced them as everyday ‘guards’ for Sam, a role they did not usually want or appreciate (Field Notes).

In this understanding, matter, discourse and subjectivity are brought together (Højgaard & Søndergaard, 2011). Human, as well as non-human phenomena, are consequently seen as simultaneously enacted and enacting. The consequence of this is not only to conceptualise the subject as enacting along with objects, but also to conceptualise objects as enacted along with subjects as enacted. In the case of the wrist band, it is not seen as just a plastic band worn on the wrist, but as an “enacting material technological force” (Højgaard & Søndergaard, 2011, p.349) in this context. In this analysis, the materiality of the wrist band is seen as a constitutive force in its intra-action with other discursive forces, and is not an added effect but mutually constitutive (Højgaard & Søndergaard, 2011). The non-human intra-activity with the human has the effect of identifying and demarcating a subject of exclusion, the marked child, and simultaneously re-demarcating the subject/category of the ‘normal’.

**The lock**

The door of the preschool classroom opening to the garden has to be always closed when Sam (a child with a diagnosis) attends. I am told that the door has been fitted with a large lock for the purpose of keeping Sam in. It is white and at least 25 centimetres in length and approximately 10 centimetres wide. The lock as a ‘special’ non-human actor is very visible and oversized to emphasise (as a special education visual communication strategy) that the door is locked and is meant to be locked.

Sam (a child with a diagnosis) was crying loudly and trying to wriggle away from the teacher who was holding him. A large group of children was sitting at a nearby table playing with play dough. They looked up momentarily at Sam and then went back to what they were doing. Sam then got up and moved towards the door. He was confronted by the large white lock. He knocked hard on the door. It appeared that he wanted to get out. He was not allowed to go outside at this time (Field Notes, 30/4/12, S1, pp.3-4).
Sam is observed on many occasions to struggle with teachers and to resist the confines of the inside space and inside time. The space and the timetable do some of the disciplinary work and as discussed previously the space is not passive in this relationship (Lenz-Taguchi, 2011). It has meaning and provides understanding about one’s subjectivity. The space has intentionality. Windows and doors were locked, separating Sam from the outside. As Lenz-Taguchi (2011) maintains, there is a relationship between the material and a child’s subjectivity or becoming which occurs organically in the multiple encounters and inter-relations they have with the non-human. Humans form assemblages with the non-human actors, transforming them after each new encounter (Lenz-Taguchi, 2011). How does Sam’s encounter and intra-action with this space produce him?

The large group of children who are playing play dough at the table look to Sam briefly, as he cries out and tries to get away from the teacher’s hold. Sam is contained and marked by the large white lock on the door to the verandah and the outside. Sam’s loud struggle to get away and move outside, did not hold the unmarked children’s attention for long. His noises and actions were ignored for the most part, as the unmarked children enacted their category boundary work maintaining the ‘normal’ by sustaining their self-regulated and self-disciplined focus on their work, keeping themselves separate from Sam. Their desire for order is observable in the way they turned away from Sam and back to their activity.

The inside space informs the children of the right way to be and we see the children here ‘becoming with’ (Haraway, 2008) the world/space around them. This is performed over and over again by the children. Discourses that circulate about the ‘normal’ child create an individual who can play independently, be autonomous and show a developing social competence (Burman, 2008). These discourses are taken up and performed by the unmarked children. During morning inside activities, sitting nicely at the table and working independently and quietly are the expected performance.

The agency of the lock is enacted when it is put on the door on the mornings when Sam attends. It is not used at other times. The lock, is an active co-constituent of the classroom’s social order (Preda, 2000), and as an ‘artefact’, it ‘tells’ a message and ‘acts’ upon the human actors in the setting (Preda, 2000, p.269). Like the wrist band, the lock is considered as an object to keep Sam safe but it has other effects as well. Sam’s discursive constitution here renders him a risk and a threat. The non-human lock
forms an assemblage with the human actors, transforming the space into a prison-like space, the teachers into prison guards and Sam into a prisoner. In this intra-action new understandings are produced. Sam is created as the 'abject' being (Butler, 1993) and the 'normal' is further legitimised.

I used a photograph that I had taken of the white lock on the door to begin the conversation. The children begin talking about what they see in the photo.

Michaela: (a child without a diagnosis) “Sam….It’s Sam opening the door.” (quick to identify Sam)
Me: “Is he able to open the door?”
Faith: (a child without a diagnosis) “No, no, not if that’s on.” (pointing to the padlock)
Me: ‘And what is that?’
Michaela: “It’s a lock a door.”
Me: “Why do we need to have a lock on the door?”
Faith: “So he doesn’t open it and run outside.”
Rachel: (a child without a diagnosis) “Excuse …..umm…..excuse me….I have that at grandmas.”
Me: “Do you have one at your place?”
Faith: “I do at my house in my cupboard so my little brother doesn’t get in.”
Me: “Does this padlock keep you inside when you want to go outside?”
Michaela: “No I am a big girl and I stay inside. I go outside after morning tea.”(Field Notes, 28/5/12, S1, p.80).

Michaela starts the conversation about Sam even before I ask her a question. She says: “It’s Sam opening the door”. There is some alarm in her reaction as she performs her ‘normal’ category work. She assumes that Sam is trying to get out at this time. Even though she can see the lock she still thinks of him as ‘escaping’. Sam is produced as the ‘escaper’, a threat. Faith says that the lock on the door means that Sam cannot escape and she also seems to say that if the lock were not there Sam would open the door and run outside. The children take up and create meaning in the established safety and risk discourses. Rachel says that she has one at Grandmas. This may have been an attempt by Rachel to somehow ‘normalise’ the lock, or perhaps she was just wanting to show her understanding of what locks were for, and in doing this reinforcing her ‘normal’ status, performing her knowing and superiority in having this understanding. Faith talks about the locks on the cupboards in her home and says that they keep her little brother from opening cupboard doors. Safety discourses and safety practices; staying inside, not running outside, not climbing the fences and keeping out of cupboards and so on, are universal in early childhood classrooms and these regulations are taken up and closely monitored by the children.
Sam is viewed as a potential risk to the social order. Safety discourses highlight potential risks. These discourses in early childhood settings and “the moral panic over the ‘riskiness’ of modern society set constraints on children’s action, through the regulation of their time and space in such institutionalised settings” (Kernan & Devine, 2010, p. 373). These discourses have led to an increasing confinement of children in separate spaces (Kernan & Devine, 2010). Michaela says that she doesn’t need the lock to keep her inside as she knows that she can go outside after morning tea. She takes up the circulating discourses of safety but also confinement of space and time. The unmarked children position Sam as not knowing the rules of safety and so he needs the lock to tell him to stay inside. The lock compellingly marks the space. It sits ‘loudly’ across the doorway, its presence is evocative. It marks a territory to contain Sam. It is large and very visible, to reinforce to all, including Sam, that he must remain inside. The lock also communicates a message about Sam and how practices inscribe him. The unmarked children understand that the lock has meaning, as a signifier for Sam, as it differentiates them from Sam and re/produces the category boundary. It creates a boundary between the unmarked children and Sam and produces a narrative about Sam as the Other.

Time and space work together to give the lock meaning. The lock alone does nothing, but in its intra-action with the space, time and with Sam it becomes an assemblage, creating new meanings. The lock, the wrist band, the space and the timetable, as discursive practices of the classroom, powerfully produces Sam as outside the domain of the ‘normal’ subject and a risky deviant. As a risk to the ‘normal’, the lock and the wrist band as mentioned, produce the marked child Sam, as separate and contained in his own space, alongside the ‘guarding’ teacher. Harwood (2010) makes the argument that the psycho-pathologisation of the individual creates the effect of a ‘mobile asylum’, a separate space, a confined space. Here the non-human actors contribute to this ‘mobile asylum’ effect, as the wrist band forms an assemblage with the teacher and Sam, enclosing around and isolating them, subjecting Sam as outside the ‘normal’.

The unmarked children again refer to spatial understandings in this conversation as they did in scenarios in Chapter 3: inside, outside, getting out, staying inside, go outside, keep you inside. The space of the classroom, in assemblages with other materialities, contributes to the children’s becoming (Haraway, 2008). The ‘normal’ subjects come to understand themselves in this intra-action of bodies, as they come to understand more about Sam and his ‘difference’ to them and his non-membership of
the ‘normal’. These relations of the human with the materiality of the space, time and other non-human actors, contribute to the subjecthood of the children in the classroom.

**The scooter board**

This piece of equipment is used in special education, by occupational therapists and physiotherapists for therapeutic objectives, for children diagnosed with sensory impairments, for improving upper body strength and for developing balance and equilibrium. Sensory integration therapy (Ayres, 1972) is thought of as the “neurological process that organizes sensation from one’s own body and from the environment and makes it possible to use the body effectively within the environment” (p. 11). Techniques and pieces of equipment like the scooter board are used widely in educational and intervention settings. The director in this preschool made a point of saying that they did not ‘do’ therapy with the diagnosed children (Field Notes). When I observed in the classrooms, I documented therapeutic practices. In this classroom the scooter board is often used as a distraction, or as a ‘soother’, for Sam (Field Notes – discussion with teacher) particularly when he wants to go outside and cannot. The scooter board is used exclusively with Sam and the other children are discouraged from using it.

The children are told that it is pack away time. While some begin the task others move to the mat where Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is using a scooter board (a rectangular board, approximately 50cm by 30cm, on four small wheels) with a teacher. The children watch Sam being rolled forward and backward by the teacher while he lies on the board. The teacher rolls him rubbing his back. Sam moves off the board and another child tries to lie on the roller board. The teacher comments, “Don’t use it that way you might hurt yourself”. The children who have been watching then move away leaving Sam and the teacher to continue the rolling (Field Notes, 30/4/12, S1, p.7).

While most of the group is packing away, some of the children show an interest in what Sam and the teacher are doing on the scooter board. The intra-action of the human and the non-human mutually constitutes the teacher and Sam in this assemblage (Barad, 2007). The scooter board, as a piece of ‘special’ education equipment, is used exclusively with Sam and the teacher. The other children show some interest in having a turn but are told that they might “hurt themselves”. Unlike the ‘wrist band’ and ‘the lock’, the unmarked children actually show some interest in this actor. However, the teacher, using safety as justification, discourages the children from having a go, which reinforces Sam’s marking and his distinct association with this non-human actor. What are the effects of this exclusive use of the scooter board?
The unmarked children usually ignore or stay separate from Sam. Contrastingly in this observation they stand and watch him on the scooter board with some interest. As one child makes an attempt to use the scooter board there is the potential to splinter, if only for a short time, the 'normal/not normal' binary created in this classroom. This actor, in contrast to the lock and wrist band, could have produced a change in the storyline at this moment. There was an opportunity for some disruption to the assemblage, however, the teacher’s actions and words recreated the non-human actor as ‘special’ and therefore Sam, in his association with it, as Other.

The squishy ball

The squishy ball, like the scooter board, is a tool/toy used by educational, psychological and physical therapy specialists to remediate what they have diagnosed as sensory impairments or sensory dysfunction in children (Cook, 1991). The small soft ball placed in the palm and squeezed is thought to provide sensory feedback for a child who could be described as tactile defensive (Bundy, Lane, & Murray, 2002) and is considered helpful to improve the registration of sensory input and its integration by facilitating nervous system organisation and adaptation (Cook, 1991). These soft balls are used with children, who are considered to be fidgety, or tactile seekers or avoiders (Bundy et al., 2002). Providing the child with a ‘fidget’ is thought to help the child reach a regulated state by contributing to their “sensory diet” (DeWeerd, 2013, p. 89).

During group time before morning tea Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) is seated on the mat with the other children towards the back of the group. After a minute or two he starts to move around getting restless. A teacher nearby comments to the director who is speaking to the whole group, “Do you think he should sit in the chair, I’ll get it for him.” The director replies saying that she thinks he usually sits quite well. The teacher then stands and disappears into the director’s office momentarily and returns with a small soft ‘squishy’ ball and she hands it to Hugo as he sits on the mat. A child nearby distracted by the ball tries to touch it but Hugo expresses his disapproval loudly. Most of the children stay focused on what is happening at the front of the group, Tyler’s news. Hugo stays focused on the squishy ball. Another teacher takes a photo of Hugo with the squishy ball (Field Notes, 27/11/12, S3, p.128).

Group time is a time to sit and listen in the early childhood classroom. To sit and listen is not only a rule but it is also seen as the ‘normal’, and “although the norm is sometimes used as synonymous with ‘the rule’, it is clear that norms are also what gives rules a certain local coherence “(Butler, 2004, p.49). As a preschool social
practice, group time or story time has an implicit standard of normalisation that is shared. The children have to sit in a particular way, cross legged with their hands in their laps and their eyes forward toward the teacher. The rules are displayed on the wall behind the teacher in pictures using boardmaker (Field Notes, Site 3). Boardmaker is an assistive technology, a picture communication strategy and learning tool software, that is thought to have “the potential to increase developmental skills and provide solutions to challenges such as behaviour, attention and communication” (Parette & Stoner, 2008, p.313). However, the pictures also have an effect to communicate to everyone the expected ‘normal’. Classrooms “establish norms of conduct and performance that organise behavioural space and enable divergences between children to be charted” (Rose, 1999, p.140). The unmarked children adjust to the social demands of the classroom, including group time, and this adjustment contributes to how they see themselves and others.

However, a child who might be seen to divert, or “fail to learn appropriate body management incorporates this stigma into his or her self-identity” (Leavitt & Power, 1997, p.43). Hugo, in this observation, does not take up the group time rules and is not regulated by the norm. He is positioned by it. The teachers show their concern about trying to find ways to normalise his presence at group time. At first they think about a chair but the director says that he does not need the chair, as he usually “sits quite well”. The teacher then decides that a squishy therapy ball, designed for ‘fidgets’, might help to normalise Hugo. This distracts one child for a short time as Hugo lets them know that the ball is meant for him.

In forming an assemblage that transforms actors, the use of the ball as a practice of special education, for ‘taming’ the ‘overactive’ and ‘disengaged’ child, produces Hugo as a subject in need of discipline at a time when the ‘normal’ sit quietly, conform and attend. The unmarked children do not need to hold the squishy ball to help them ‘settle’. They do not have a need for it as they take up the regulatory discourses of time and space and sit attentively at group time. Hugo’s body is diagnosed as unsettled and inattentive. In the early childhood classroom, the ‘still’ body is considered the more attentive, learning body (Leavitt & Power, 1997). As a non-human actor, the squishy ball, forms an assemblage with Hugo’s body, the teacher and the unmarked children, that momentarily produces conditions of possibility for the everyone in the group. The assemblage is capable of exerting force on subjects’ actions, changing and shaping them (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010), as they assemble together and form networks that shape particular subjectivities.
As special education and remediation discourses have authority in the classroom, these ‘special’ non-human actors in the assemblages are infused with authority and certainty, about who can use them and who cannot, who is included and who is not. The unmarked children do not request to have a turn of the ball even though they show some interest. They recognise its association with Hugo and by not asking for a turn they maintain their positioning as the ‘normal’. They mostly ignore or avoid watching Hugo playing with the ball regulating themselves within the ‘normalising’ discourse. As Butler (2004) argues, the ‘normal’ only subsists in and through its actions. The children’s actions, in regulating themselves and others, are operating by way of the norm. The unmarked children become subject to the norm, and also subjected by it, and its regulatory power (Butler, 2004, p.41). The ‘normal’ disassociates itself from the non-human squishy ball at group time, as its association with Hugo positions it as a signifier of the ‘not normal’, because of its action in the remediation of Hugo.

In this section I have examined what I have called the ‘special’ non-human actors. These objects, the wrist band, the scooter board and the squishy ball, are non-human actors that take their authoritative place in a classroom embedded in special education and therapy discourse. They are positioned as both objects of regulation to settle the ‘inattentive’ or ‘overacting’ child, and of remediation to ‘fix’ the identified deficits of the child with a diagnosis. They reinforce category boundary work, separating and creating a divide between the ‘normal’ and the Other. In their mutual entanglement with the human actors, they create a narrative about the child with a diagnosis that is exclusionary, as the child with a diagnosis is produced as separate in this association with the non-human. The non-human actors become ‘barrier keepers’ that maintain the ‘normal’ and Other as separate. The inattentive, overacting, the unreasonable, and the unable, all have particular associations with non-human actors and, in an assemblage with the humans, teachers and children, act to correct and normalise. These relations keep the ‘not normal’ away from and separate to the ‘normal’.
A festive holiday non-human actor

The Xmas decoration

A table was set up in the yard for Xmas craft. A large branch from a tree balanced in a bucket of sand nearby. On the table were Xmas shapes to be decorated with paper and glitter which were to be hung on the branches creating a Christmas tree. The children busied themselves making shapes hanging them on the tree with pipe cleaners.

At packing away time some of the children were concerned that they had not finished or had not had a chance to make a decoration. Some children hurriedly made a decoration to put on the tree.

Jasmine (a child with a diagnosis) was sitting under the tree branch with another child, Hayley (a child without a diagnosis). As packing away became more vigorous, the teachers gave various directions, praising those who were working hard to clean up and stop the latecomers by taking away the craft pieces. Hayley moved away from under the tree to do her share of the clean-up work. Jasmine, still sitting at the table, started to cry and moan loudly. Nancy a teacher approached Jasmine asking her why she was crying. Jasmine pointed to the Xmas decoration she had made which was hanging on the tree. Hayley had put it there in her packing up activity. Nancy asked Jasmine if she wanted to take her decoration home (even though the other children were asked to leave their decoration on the tree). Nancy handed Jasmine her decoration. Jasmine stood up, took it and quickly moved away; the crying stopped. Nancy looked at me pityingly and commented, “She wanted to take it home………her lack of words makes it hard for her”. Children were working to pack up the table within earshot of Nancy’s statement (Field Notes, 27/11/12, S3, p.126).

In this relation between the teacher, the children and the Xmas decoration, subjects are brought into being. The ‘special’ non-human actors discussed earlier acquired their authority from the knowledge created in special education, psychology, and other therapeutic or remedial discourses. They are situated for the marked child’s remediation and explicitly position this child as ‘different’ while maintaining the unmarked children as ‘normal’. The unmarked children do not have need for the ‘special’ non-human actor or its remediation.

The above scenario brings to light how objects, not ‘special’ or every day, but nevertheless significant, can form assemblages with human actors in a particular moment and ‘do’ things, transforming understandings, as it is in the ‘doing’ that meaning is produced. During the morning activity a Xmas decoration is made by many of the children which they attached to the branches of the tree set up nearby. As an adult-planned classroom activity, very thematic and pertinent as it was December with Christmas approaching, the unmarked children cooperatively positioned themselves as
understanding the meaning of the activity, and followed the directions, drawing on the dominant adult-child discourses that regulate and organise their activity in the classroom (Leavitt & Power, 1997; Millei, 2005). When the packing away started, some of the unmarked children moved to clean up the table, possibly to re-position themselves as ‘capable’ and ‘helpful’ to receive some feedback or praise from the teachers. Early childhood teachers use praise, considered a form of reward, to regulate and affect children’s behaviours. Teachers in many contexts, use behaviourist techniques handing out rewards, including verbal praise, to encourage appropriate behaviours and discourage the inappropriate (Millei, 2005). As I have deliberated before, packing away time is a regulated time of the day when order is restored. Children are praised for their efforts, and at the same time are regulated, and regulate themselves and others, to achieve these rewards.

Jasmine here does not follow the lead of the other children and sits and cries until she is allowed to take her decoration with her. When the decoration is removed from the tree and handed to Jasmine it forms a new association with her, marking her as different and separate from the other children, and the decoration different from the other ones on the tree. Jasmine does not help to pack away, she does not follow the regulatory discourses of the classroom, and is not disciplined by the same reward and punishment regime. She instead becomes emotional. This display of emotion is possibly recognised as part of her diagnosis, and her inability to self-regulate, as the other children move to follow the directions without a fuss. The teacher positions Jasmine within a deficit discourse, explaining to me that her show of emotion is the result of her lack of communication skills, and her inability to understand the requests to leave the decoration on the tree. The teacher, drawing on the dominant developmental and deficit discourses, makes the comment, “her lack of words make it hard for her”. There is also the hint of tragedy in the teacher’s comments. It is “hard for her” the teacher says with a look of pity on her face. The teacher positions Jasmine as in need of sympathy as she cannot understand the rationality of the Xmas tree decorating activity. Jasmine is subjected as ‘unable’ and in need of soothing, sympathy, tolerance and separate rules.

Jasmine’s Xmas decoration, in its intra-action with human actors, produces Jasmine as marked. The gaze of the teacher and the children is on her and her decoration and together they tell a story about Jasmine. The unmarked children, informed by normative discourses of development, regulation and rationality do not ask to take their decoration home. The Xmas decoration, at this time, reinforces and maintains the
unmarked children category work around the ‘normal’. The non-human actor is equally at play here, as a contributing force in the becoming of Jasmine, and the ‘normal’ (Hultman & Lenz-Taguchi, 2010).

**Chapter review**

Using Højgaard & Søndergaard (2011) and others (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Latour, 2005; Barad, 2007) as inspiration, I have examined how materials and discourses are enacted and taken up, constitutively working to create and shape subjectivities. Engaging in poststructuralist work and examining the processes of subjectification by analysing discourse alone, could have provided “sophisticated and complex analyses” (Højgaard & Søndergaard 2011, p.342). However, this would have meant stopping short of thinking about materialities, and their force in creating particular discursive practices, as well as their potential for subjectification. It is through the performances and practices of both human and non-human actors that knowledge is constructed and circulated (Højgaard & Søndergaard 2011). I have highlighted only some of the many non-human actors in the classroom. There were many others that could have been discussed, as they intra-acted with human actors, forming associations and positioning and re-positioning subjects. Within the discursive context these associations contributed to category production and maintenance of the ‘normal’.

In the last two chapters I have examined the discursive nature of the ‘normal’ in the classroom. Chapter 3 illustrated the dominant and sanctioned discourses and how they created particular subject positionings that privileged the ‘normal’ and excluded the Other. These subject positionings, taken up and performed by the children, worked the boundaries of the ‘normal’, as they maintained their own position and the social order of the classroom. A divide or separation began to appear. In Chapter 4 the observation of this separation again continued as the non-human and human assemblages performed as compositions. The Other produced as unreasonable and best avoided. Category boundary work around the ‘normal’ requires this separation from the Other. The Other becomes not only different from the ‘normal’, but positioned as ‘in’ another space/place, away from the ‘normal’, as a way to protect or sustain the ‘normal’. The non-human actors contribute to this separation and the production of a ‘mobile asylum’ (Harwood, 2010) as the teacher becomes the ‘guard’, with the wrist band and the lock, and the marked child becomes the inmate or prisoner, a risky and deviate subject.
In the following analysis, I contemplate some of the effects of the ‘normal’ category boundary work that became overwhelming in the data. The effects produce in the classroom both exclusionary and inclusionary practices as they continue to provide limited positionings within the normative discourses. How does the take up of these discourses effect the way the children see themselves and others? What happens in the classroom when the ‘normal’ is maintained and protected? It is the observed and analysed effects of these discourses, in the following two chapters, that illustrate the many difficulties that ‘inclusive’ early childhood education faces, as it remains suffused in discourses that construct only limited possibilities.
Chapter 5

Tolerance as a discursive practice: authority and legitimisation of the 'normal'.

Many questions arose during the analysis about particular and regular performances enacted by the unmarked children, as they encountered and interacted with the marked child and each other. There were countless observations of the unmarked children engaging in ‘helping’ performances with the marked child. The ‘helping’ performances were accompanied by an ‘obvious’ degree of ‘concern’ for them and their actions, their inactions or their indiscretions in the classroom. The ‘helping’ and ‘concern’ were associated with a shared understanding among the unmarked children, that the marked children were in need of monitoring, to assist them with their deficits and their multiple and constant transgressions. While I am not arguing that the act of ‘helping’, or being ‘helpful’, has no public value in producing a caring society and that people should not help each other, I do wish to problematise the power of this discourse and the way it constructs the marked child as Other. The naturalised innocence of the discourses that circulate around ‘helping’, normalise it as an act of virtue, without any questioning of the power and subjection involved.

At times the children’s ‘help’ was quite direct and often teacher-like, remediating the marked child’s difficulties, telling or showing them what to do. At other times a more mother-like ‘helping’ was observed where the unmarked child took on a more gentle and nurturing role in order to ‘help’ or change the marked child’s behaviours. Sometimes the marked child was ‘helped’ by the whole class to join in with the group at story time. What became of interest was the way the unmarked children ‘helped’ the marked child but they did not ‘help’ other unmarked children who were unsettled or ‘naughty’ at times to join the class at group time.

Contrastingly, some of the unmarked children did not engage in this overt performance of ‘helping’ at all. Instead, there were times when the unmarked children observed the marked child’s transgression, but they stood back and said nothing, or moved on, they did not ‘help’. This was in contrast to the way the unmarked children were managed by each other, when they got the rules wrong, and they disciplined each other. There seemed to be an understanding to leave the marked child alone. No matter what the marked child did, the unmarked children shared an acceptance, or at least made an allowance for it, all without complaint. It appeared to me that there was a degree of
resignation around the actions of the marked child. This resignation manifested itself in several ways, such as not interfering, not challenging, putting up with, giving in to or not telling the teacher about the marked child’s indiscretions and transgressions. There was perhaps a shared understanding that the marked child had to be endured. Both the helping actions, and the resignation of the unmarked children around the marked child, will be examined in this chapter as practices of tolerance.

Tolerance, it will be argued, is a discourse of power, and although typically conceived as an individual virtue, also articulates identity and difference as well as belonging and marginality (Brown, 2006). Tolerance produces subjectivities of virtue for the bearer of tolerance and a position of deviance for the tolerated. How do the children come to see each other in this way? How do they come to know who to ‘help’ and who not to ‘help’? How do they come to know who to ‘endure’ and who not to ‘endure’? What are the effects on inclusionary and exclusionary practice?

**Helping: performances of ‘concern’**

*A community of tolerance*

The children gradually get settled onto the mat after pack away time. Michael (a child with a diagnosis) is seated at the back of the group holding some trucks in his hands. A teacher, Chris, seated next to Michael, tries to take the trucks away, as there is a ‘no toys at story time’ rule. Michael protests loudly. Without warning the director, Sue, moves quickly from inside her office where she has been watching through a window calling “Chris, Chris, let him have them, it soothes him”. The director hands the trucks back to Michael. Chris remains silent. The director then apologises to Chris for her abrupt entry but reinforces that she did not want to “set Michael off”. The whole group watches on. Anne, the teacher at the front of the group asks the children to sit in a circle and asks Michael individually to join them to which he replies “No”. When they are settled Anne asks them to clap their names in turn around the circle. When Michael’s name is called he starts to join in the group clapping on his knees. When Anne calls Michael’s name the other children joined with the teacher calling “Michael, Michael”. This was the only time they called other children’s names (Field Notes, 4/5/12, S1, p.17).

Michael, in this observation, became the centre of everyone’s attention. The teachers, the director and the unmarked children combine as a group to show their ‘concern’ for Michael and they all ‘help’ him join the activity by clapping his name. What else was going on here? How can we understand the subject positions in this scenario? What discourses are drawn on in establishing these positionings? What are the effects of these discursive moves?
The strategic positioning of the teacher’s body next to Michael on the mat initially marks Michael. Special education discourses often inform teachers that a child with a diagnosis can potentially be ‘disruptive’ for the ‘normal’ whole class group. Michael is created as in need of close supervision at this time, as his diagnosis produces him as inattentive, easily distracted, impulsive and hyperactive (Washbrook, Propper, & Sayal, 2013) and sitting quietly for any activity is characterised as problematic for anyone with such a diagnosis. When the teacher attempts to take the trucks from Michael, she re-positions herself as a ‘regular’, not ‘special’ teacher, and possibly also tries to position Michael as part of the regular group.

In ‘regular’ teacher discourse, the pedagogical rule of not playing with toys at group time is customary. Toys are measured as a possible distraction for children, as at group time they are expected to follow teacher-directed activities like story reading. As Chris the teacher tries to remove the trucks from Michael, the director vehemently interrupts her as she bursts out of her office and into the classroom to stop the trucks being taken from Michael. With this act, Michael is positioned as Other, and the teacher is re-positioned by the director, as a non-expert in special education practice. This authoritative move by the director, takes everyone by surprise. In her capacity as the special education ‘expert’ in the centre, she positions herself as ‘knowing’ Michael via the characteristics of his diagnosis. She sees her actions as averting the potential disruption of the class. Michael is diagnostically created as unruly, disruptive and a threat to the group’s stability. The intensity of the director’s intervention however creates a sense of anxiety in the classroom. How does this position Michael? How does this position the teacher and the director? How scary could his disruption be?

Using reflexivity……

As this scene unfolded I came to think that my presence in the classroom may have been a provocation for the director’s actions. As I was a researcher examining ‘inclusive’ practices I often felt that I was positioned as an ‘expert’ and some of the teachers I encountered also wished to be positioned as ‘experts’ and so often enacted special education strategies to show their knowledge of the field. I noted my discomfort at the time with the awkward power relations and positionings produced possibly by my presence at this time. I wondered whether this would have happened if I had not been there and what role did I play at this moment in further marking Michael. My presence possibly strengthened the power exercised by special education knowledge and the ‘truth’ about the ‘normal’ and about Michael. As a researcher my positioning was
unavoidable but I have to grapple with the idea that the effect of my presence in the classroom was not neutral.

Special education knowledge, in its relations with ‘regular’ educational knowledge, robustly positions the director in this classroom as the ‘expert’. Special education, in the ‘inclusive’ classroom, ‘trumps’ regular education because special education has the knowledge of the ‘special’ child and this knowledge has become valued in the move toward ‘inclusive’ education. Slee (2011) argues that “inclusive education needs to be decoupled from special education” (p.155), and the field needs to be reframed and freed from previous underlying assumptions. As I discussed in my introduction, ‘inclusive’ education is framed by what we think we know about the ‘special’ child, and by showing more ‘concern’ for ‘them’, and their diagnosis, and by improving our professional knowledge of the diagnosis, we can better ‘include’ the child helping ‘them’ to ‘assimilate’ through remediation (Odom, 2000; Diamond et al., 1997). Special education identifies that the diagnosed child has ‘needs’ that are extra to other children’s needs. The use of the word ‘needs’ powerfully fashions a picture based on ‘concern’ for the marked child. To have extra ‘needs’ positions one as more dependent, less autonomous, and less rational, which are values of substance and privilege, in a Western liberal ‘civilised’ society (Brown, 2006).

Special education discourses confer ‘special’ conditions on the marked child. The unmarked children in the group sit silently, watching this interaction between the director and the teacher, understanding that ‘special’ concessions are to be made for Michael because he needs to have toys at story time. The unmarked children at story time position themselves as ‘good students’, sitting still, listening intently, performing the ‘normal’ in this discursive context. How do they understand Michael and his actions and the actions of the teachers? How do they position themselves as they are not afforded the concession of having a toy?

As the scene continues Michael is asked to join the group and he replies with a definite and loud “No”. The whole group then attempts to ‘bring him into line’, to ‘normalise’ him. The unmarked children clap their own names, each child having their turn as the teacher moves around the group. This activity/game is often used as a transitioning technique in early childhood classrooms to settle the group and gain their attention. However, when it comes to Michael’s turn he says “No”. The group then encourages him and try to regulate him by calling and clapping his name. They actively take up and reinforce Michael’s marked position as a subject in need of extra support and remediation. The children show their ‘normal’ category solidarity and membership,
sharing an understanding of themselves and Michael, as they all join in to regulate and remEDIATE him. They try to create social order by imposing the ‘normal’ on Michael who is created as ‘not normal’.

The unmarked children join with the teachers to try to ‘manage’ Michael, to avoid “setting him off”. Michael is produced as a risk or a ‘threat’ to the order and routine of the story time activity. How is this ‘threat’ to be managed? Interestingly the unmarked children appear to ‘tolerate’ Michael’s indiscretions in not following the rules. He is not positioned as being ‘naughty’ for holding the trucks. He is enthusiastically encouraged to join the activity, as they perform their ‘concern’ for him. Michael, as a discursively produced subject, is afforded the unmarked children’s tolerance. The ‘threat’ of his disruption is managed by their tolerance to his transgressions, and the social order is restored, at least in the short term. How can we explain their actions in ‘helping’ and showing ‘concern’ for Michael?

In her book, Brown (2006) contends that the promotion of tolerance is prominent in particular forms of integration and assimilation (Brown, 2006, p.2). Tolerance is omnipresent in the ‘inclusive’ early childhood classroom. Tolerance is a political, moral and social discourse in this setting. “Almost all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable by virtue of being tolerated, and the action of tolerance inevitably affords some access to superiority” (Brown, 2006. p.14). What is the work that a tolerance discourse does in this group time? How does this discourse position the children in the classroom? How does it operate to constitute the normal in this space? What are its effects in the inclusive classroom?

Brown (2006) maintains that tolerance is a “unique way of sustaining the threatened entity” (p. 27, original emphasis). In the classroom, the marked child threatens not only the social order but the boundaries of the ‘normal’. Brown continues, “tolerance is a practice concerned with managing a dangerous, foreign, toxic or threatening difference from an entity that also demands to be incorporated” (p.27). Policies and practices in education promote the incorporation or ‘inclusion’ of the child with a diagnosis that is potentially dangerous. However, in the ‘inclusive’ normative discursive context, the child is created as disruptive, unruly and threateningly different. The director’s actions, in coming out of her office in such a vociferous way, contribute to the notion of something ‘threatening’. In a classroom saturated by special education practices, tolerance is relied upon to manage and remediate ‘threat’. The director tolerates Michael’s transgressions in an attempt to contain any potential disruption.
A tangible effect however of this ‘tolerating’ is a noticeable separation. Separation of the marked and the unmarked has been noted in the previous chapters, and now is made visible again here. A divide between the tolerated and the tolerating becomes visible and this arguably delivers not only a significant challenge for ‘inclusion’ but also a challenge for the becoming subjectivities of the children in the classroom.

In this discursive environment, only certain subject positions are possible, with other understandings of conduct, or ways of being, disqualified (Millei, 2005). How are the tolerators and the tolerated positioned? Discursive positions that are disqualified or ‘mistrusted’ become a ‘concern’ due to their transgressions. As Petersen (2008) points out, “these people who get it wrong need some guidance; their problems need to be pointed out to them, they need to be enlightened, corrected” (p.398). The unmarked children and teachers, in their actions and words, express a level of ‘concern’ for the marked child. Michael, as the object of ‘concern’, is in need of remediation, as he is considered unreasonable, volatile and unpredictable. The ‘concern’ of the unmarked children, in trying to bring Michael in, suggests Michael’s possible threat to the social order and the ‘normal’ and legitimates the ‘concerns’ of the ‘concerned’. In the ‘inclusive’ classroom, there is a “boundless sea of concern” (Petersen, 2008, p.399) about getting the marked child to change, to become ‘normal’, or to keep the ‘threat’ of their difference contained.

The following analysis continues to draw on the work of Wendy Brown (2006), tracking the uses, deployment and power of tolerance. Tolerance is premised on and pertaining to difference, and viewed as a way of managing “the demands of marginal groups in ways that incorporates them without disturbing the hegemony of the norms that marginalize them” (Brown, 2006, p.36). Tolerance, as a discourse and practice, is observed and performed in the ‘inclusive’ classroom by the unmarked children and teachers. The tolerating unmarked children are afforded access to superiority in this relation. These positionings have effects on subjectivities as they are continually repeated in discursive practices.

To continue the analysis I offer some data to show how unmarked children negotiate with other unmarked children in the classroom. The actions in this negotiation provide a stark contrast to the ones that follow it when the interactions happen with the marked child.
**Discipline not tolerance is ‘dished out’ for the ‘normal’**

Alex (a child without a diagnosis) is sitting on the mat near the blocks playing alone with a Duplo train he has made. The teachers have declared pack away time, but Alex continues to play with the train. Joshua (a child without a diagnosis) moves toward Alex and tells him to put away the train. “Pack away time” he says loudly into Alex’s face. Alex does not listen and continues with his train play. Joshua remains standing over Alex, so Alex pushes him away. Joshua responds with a loud “Ow”, and moves away but only for a short time. On returning to the mat again he tells Alex to pack away. This time Joshua takes the train from Alex, when Joshua picks it up and it breaks in half, in mid-air, crashing over the mat. Joshua puts the piece in his hand into the Duplo bucket. Alex then puts the rest of the train away and puts the bucket on the shelf. As he gets up he pushes some more children over who are nearby (Field Notes, 4/6/12, S1, p. 129).

As a regulated part of the preschool day, packing away, as commented on earlier, is a disciplined time for restoring order to the classroom. Other children or teachers usually discipline children who transgress and those who cooperate receive praise. Children will step in to correct any deviance and restore the social order of the classroom (Davies, 1983) unless, as we have seen before, those who are transgressing are children marked with a diagnosis. Joshua disciplines Alex’s deviance and his indiscretions are not tolerated. His actions are not ignored but quickly regulated. Joshua takes control and removes the train from Alex’s hands putting them in the bucket. Alex then concedes defeat and puts the rest of the train away but also shows his disapproval by giving some bystanders a push as he goes. Alex’s actions could subject him as ‘naughty’ but the ‘naughty’ are not tolerated in the classroom, they are disciplined. This interaction between two unmarked children, where the transgressor is disciplined and conforms, with only a short burst of resistance, provides a contrast to the interaction that follows between Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) and Leah (a child without a diagnosis), where tolerance, not discipline, is taken up as a discursive practice.

**Tolerating transgressions**

At packing away time the children are divided into their class groups and sent to separate parts of the yard to put things away. Most of the children seem to do some packing away. However Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) is observed to resist this activity regularly. On this occasion he has spent the morning playing in a ‘fire truck’ and has been asked repeatedly to pack it away by a teacher. Instead of following these instructions he takes himself up onto the high fort and lies down in the fort. Leah (a child without a diagnosis) follows Hugo up into the fort trying to encourage him to come down and do his share of the packing up. She bends down next to him touching him gently and talking to him softly. “Come on
Hugo, you have to pack up the fire engine that you were playing with." He wriggles away from her touch saying "no' several times, each time with increasing volume. She repeats similar words several times. One of the teachers calls to her, "Leah, are you going to get out of packing up?" Leah explains that she is trying to get Hugo to help. After a few minutes she gives up, comes down from the fort and starts to pack away the fire engine. She is told by the teacher to leave some for Hugo to do. Eventually Hugo comes down from the fort and with the teacher standing over him he puts one thing away (Field Notes, 6/11/12, S3, p.48).

Before analysing here I wish to point out that this piece of data, used in Chapter 3, is being revisited. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) challenge the qualitative researcher to think with their data and challenge the idea of simplistic and single readings of data. Instead they argue for opening up to a “dense and multi-layered treatment of data” (p. vii). My analysis to follow works towards this multi-layered treatment, as I read the same data across different theorists and different concepts, and thus hope to “avoid being seduced by the desire to create a coherent and interesting narrative that is bound by themes and patterns” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p.viii).

Pack away time begins in this classroom with the shaking sound of the tambourine. The director then gathers the children together on the ground and assigns them areas of the yard that need to be cleaned up and packed away. In a conversation about packing away Joseph (a child without a diagnosis) told me that “If you’re in the ‘reef room’ and they are carrying the board down, you can’t help with the mountain (room)” (Field Notes 20/11/12, S3, p.99). Each class group has separate responsibilities and the routine is structured and well understood by the unmarked children.

Hugo, in this scenario, transgresses from the ‘normal’; he does not help to pack away in the expected ‘normal’ way. One reading of this scenario might be that Hugo enjoyed the morning ‘fire engine’ play so much that he was not happy to put it away, and he did not take up the regulatory discourses regarding timetables, but rather skilfully resisted them by hiding, and in this way he did not conform to the discipline that works to ‘civilise’ young children (Leavitt & Power, 1997). Nevertheless, Hugo is subjected by these discourses. Instead of doing what he is supposed to do, he moves to the top of the fort. He appears to be hiding from those who might discipline him. He lies down to make himself less visible. In this discourse, at this time, Hugo is positioned as a transgressor, and as such, he is in need of regulation and management. Hugo’s resistance could have other interpretations however, in this discursive context, these other ways of seeing remain unappreciated.
Leah (a child without a diagnosis) is frequently observed to ‘move in’ on Hugo and to help him to follow the rules. In the above scenario Leah moves up onto the fort showing her ‘concern’. As the “concern expresser” (Petersen, 2008) she positions herself as someone who might be able to assist. What subject positions are made available in this discourse of ‘concern’? ‘Concern’, as Petersen (2008) argues, produces “exclusionary and de-legitimised” (p.394) positioning. Leah is positioned as the autonomous, rational, ‘normal’ and legitimate subject, while Hugo is positioned as the dependent, unreasonable and illegitimate subject. This ‘concerned’ action works to shape and regulate Hugo’s actions, Othering him in the process. When read in this way, these acts of ‘concern’ problematise these ‘natural’ and taken-for-granted discursive practices of ‘helping’. As Leah gently tells Hugo that he needs to do his share of the pack away, she positions him as the immature subject and tries to negotiate in a rational way with him. Leah, after a few minutes, fails to do this but does not continue to coerce Hugo into packing away and moves off the fort. What informs Leah that she should not continue to coerce Hugo? She does not tell on him to the teachers, as she might tell on a ‘naughty’ child, but is patient and accepting, further marking him by tolerating his actions. The teacher then comments about her actions, inferring that she is trying to avoid the work of packing away. Do the teachers want to avoid Hugo being disrupted and perhaps ‘set off’ by telling Leah to pack away? What does it mean when the teachers separate them? When Leah moves down off the fort and does some of the packing up, how does this position her and Hugo? Hugo’s transgressions are ‘tolerated’ by the teachers and Leah’s are discouraged. Hugo at this time is left on the fort separate from the other children. Is Leah asked to come down to maintain the normative order?

Leah’s enactment of tolerance produces and positions subjectivities (Brown, 2006). Leah is produced in this context as the ‘normal’ helper, the older, caring female who is trying to ‘help’. Leah works to maintain the category of the ‘normal’ by taking up a discourse of tolerance, first performing a ‘helping’ role asking Hugo to pack away and when this does not happen she tolerantly moves on. Informed by psychological, developmental, special education discourses, Leah positions herself as ‘older’ and ‘tolerating’, as she acts to ‘help’ Hugo follow the pack away rules. Brown (2006) contends that tolerance as a discourse moves around between state, civil society, and citizens, producing and organising subjects as it is used by subjects to govern themselves and others. Tolerance in the classroom is institutionalised and is employed
by the children and the teachers. Leah takes up tolerance as a practice to assist in the governance of the ‘normal’.

Performing the packing away routine correctly and ‘helping’ others in conducting their conduct and managing their own and others’ possibilities, creates the unmarked children as legitimate and superior in this exercise of power. For Foucault (1982), “the exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (p.342). Tolerance is analysed here as an exercise of power and a political practice enacted by the unmarked children. As the dominant group in the classroom, they confirm this position by offering protection or incorporation, or ‘help’ to the sub-ordinated, and by doing this reveal their virtuousness in the process (Brown, 2006, p.178).

Hugo is subjected by multiple discourses. The ‘truths’ and characteristics of his psychological diagnosis, and the therapeutic advice passed on by ‘experts’, affect his inclusion and exclusion in this classroom. In an ‘inclusive’ classroom a child’s diagnostic characteristics come to represent who they are and explain how they might act and think. The marked child is often described by their diagnosis, such as “he has ADHD and Atypical Autism, he is medicated and has been since the age of three” (Field Notes 4/5/12, S1, p.11). The child is often not named as their diagnosis is given as a description of them and only medical/psychological ‘facts’ are shared in conversations.

Once a diagnostic label is attached there is the risk that all the child’s characteristics are filtered through this diagnosis or explanatory mechanism resulting in a tendency to view the child’s behaviour as symptoms, rather than as expressions of his or her unique personality (Molloy & Vasil, 2002, p.661).

The power of this knowledge over-rides all other knowledges of the child creating the child with a diagnosis as a unitary and fixed being, different and separate from those without a diagnosis who are also considered unitary beings in this discourse but members of the privileged ‘normal’.

Billington (2000) refers to the stigma of a diagnosis as a ‘social disease’, which he believes has repercussions for a child for the rest of their lives. This discourse, around disability as a disease, and a ‘tragedy’, is present in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. Teachers often commented on the ‘sad life’ of the marked child. On one occasion a teacher was
observed reading a story to Sam (a child with a diagnosis). He was lying across her lap and she was pointing at and naming the pictures in the book. She looked toward me saying, “It’s calming for him, can’t imagine what it must be like for his poor parents”, her face down-turned and head slowly moving from side to side, showing her melancholy (Field Notes, 4/6/12, S1, p.134). The marked child is sometimes created as a subject of pity, and in need of sympathy and tolerance. Perceptions of disabled people in line with this discourse are nearly always negative (Swain & French, 2008). The tragedy model assumes that disability is about loss and that disabled people would rather be more like ‘abled’ people (Swain & French, 2008). This model often evokes and seeks to arouse sympathy and ‘concern’ in non-disabled people. “The ethical bearing of tolerance is high-minded, while the object of such high-mindedness is inevitably figured as something more lowly” (Brown, 2006, p.178). Power then is exercised by the privileged ‘normal’ who can ‘give’ the sympathy and show ‘concern’. The ‘normal’ are constituted as the virtuous and the moral, and the Other as “undesirable by virtue of being tolerated” (Brown, 2006, p.14).

Routines and timetables discipline children, as argued in the preceding chapters, creating them as ideally ‘rule following’ subjects. The children, who can master the discourses and adjust to the social demands of the classroom, are subjected as socially mature, autonomous and self-regulating. Becoming civilised requires monitoring. However, children are not passive recipients of classroom rules and are often observed to actively mediate and resist them (Leavitt & Power, 1997). Children, who take up the ‘civilising’ practice, by performing within the norms, rules or codes of conduct, are positioned as the ‘civilised’ and from this position draw on tolerance to ‘civilise’ those who remain ‘uncivilised’. Brown (2006) refers to tolerance as a civilisational discourse, as “to be uncivilised is to be intolerable is to be barbarian” (p.182) and certain practices that are declared intolerable, are stigmatised as uncivilised. The asymmetry of power, between the tolerated and the tolerators, can be observed in the ‘inclusive’ classroom.

Routines like packing away are also closely entwined with the discourses of play. Through play it is proposed that children can learn to follow rules and learn to understand right from wrong. Play in the classroom is not free or ‘natural’ as how to play and what to play is often fixed and ordered. It is measured and judged against norms (Cannella, 1997). Routines and timetables around play must be followed (Allwood, 2003). Play equipment has specified ways that it can be used and packed away and this is monitored by the teachers and the children. Children’s play is under
constant surveillance from teachers in the classroom. Those who cannot play in the ‘correct way’, and then pack away in the ‘correct way’, are given extra ‘help’ and instruction to learn this. Play needs to be taught to some children (Cannella, 1997). Play is regulated and ‘normalised’, and if a game becomes too loud or physical, it is stopped if deemed inappropriate (Field Notes, 31/10/12, S3, p.37). The children learn to negotiate play, and the rules of packing away play, by drawing on multiple and conflicting discourses.

Foucault (1977) tells us that the more subjects in a space are under surveillance the more they become regulated. “Within this heavily regulated space, play has been a key concept through which adults have tried to produce, understand, monitor, regulate and govern childhood” (Ailwood, 2003, p.295). The play, and the packing away after the play, is recognised as part of this regulation and governance. However, the child with a diagnosis is produced as in need of remediation regarding their playing and packing away, and is ‘helped’ rather than disciplined. Conversely, the teachers discipline the unmarked children, who in turn discipline each other, when they do not play or pack away correctly. Order is restored as everything is put back in the place where it ‘belongs’. In this classroom, the teacher makes comments about how the packing away activity has been conducted by the children, she calls out the names of the children who have been observed to have worked hard doing their share and she also names those who did not (Field Notes, 14/11/12, S3, p.76, 28/11/12; S3, pp.152-153). Praise again, as a reward, is used to discipline behaviours (Millei, 2011). Surveillance by the children of each other regulates packing away, producing particular ways of ‘doing’ that are considered the ‘normal’. The unmarked children position themselves as working hard at packing away, ensuring their recognisability (Butler, 1997a) as a member of the ‘normal’.

In a conversation stimulated by a photograph taken of Hugo on the fort, the question was asked about the rules of packing away and why Hugo didn’t pack away, Joseph’s response was, “Yeah…..umm…cause they haven’t told him the rules yet” (Field Notes, 20/11/12, S3, p.99). This seems a notable response as the routine was the same every day. Joseph stated that Hugo had not been told the rules. He did not position Hugo as ‘naughty’ for not packing away even though he knew that the rule applied to everyone else. “We see everyone packing away like that” (Field Notes, 20/11/12, S3, p.99). Joseph positioned Hugo as not the same as him as he had not been told the rules. In explaining Hugo’s resistance to packing away in this way Joseph expressed his acceptance and understanding of Hugo’s difference, and possibly the need to ‘tolerate’
him not knowing. As Hugo hadn’t been told yet, it was conceivably understandable that he didn’t follow the rules. Hugo then is created as a person who needs to be given tolerance at least until someone tells him the rules.

Tolerance is generally conferred by those who do not require it on those who do; it arises within and codifies a normative order in which those who deviate from rather than conform to the norms are eligible for tolerance (Brown, 2006, p.186).

The discourses that dominate this classroom inform the unmarked children that Hugo is eligible for tolerance. How does tolerance produce possible subjectivities for Hugo? What kind of subject does tolerance produce?

**A subject of tolerance**

In the following scenario we see how Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) seems to enjoy his ‘tolerated’ positioning during this play episode.

Hugo (a child with a diagnosis), Leah, Audrey (children without a diagnosis) and Nancy (a teacher) are sitting and playing at the bottom of a rock water course that has filled with water, creating a pool. Hugo has a dolphin in his hand and he is moving it around in the pool of water.

Nancy asks Hugo: “Is that a dolphin or a fish?”

Hugo: “A dolphin.”

Leah: “Yes good!” (the pitch of her voice rising).

Nancy: “Where do they live?”

Audrey: “In the ocean.”

Hugo: “Yum yum yum” (making eating noises). Hugo moves his dolphin closer to some leaves that are floating in the water and pretends the dolphin is eating them.

The discussion continues about what dolphins might eat.

Leah stands and runs off returning with more dolphins and sea creatures. Hugo begins to squeeze his dolphin making a loud squeaky sound.

Hugo stands and moves to the top of the rocky water course and starts to balance his way down the rocks. The other children follow. Nancy attempts to discourage them. She takes Hugo’s hand to help him so that he does not fall. The slope is very small. Audrey then holds Hugo’s hand helping him walk down the wall again. After Hugo has balanced his way down the slope several more times he goes to the top again and stands waiting smiling and saying, “Are you going to help me Leah?” Leah is quick to help him, holding his hand as he moves down the slope (Field Notes, 6/11/12, S3, pp.46-47).

The whole group has come together to ‘tutor’ Hugo, in a similar way to how the group encouraged Michael to join them in clapping at story time. Leah and Audrey position
themselves as teachers, ‘helping’ Hugo to learn, as they draw upon normative caring and nurturing discourses. The teacher joins in the conversation about dolphins, drawing on pedagogical discourses when questioning Hugo. She directs her questions to him. The unmarked children’s actions, in joining with the teacher in the lesson, shores up their legitimate membership in the category of the ‘normal’ and expands the power of the ‘normal’ (Brown, 2006, p.82) in the classroom. They perform in adult-like ways to teach and support Hugo.

When the children start to climb and balance on the rocks, the teacher re-positions herself from pedagogue to safety expert, regulating the children’s behaviour by reminding them to be safe. She enacts a ‘helping’ performance by taking Hugo’s hand enabling him to ‘safely’ negotiate the small slope. As considered beforehand safety discourses manage and regulate children’s actions in early childhood classrooms (Leavitt & Power 1997). Audrey then takes her turn at ‘helping’ Hugo. After several turns at safely traversing the slope, Hugo moves again to the top and this time waits for ‘help’. He now repositions himself at the centre of the game, more powerful and parleying from his perspective. Hugo has now re-positioned the unmarked children as his ‘helpers’ and he seems to be the one navigating the game and ‘calling the shots’, enjoying the girl’s attention.

Hugo’s positioning as the ‘helpless’, by the unmarked children and the teacher, is an acceptable and sanctioned way of positioning the marked child. The notion of ‘helplessness’ pertains to a level of innocence and immaturity, and a degree of tolerance of the ‘helpless’ is necessary for remediation, development and civilising. Developmental discourses circulate in this classroom, where the ‘rational’ adult-like being affords a degree of tolerance toward the ‘irrational’ child-like being. Hugo, at this time, accepts this subject positioning and repositions himself, renegotiating the power relations in the interaction. Hugo now asks for ‘help’, he performs the position that he has been granted. He performs as if needing ‘help’, but there is also a hint of playfulness in Hugo’s negotiation of the slope. Hugo is engaging in some politics of his own, he does not resist the positioning as he did before, but now appears to accept the position and the extra attention he receives at this time.

However at other times the marked child does not accept their positioning by the unmarked children.
**Tolerating indiscretions**

In the block corner early one morning, Michael (a child with a diagnosis) was putting the long blocks side by side, making them as wide as they were long. It looked like a square platform. He then started to put other blocks around this square shape.

Michael (a child with a diagnosis): “I’m making a garage” (he says to himself as he hammers with his fist on the outside of the blocks)

Seb (a child without a diagnosis) from across the room approaches sitting opposite Michael watching him. He timidly starts to put blocks onto the construction, looking at Michael closely and following his lead. Seb puts the blocks down hesitantly.

Seb: “There you go Michael.”

Michael then lies down on the mat, next to the construction saying “Good night, good night.”

Seb: “We haven’t fixed it, we haven’t built it.”

Michael then falls onto the construction noisily pushing it over and scattering the blocks. He lies across the pile of blocks. He then picks up one of the long blocks and holds it above his head hitting a child who is playing nearby in the head. This other child picks up another block and tries to hit Michael but then moves on (The noise attracts the attention of the teachers)

Seb watching then attempts to fix the construction.

Seb: “I’ll make it up all nice.”

He tries for a minute or two but Michael does not join in.

Seb then stands and walks away from the area but returns only minutes later.

Seb: “Do you want me to build it again? Let’s make a new garage.”

Michael: “It’s all broken.” (loudly)

Odette (teacher) watching close by now approaches.

Odette: “How did it get broken?” she asks as she starts to place the blocks back in the shelf. Seb watching Odette then starts to put the blocks away too.

Michael continues to build. He tries to balance one long block on the ends of two long blocks that are vertical creating an archway/bridge formation. The blocks are unstable and fall crashing loudly.

Seb moves away saying: “I just don’t want to get hit with those.”

Me: “Has it happened to you before?”

Seb: “Yeah just two times.” (holds up 2 fingers).

He walks away to the other side of the room (Field Notes, 1/6/12, S1, p.97).

Michael is playing alone with the blocks. He declares to no one in particular that he is making a garage. Seb moves into the block area and starts to add blocks to the construction saying: “There you go Michael”. He does not ask Michael if he can join him, which is a regular entry to others’ games, he just starts to add blocks. Seb positions himself as a ‘helper’ and more adult-like teacher. Seb positions Michael as in need of ‘help’. As Michael is the object of ‘concern’, Seb draws on the multiple discourses that inform him of Michael’s marked position. Michael’s way of playing with the blocks needs ‘help’ and remediation. Seb tries to convey to Michael how and what
he should build. Seb comments: “I’ll make it up all nice”, reinforcing his position as the ‘helper’, while showing Michael how to do it the ‘right way’.

Michael, however, resists Seb’s positioning of him and his uninvited ‘help’ and management. He lies on the floor saying goodnight as a way to communicate and avoid Seb’s ‘help’ and interference. As Davies and Harre (1999) suggest, people are capable of making choices in relation to the discursive practices that provide subject positions and there are many and contradictory discursive practices that people can engage in (p.35). Michael’s actions show his refusal to be a part of this ‘helping’/‘helpless’ discursive practice that is being thrust upon him. Michael has finished with the game at this time. Seb, however, as the competent block player, tells Michael that he has not finished as completing an activity independently is considered developmentally appropriate and enforced in early childhood classrooms. To complete a task shows one’s autonomy, sensibility and intrinsic motivation (Carlton & Winsler, 1998), all considered favourably in the classroom. Conversely, Michael’s response in falling onto the construction, destroying it and scattering the blocks loudly across the mat, is viewed as senseless and unreasonable, as he lays his body across the pile of blocks.

After demolishing the building Michael lifts a block into the air hitting another nearby child in the head. This child tries to retaliate by hitting Michael back, but as the noise level starts to rise, this child moves on when the teacher’s attention is noted. There is an ever present ‘risk’ to the social order when engaging with the ‘not normal’. Michael is marked by his psychological diagnosis and the discursive practices of special education. He is closely watched by teaching staff at all times as his diagnosis subjects him as ‘impulsive’ and ‘disruptive’. Seb tries to ‘normalise’ Michael’s play or at least contain him and return order to the block corner. Seb enacts the discursive practice of tolerance as a way to regulate Michael’s difference. The irrational Michael is a potential and ‘real’ threat and in need of management. Seb, drawing on these discourses, tries to calm the situation. He positions himself as ‘tolerant’, producing Michael as tolerated and somewhat flawed at block playing.

When Michael starts to lift the blocks above his head Seb leaves the scene, as he assesses Michael’s dangerousness up close. Seb moves away furtively, he does not complain to the teacher about Michael’s dangerous block behaviours. The child who is hit by Michael tries to retaliate but moves on quickly, without complaining when the teacher starts to take notice. How is it that neither of the boys complain? What would happen if he hit Michael back? Seb tolerates Michael’s transgression. As Brown (2006)
explains, “tolerance was coined to manage eruptions of the particular against the imagined universal, the marginal against the mainstream, the outsiders against the insiders” (p.86). Michael’s eruption is afforded tolerance by the imagined universal, the ‘normal’ to manage him. Where does this leave ‘inclusive’ education if the unmarked children tolerate and separate themselves from the marked children? Phillips (1999) argues that tolerance “reinforces inequality between the majority and minority groups as it confirms the ‘normality’ of those who are dominant defining the others (even to themselves) as ‘deviant’” (p.129). How can separation be ‘inclusive’?

When Michael’s actions result in elevated noise levels the teacher approaches. Seb watches on and ‘helps’ as the teacher is putting the blocks back into the shelf, while Michael builds other structures, that also crash and make noise. The teacher’s act of putting blocks away appears to be trying to contain the noise. She says nothing to Michael about hitting the other child or to Seb about his ‘helping’. The teacher’s performance of ‘concern’ could be read as avoiding a confrontation with Michael. Petersen’s (2008) metaphor of the “runaway train” (p.401) might be useful here. The teacher, as the ‘concern expresser’, might see Michael as the potential ‘runaway train’, “an uncontrollable force” (p.401). It is her role to rescue other passengers, the unmarked children, so that they maintain their position and don’t jump on the same train as Michael. Michael's marking is reinforced and his ‘not normal’ way of playing is tolerated by ‘concern’. The unmarked children, including Seb, do their best to tolerate his actions, and in doing so keep the peace, manage the ‘threat’, and control the risk of the ‘runaway train’. Tolerance is “conceived as a tool for managing or lessening this hostility to achieve peaceful co-existence” (Brown, 2006, p. 157).

Tolerating Michael is taken up as the better alternative to other ways of interacting with him. As Brown (2006) suggests, there seems little or no choice about living or playing with other people to which we object and we have to accept that tolerating is perhaps a better alternative (Brown, 2006). Michael is not corrected for his actions. He is not asked to be more careful. He is tolerated, and tolerance does other work, as the individual who is the bearer of tolerance, carries “an authority and potential subjection through unavowed norms” (Brown, 2006, p.14) while all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginalised and undesirable by virtue of being tolerated.

Seb's ‘helping’ performance presents him as a bearer of tolerance. Tolerance is granted by those who do not require it on those who do (Brown, 2006, p.186). Michael's ‘violent’ and unruly actions in swinging the block around above his head is not met with more violence but with a 'civilised' response, as tolerance is thought to
work to repress violence (Brown, 2006). Are Seb’s actions, in being the tolerant, virtuous and civilised child, violent and exclusionary?

Could Michael have a different way of understanding how to play with blocks? Michael lifts the block above his head to show his strength or is it just his game at that time? Conceivably, his striking of the other child with a block was just a bit of clumsiness or carelessness and was not enacted with any ‘violent’ intent. However, it is read as a ‘threat’ and some level of ‘fear’ is sensed in Seb. Michael, as the tolerated, is best left alone, if order is to be restored. As Michael continues to build, erecting a bridge that subsequently crashes and falls, Seb decides that he will move away to avoid getting hit by the blocks. He fears for his own safety. Seb’s fear of Michael’s actions, as the discursively produced Other, is tangible and therefore through this action the ‘threat’ materialises.

The scenarios, in this section on ‘helping’, make visible the discursive practices of tolerance in the classroom under the guise of ‘helping’ and ‘concern’. These practices however, are also modes of exclusion, with each scenario divulging a different and more nuanced way of performing these practices. In the class group scenario, the ‘bringing in’ of Michael into the story group shows how tolerance can be utilised as a civilising discourse. Brown (2006) identifies how tolerance has been used to regulate the ‘uncivilised’ and thereby legitimate the tolerator’s power and position. Brown cautions that tolerance is often thought to reduce conflict and protect the weak, but that it does more than that, as it contributes to political and civic subject formation (p.9). Leah’s ‘helping’ Hugo in packing away shows a tolerance of the weak and a “taming the unruly” (p.8) to reduce conflict but it also has other effects. When Seb tries to ‘help’ Michael with his block play, this could be read as a social and moral practice, but it is also a political practice, as it involves the enactment of discursive norms, the licensing of certain actions and the regulating of others. These practices of tolerance continue the “marking of subjects of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal” (Brown, 2006, p.13) and potentially threatening. The marking of subjects by tolerance re-establishes and re-legitimises the marking, along with the power and access to the superiority of the ‘normal’.

In the next section, I examine how tolerance is made visible in a different way, as the unmarked children enact a kind of resignation around the marked child. Tolerance can be seen in the way the children just give in and endure the marked child and their actions.
Giving in, giving up, putting up with: performances of resignation as toleration

Giving up

Spencer (a child without a diagnosis) is up in the climbing tree. The rule is that only one child is allowed in the tree at any one time. Michael (a child with a diagnosis) starts to climb up the tree. Spencer tells Michael to get down, reminding him several times of the rule. Michael does not listen and moves further up the tree. Spencer then gets down out of the tree walking away shaking his head and looking back at the tree as he goes. Spencer: “He always do’s that!” he says with a sigh and a degree of resignation. He walks away looking unhappy, his face wrinkled up and eyes narrowed and looking back at Michael as he moves away (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, p.52).

The climbing tree is very popular and conflicts over the tree are observed on many occasions (Field Notes, 25/5/12, S1, p.68). Spencer moves away from the climbing tree and ‘gives it up’ to Michael. This could be read as an act of category boundary recognition but also an act of tolerance and resignation. Spencer maintains himself as recognisably ‘normal’ as he knows the rules. He unhappily tolerates Michael, who is subjected as not having to follow the rules, unreasonable, and possibly threatening. To maintain the ‘normal’ order and to avoid confrontation with Michael and the teachers, Spencer practices tolerance. Drawing on the sanctioned tolerance discourse, Spencer understands that he cannot challenge Michael over being in the tree. He does not want to ‘set him off’. Spencer knows the rules of using the climbing tree but he is also aware that Michael does not follow these rules. As Michael starts to climb the tree Spencer tells him about the one person rule. This ‘rational’ rule protects climbers and avoids accidents. Children use safety discourses as their justification for others to keep the rules around playing in the classroom and in the playground. These same rules of play produce authorised exclusionary practices (Field Notes), as they enforce who can play, who cannot play, how many can play and how play can happen. The unmarked children talk about the rules and how it is not safe if more than one person climbs the tree (Field Notes, 25/5/12, S1, p.68). They take up the rules and enforce them.

Spencer tells Michael several times to get down, but Michael does not respond, staying in the tree and climbing even higher.

Spencer was aware of my presence observing this encounter, as his comment on leaving the tree was directed toward me. His act of remaining recognisably a member of the ‘normal’ category, aware of the normative moral order, of what is right and what is wrong, may have transpired as he could see that I was watching. He may have imagined that, as an adult in this classroom, I would have the same expectations as the
teachers and so he positioned himself as the ‘tolerator’. How does he position Michael on this occasion?

Spencer, it seems, accepts Michael’s position as Other, by keeping the peace and tolerating Michael’s invasion of the tree. His tolerance however is enacted differently to the actions described in the earlier part of this chapter. He does not act to ‘help’ Michael, but shows a submission or a resignation, accepting that he must move on, demonstrating a rational self-control by keeping the peace and maintaining the social order. Tolerance involves the “withholding of speech or action in response to contingent individual dislikes or violations of taste” (Brown, 2006, p.13). This withholding of speech and action, performed by Spencer, is a less visible form of tolerance than the ‘helping’ work accomplished by the children in the earlier scenarios. The work it does in de-legitimising and excluding is however powerful. The effect of this action maintains Spencer’s membership of the ‘normal’ category and Michael’s membership of the ‘not normal’. Even though Spencer is not particularly happy about performing this tolerant act, his tolerance does the work to keep the tolerated separate (Brown, 2006). Tolerance here again contributes to the separation of the ‘normal’ from the ‘not normal’.

Tolerance is often considered to create neutrality and respect toward the tolerated and has been readily taken up into civic ethos and the social practices of our modern society (Brown, 2006). The ideals of toleration are commonly associated with equality (Phillips, 1999) and the obligation to tolerate is regarded as a consequence of citizen equality, “but toleration is oddly out of tune with equality and does not lend itself easily to egalitarianism” (Phillips, 1999, p.128). Tolerance conceals power relations, the power of authority, and the power associated with discourses of normativity, as “tolerance checks an attitude or condition of disapproval, disdain, or revulsion with a particular kind of overcoming” (Brown, 2006, p.26). This overcoming or the tolerating of the Other includes modes of incorporating and regulating the presence of this Other within.

Tolerance discourses make a contribution to moral education discourses that also dominate the early childhood classroom, creating individuals who understand the ‘right’ way to be with ‘others’. To be ‘tolerant’ in this discourse is to be ethically virtuous and socially conscientious (Brown, 2006), to be a moral being. In this discursive context, children are thought to be developing social and emotional competency and are expected to enact tolerating practices. To be tolerant of the marked child, who is
‘threateningly different’ (Brown, 2006), displays a ‘maturity’ of ethical and civic understanding. The children take up this discourse if they wish to be subjected in this way however, the same discourse positions the marked child as the uncivilised and deviant, an object of tolerance.

**Putting up with**

Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is standing at the classroom door banging on it with his hands and making a whining noise. A teacher (casual) moves toward him holding her guitar, sits near him and starts to play. Sam sits on the floor nearby but continues to make a noise. When the teacher plucks the strings Sam moves her strumming hand away and hits the guitar. Several other children (without a diagnosis) have now gathered around the teacher with the guitar watching and waiting. Sam continues to whine and tries to stop the teacher from playing by roughly and abruptly pulling her hand away from the strings. The unmarked children watch him trying to stop the guitar playing. Sam gets up and moves back to the door pulling at the padlock that keeps the door shut. He continues to make loud sounds. I take a photo of the children gathered around the guitar. Sam notices the camera and grabbing it off me starts to push buttons on the camera. The other children watch him, wide eyed, as he takes the camera and starts to use it. The unmarked children do not say anything. He spends several minutes focused on manipulating the camera. Sam becomes calm and is no longer making the noises. The other children just watch him exploring the camera. They do not ask to have a turn of the camera or the guitar even though Sam has had a turn of both (Field Notes, 11/5/12, S1, p.36).

The teacher attempts to distract Sam from banging on the door by bringing out her guitar. Sam’s transgression of banging on the door to get out, is overlooked, instead the teacher introduces something else for him to get interested in. Distraction is a technique used in special education as a management strategy for the behaviours that might be deemed difficult to control (Myles & Southwick, 2005; Johnson, Lashley, Stonek, & Bonjour, 2012). It is also used as a pedagogical tool with younger children to gain or maintain attention. Sam, as the discursive Other, cannot be regulated by ‘normal’ disciplinary techniques, so distraction is used to change his behaviour. Distraction also avoids confrontation and further disruption to the social order.

A group of about five unmarked children sit down around the teacher on the floor showing their interest in the guitar. As she strums the guitar, Sam moves the teacher’s hand away to stop the teacher playing, hitting the guitar and whining loudly as the teacher tries to play. The unmarked children watch on as Sam cries out and forcibly moves the teacher’s hand away from the strings. The unmarked children do not touch the guitar they remain quiet, watching the teacher and Sam. As I take a photograph,
Sam becomes interested in my camera and he grabs the camera from me. The unmarked children sit quietly staring at him, with some disbelief. They do not ask for a turn of the camera. They do not comment on Sam using the camera. How do they know that they should not ask for a turn or make a comment and how do they know that Sam’s actions should be endured but not copied? They did not tell him to stop what he was doing, they did not interfere. They did not ask for a turn to play with the camera or the guitar. Sam’s transgressions, in trying to stop the guitar playing and in snatching the camera, are not regulated by the children, by the teacher or by me.

Using reflexivity……

Watching the children watching Sam with the guitar I wondered at first why they did not ask for their turn and so when Sam’s attention moved onto my camera I allowed him to take it as I had no objection to him or anyone else using it. At this point I think I might have repositioned myself as a teacher attempting to show how I could include Sam just as the teacher with the guitar had done. The teachers had told me that Sam enjoyed technology, using computers, ipads and cameras and I thought that my actions would ‘include’ him, perhaps creating him as a clever technology user. I then again repositioned myself as a researcher trying to observe the ‘normal’ reactions to the transgressions of the Other. I offered the camera to the other children when Sam had finished with it but nobody wanted it. I feel I contributed to Sam’s marking at that time as I had allowed him to do something that the unmarked children thought they could/should not do. I did not realise at the time they would decline my offer of a turn but my actions in thinking I could disrupt in a small way Sam’s subjection merely occasioned the maintenance of the ‘normal’ and reinforced Sam’s marked position within the available circulating discourses. This was one of the few occasions where I had a direct encounter with Sam as he was kept at a distance by the teachers and the wrist band.

The unmarked children look shocked by Sam’s actions but nevertheless they seemed resigned to them. Tolerance is enacted by the unmarked children as they continue to allow Sam to act in this ‘objectionable’ way, rather than preventing him from doing it (Horton, 1996), or even commenting on it. The unmarked children show they understand their standing in the discourses and work to maintain their subject positions. However they cannot hide their disbelief and disapproval of Sam's actions, they tolerate, as tolerating bestows on them an “additional badge of superiority” (Phillips, 1999, p.129).
Giving in

At indoor play time Liam (a child without a diagnosis) and Michael (a child with a diagnosis) are standing at a small table in the corner of the room. The table has a light under it to illuminate whatever you put on top. One of the teachers commented that the children had looked at medical x-rays using it. Michael is lining up colour pegs on the table. Liam has some pegs and some small shapes and he appears to be categorising them according to their brightness. Michael starts to put the pegs into a small bag that is also on the table. He starts to take the pegs and shapes that Liam is using and Liam tries to take them back. Michael loudly responds, “No.” Liam then joins Michael putting the pegs into the bag. Liam however keeps a few pegs for himself. Michael: “Put more in.” Liam: “Not my special things.” Liam continues to put pegs into the bag that Michael is now holding open. Then Liam leaning across the table puts his arms around the remaining shapes he has lying on the table. Michael attempts to take Liam’s shapes. Liam: “No more.” Michael: “Please.” Liam: “No these are my decorations.” Michael: “Can I have some more please?” Liam: “No.” Michael points to a purple triangle shape: “Can I have that one?” Liam: “No.” The argument continues backward and forward. Liam hands Michael another bag. Michael does not give up so Liam says: “Ok you can have one.” Liam hands him a shape but not the purple triangle that he has asked for. Michael grabs the triangle anyway and moves away with Liam calling to him: “Give it back.” Fiona, a teacher, moves closer to the boys as they become louder. Michael moves away with the triangle and puts it into the bag he has collected all the other pegs in. Liam talks to the teacher about the purple triangle and that Michael took it from him. But as it has now disappeared, the teacher does not pursue Michael about it. Liam leaves the area looking unhappy (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, p.46).

In this observation, Liam and Michael are initially playing near each other and it appears that they are sharing the lamp table and the shapes and pegs. As Michael starts to put the pegs away and begins to take Liam’s share as well, some conflict arises. Liam takes back what has been taken from him. Michael responds with a loud “no”. This retort from Michael elicits an immediate response from Liam as he starts to join in with Michael putting the pegs and shapes in the bag, kowtowing to Michael’s demands. How could Liam’s response to Michael’s loud “no” be understood? Was Liam ‘giving in’ to Michael or was something else happening as well? Michael’s loud “no” response could be heard all around the classroom. As possibly ‘threatening’ and
without reason, this loud sound might have triggered in Liam a resignation, a tolerance toward Michael.

As discussed previously, noise and inappropriate levels of noise in the classroom environment need to managed. Excessive noise levels, are argued to affect a child’s cognitive growth, being a distraction to one’s attention and detrimental to learning (Evans, 2006; Shield & Dockrell, 2003). Too much noise reflects not enough learning. Rational cognitive growth requires one’s full attention. Other noises like the ones made by the marked child are also deemed to be in need of management and control. How do the noises made by the marked child affect their positioning? How do the unmarked children respond to these noises?

In this discursive context the noises of the marked child are regarded as different to the ‘normal’. They are viewed as immature in child development discourses, where words are valued, and signal a privileged positioning in communication and development. The noises of the marked child are difficult and sometimes impossible to understand creating confusion and anxiety. The noises made by Oliver (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, p.42) a child with a diagnosis, seemed to always result in general ‘panic’ among the staff as they tried to stop his noises. They offered him food, sleep or a nappy change as a way of keeping him quiet. As he had no words, only sounds, they appeared to find his noises unsettling (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, p.42) and they worked very hard to stop them or contain them.

Liam contains Michael's irrational noises by complying with his actions and tolerating him when he takes away the pegs and shapes. As Liam tries to keep a few, Michael tells him that he wants more. Liam does not fight against Michael, who continues to take his shapes, but instead, he tells Michael that it is his decision to allow him to take more saying “not my special things”. Liam tries to keep Michael quiet, being aware of the sounds that Michael might give at any time, which positions both of them as ‘unreasonable’. As Spencer was not happy about leaving the tree, Liam too is not happy about losing his shapes. Liam uses his body, putting his arms around the shapes trying to protect the last of them. He tries to create a barrier with his arms to try to stop Michael taking more. The argument continues with Michael wanting more and Liam standing his ground. But again, Michael's noises, his persistence, and the potential threat of being associated with Michael, informs Liam that he should ‘give in’ to him, to maintain the social order and his position as ‘normal’. What kind of subjects does this kind of tolerating produce here? Michael's transgressions must be tolerated. Finally Michael takes the prized purple shape, the one that Liam has been trying hard
to keep. They argue again more loudly which attracts the teacher's attention. As Liam is engaged with the teacher explaining his actions, Michael slips away with the desirable purple shape. Liam's requests for recompense go unheard. Michael's noise has been contained by Liam's tolerance and the teacher's actions reinforce this. Liam leaves the scene unhappy but recognisably the 'normal' and the tolerant.

Giving up and giving in are enacted by the 'normal' to show their category membership by performing acts of tolerance around the marked child. Keeping the social order by not setting the marked child off, or by keeping noises to a minimum, are ways that the unmarked children 'do' this boundary work in the classroom. Giving up and giving in are actions that position one in amongst the 'normal', the reasonable. Being resigned to the presence of the marked child and using tolerance as a discursive practice produce a divide between the 'normal' and the 'not normal', the reasonable and not being able to be reasoned with. Tolerance creates a separation, and it also produces with this, resignation, a silence, something that is not talked about but nevertheless 'put up with' and not addressed.

Who and what can we tolerate?

In the following scenario, the unmarked children draw again on discourses of 'concern' and tolerance as they talk about the legitimacy of the marked child's appearance, and difference, as she wears an eye-patch on her glasses. As Cohen (2004) reminds us, "tolerance is not indifference" (p.71) and the need to tolerate emerges only when we recognise something that we disapprove of or dislike. He claims that toleration requires the tolerator to have a negative response about something they 'care' enough about to warrant the need for tolerance.

Me: "I've noticed Jasmine (a child with a diagnosis) wears a patch on her glasses."
Cody (a child without a diagnosis): "Yeah."
Hamish (a child without a diagnosis): “Yeah cause that's because that eye can't see.”
Tyler (a child without a diagnosis): “No because that eye doesn’t um …… it’s not so strong enough and that eye’s strong enough.” (He points to his own eye to indicate which eye he is referring to.)
Cody: “Nah. This one’s not and this one’s strong.” (He points to his eyes.) “It’s a forty six and it’s an eight.” (Again pointing to each eye to indicate the difference.)
Me: “Why don’t you have a patch on your glasses?” (Both Cody and Tyler wear glasses.)
Cody: “Cause our eyes can see properly.”
Me: “How do you know about Jasmine’s patch?”
Hamish: “Umm.”
Cody: “Andrea told us.” (Andrea is the centre director and teacher.)
Me: “Why did she tell you?”
Hamish: “Ahh .... because we asked Andrea one day and then she told me.”
Me: “Why did you ask her?”
Hamish: “I just thought and said to Andrea .....maybe you're not allowed to have that on....we just thought maybe we should ask the teachers if its allowed at preschool.” (Field Notes, 20/11/12, S3, p.102).

In this conversation, when I ask the unmarked children about Jasmine’s eye-patch, they positioned themselves immediately as medical authorities, a knowledge of superiority. They talk ‘numbers’ to describe Jasmine’s eyesight, as numbers are created as a powerful and authoritative knowledge in educational settings. Knowing numbers in preschool shows one’s maturity and readiness for school. Using numbers in this way emphasises their authority and knowledge. They talk about Jasmine as not seeing properly, even though two of the three unmarked children in the conversation, are wearing glasses. Possibly they consider their eyes to be different to Jasmine’s, as they are not wearing a patch on their glasses. They comment that Jasmine has “one eye that can’t see” and maintain that “our eyes can see properly”. They do not position themselves with the same ‘deficit’ as Jasmine. Their questions regarding the eye-patch reveal how they position Jasmine as different, maintaining their category membership. The eye-patch produces Jasmine’s marked position and informs the unmarked children’s understandings of her.

The unmarked children have conferred about this non-human actor before as they describe how they asked the director about it. Hamish wanted to find out about the acceptability and ‘correctness’ of wearing this eye-patch at preschool. But, what else is going on here? Do the children’s questions about the eye-patch intend to challenge Jasmine’s legitimacy? Do they want to know whether Jasmine’s eye-patch should be tolerated or are they questioning the legitimacy of Jasmine in this classroom? Their enquiry, about tolerating Jasmine’s transgression in wearing the patch, is not just about managing a potential threat to order or curtailing conflict, but is also about shoring up the legitimacy of the ‘normal’ and expanding its power and authority. As Cohen (2004) reminds us, tolerance is not pluralism or an enthusiastic endorsement of difference (p.73). After deferring to the expertise of the director, again legitimising the ‘normal’, to check if Jasmine should be tolerated, they discover that they must ‘endure’ Jasmine’s ‘strangeness’. The discussion about her medical issues reinforces this. The unmarked children show tolerance by following the protocol of checking with the teacher as “toleration suggests an act of generosity from those who have the power to interfere but refrain from doing so” (Phillips, 1999, p.128).
Tolerance involves a degree of non-interference (Cohen, 2004). The unmarked children do not interfere with Jasmine and her eye-patch wearing and in this way they are tolerating her difference. By consulting the teacher, as the authority in the classroom, the unmarked children are positioned as rational rule followers who understand how the hierarchy operates and how power is exercised in the classroom. The effect of this tolerance and non-interference however reinforces Jasmine’s marking and their category membership. The unmarked children’s ‘concern’ for Jasmine’s conduct is not just about the eye-patch. However, in order to understand Jasmine, they can only draw on available discourses, which produce Jasmine as different and deviant, potentially unruly and in need of governing and management.

The discursive practice of tolerance is enacted here to quiet any unrest that Jasmine’s patch or Jasmine might arouse. Tolerance quietens and tries to bury “the social powers constitutive of difference” (Brown, 2006, p.89). The powers that produce difference and the differences that are discursively produced here around the ‘normal’ are quietened by tolerance. Differences that reveal inequality, exclusion and marginalisation are “ideologically vanquished” (Brown, 2006, p.89) when tolerance as a practice hides what it wants to bury.

**Teaching and learning tolerance**

Tolerance creates a certain kind of social order and certain kinds of subjects. Tolerance regulates the presence of the Other (Brown, 2006, p.8) and at times needs to be ‘taught’ when intolerance is observed.

Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is in the preschool yard trying to climb through the holes in a hanging sheet that is being used as a goal for bean bag throwing. As he persists with trying to get through the sheet the other children continue to throw the bean bags with some of them hitting him on the head. Nothing is said to Sam or the children about this. A teacher moves Sam away from this activity. He moves towards a climbing frame that has been left near the storage garage. He starts to climb it but is stopped by the same teacher who comments to me, “He loves to climb, he does not need to be encouraged. He can climb out of the school yard, he’s like a monkey”. Sam tries again to climb up the frame and again the teacher takes him down. He tries to climb several more times but is stopped. He then moves over to the preschool gate and tries to put his foot up on the vertical bars like he might try to climb the fence. Eddie (a child without a diagnosis) has been following this teacher like her shadow all morning and he closely watches this interaction with Sam and the teacher and he comments to me as I am observing nearby;

Eddie: “Sam is really naughty.”
Me: “What is he doing?”
Eddie: “Climbing on the gate and Anne was getting him down.”
Me: “Do you climb on the gate?”
Eddie: “No!” (very decidedly)
Me: “Why?”
Eddie: “I’m not naughty.”
Me: “Why do you think Sam climbs on the gate?”
Eddie: “Because he’s a naughty little boy. You can’t climb on the gate.”

Anne, the teacher, hears Eddie’s comment and looks at me with eyes wide. She starts to talk to him about Sam but she has to move quickly chasing Sam. She says to Eddie; “Sam just hasn’t learnt all the rules yet.”

Eddie shakes his head, frowning with a surly look (Field Notes, 7/5/12, S1, p.29).

Sam is climbing on a sheet that the children are using as a target for their bean bag throwing. The children continue to throw the bags even though they are hitting Sam. Sam is not playing with the equipment in the normative way. Were the children enacting intolerance by hitting Sam with the bean bags? Did they not see him? Sam did not move away, he did not protest. Were his actions viewed to be without reason or throwing him as allowed because he did not respond to the bean bag ‘assault’? How was this potential intolerance or perhaps outright attack on or abuse of him viewed by the teacher? How did I view this myself and why did I not step in to halt the assault on Sam?

The unmarked children’s actions illustrated how they regularised and normalised appropriate ways to play and excluded Sam’s way to play and learn. Clearly, Sam did not perform the ‘appropriate’ play on the equipment. At this time, Sam’s ‘not playing within the rule’ did not ignite a form of tolerance, for example the unmarked children moving away. The rule legitimised their actions of throwing, no matter if Sam was in the target. Through the rules of the game the children have gained a sovereign form of power. The ‘rules’ suspended Sam’s right to ‘be’ and ‘do’ in this space. The rules provided the children with an exception to tolerate the ‘not normal’ outsider. Sam did not follow the rules and he was in the wrong place. The disciplinary power of playing the game properly did not have an effect on Sam and therefore a more direct sovereign power was applied. As Millei and Cliff (2014) further explain by drawing on Agamben’s (2005) notion of the ‘exception’, where the regulation of a target identified as ‘exceptional’, legitimises ‘exceptional’ action. The unmarked children are “at the point where disciplinary power is exhausted,[and] the project of ‘civilising’ the body no longer requires only ‘regular’ surveillance and normalising instruction by educators and other experts” (p.260), but requires sovereign power to be exercised, which is legitimised by the circulating developmental discourses, and the rules of the game, suspending Sam’s rights as a legitimate subject.
Sam is moved away from the area so that the unmarked children can continue to play the game ‘correctly’. His way of playing with the activity is not recognised, or talked about, or given any degree of legitimacy. He is just moved on to enable the unmarked children to continue the ‘normal’ way to play the game. Again, we see the marked child separated, and moved on, but in this case, toleration was suspended. This time Sam is separated from the unmarked children for his own protection. Nothing is said, no comment is made and the rules of the game seemed to dissolve the need for toleration. An ‘unreasonable’, and ‘not human’ Sam, did not produce toleration in the children, the teachers or me at this time.

Using reflexivity…..

What was I doing as this was happening? As I watched the children threw the bean bags at Sam and I made a mental note that the ‘missiles’ could not physically harm him. Sam did not protest or move away and I did not step in to challenge the children’s actions. At the time I was alarmed by their actions, I thought that perhaps the children were showing their disapproval and abjection of Sam in a ‘legitimised’ way as they could claim they were just trying to play the game properly. As I continued to reflect on this scene my discomfort increased as I considered the disciplining violence enacted on Sam by the power of the ‘normal’. Sam’s objectification by the discourses made him ‘less than human’ and the children no longer tolerated him in this moment. How do these discourses operate and maintain their legitimacy when they violently marginalise and de-humanise in this way? I was a part of this observation, I stood around probably open mouthed and surprised. The way Sam was moved on by the teacher without words like a ‘wheelbarrow’ being manoeuvred on a path also reinforced for me his ‘less than human’ positioning. The scene however seemed all too familiar to me as a teacher and researcher. The way the discourses produce the marked child as the anomaly, objectified and ‘not normal’, with deficits that create them as less than human.

I think my reading of this scene is uncomfortable as it disrupts the ‘harmonious’ image of the ‘inclusive’ classroom and highlights the violence of relations when discourses create subjects that are ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and the ‘wrong’ must be ‘disciplined’. Nevertheless I continue in this representation to challenge, disrupt and trouble the hegemonic structures that I have worked within and present new ways of thinking “pushing toward an unfamiliar, towards an uncomfortable” (Pillow, 2003, p.192).
Sam, followed closely by the wrist band wearing teacher, becomes interested in a climbing frame and starts to clamber up. The teacher tries to stop him. She draws on regulatory and safety discourses saying that he loves to climb and needs no encouragement. The teachers often talk about Sam’s interest in and ability to escape (Field Notes, 30/4/12, 7/5/12, S1). Each time he tries to climb on something the teacher picks him up and moves him on. She follows and maintains a level of patience in her endeavour to stop him climbing, modelling a tolerance toward Sam. “He can climb out of the school yard, he’s like a monkey” is the teacher’s comment. Sam is now positioned as ‘other than human’, or less than human, and a threat to himself and potentially to others. His climbing actions are viewed as quite unreasonable. He is compared to a ‘monkey’ climbing irrationally, unpredictably, erratically and without purpose. Sam’s actions position him as barbaric or animal-like, as one who again needs to be civilised using tolerance as a discursive practice to civilise him (Brown, 2006). Sam’s actions, and the knowledge of his diagnosis, contribute to producing him as a particular kind of subject. Sam is positioned by the ‘normal’ via his diagnosis and his irrational (animal-like) behaviours. Sam, like a monkey, needs to be contained, controlled and civilised.

Eddie (a child without a diagnosis) follows closely behind the teacher Anne when he attends preschool. On this occasion he is alongside Anne as she closely monitors Sam’s climbing. He hears her comment about Sam being a monkey and remarks to me that Sam is being “really naughty”. Eddie, drawing on regulatory discourses, is cognisant that Sam’s climbing is outside the borders of appropriate behaviour. He takes careful notice of Sam’s actions. He does not ignore Sam, as many of the unmarked children seem to do. From the tone of his voice, he is annoyed by Sam’s rule-breaking actions, wanting Sam to stop doing what he is doing. Eddie seems to want more of the teacher’s time as he follows her around, requesting her attention throughout the morning. He seems resentful of the time she spends with Sam and he expresses intolerance towards Sam. He positions himself as superior in knowing appropriate ways of being, while calling Sam ‘naughty’ in an irritated tone, positioning Sam as one who needs to be punished and left alone, rather than tolerated and rewarded with so much attention. The teacher Anne however quickly draws on tolerance discourses, and steps in to the conversation to regulate Eddie, by teaching him to be more tolerant of Sam. She tells Eddie that Sam hasn’t learnt all the rules yet. Eddie appears unhappy with this response from the teacher and he doesn’t seem to readily accept this idea.
Using reflexivity……..

This was one of only a few times when the practice of tolerance was interrupted as the unmarked child resisted this discourse, positioning the marked child as ‘naughty’, just a regular ‘naughty’ not pathologised. When observing this I immediately and spontaneously positioned myself in the teacher’s shoes and thought yes it is necessary to teach tolerance here and Eddie needs to know that Sam is not ‘naughty’ just not the same……………… What was I thinking? How can tolerating bring about a rethinking and repositioning of subjects? Again I said nothing. The tolerance discourses that circulate in the ‘inclusive’ classroom informed my ‘naturalised’ and instantaneous response to this situation. I had to challenge myself to think otherwise about this and still struggle in the context to question the familiar.

As Eddie watches on while Sam is hit by the bags, he does not appear to take any notice of these actions. He watches closely however, as Sam moves haphazardly from activity to activity without apparent reason, and he observes him as he climbs on the equipment and the boundary fences, in a random way, positioning him as an escape risk. Eddie can see that Sam does not obey the rules. Eddie does not accept Sam’s behaviour, he does not tolerate it, or become resigned to it. Eddie positions Sam as intolerable. The teacher encourages Eddie to be tolerant by drawing on developmental and learning discourses, but this does not seem to impress him.

Tolerance discourses can be drawn upon when individuals behave in ways that are offensive or disturbing. Here again tolerance is enacted by a negative response (Cohen, 2004). Eddie voices his negative opinion about Sam saying that he is ‘naughty’, but a child with a diagnosis is not produced as ‘naughty’ in this classroom, they are produced as ‘deficient’ and unreasonable and as such in need of sympathy and tolerance. This tolerance teaching, performed by the teacher, encourages Eddie to position Sam as something other than ‘naughty’. Sam is not constituted as ‘naughty’, even though his actions could be read that way. To be positioned as ‘naughty’ is not always pathological and attracts discipline, not tolerance or sympathy. Sam is constituted and read as pathological and ‘deviant’, in trying to irrationally escape, and by climbing like a monkey out of the preschool yard, he becomes other than human and other than rational. He is not positioned as the naughty or the ‘bad’, as they are considered somewhat rational, but in following Laws (2011) I would argue that he is positioned as the ‘mad’.
To speak of a child as ‘mad’ however could be considered outside the domains of acceptable discourses. In sanctioned discourses, children are often regarded as ‘untamed’ or ‘innocent’, but never ‘mad’ (Laws, 2011). Theorising with Foucault (1967) and using his work on ‘adult’ madness as a tool for examining the institution of the classroom and its structures and discourses, I would contend that in the ‘inclusive’ classroom, when the marked child is constituted by the dominant and marginalising discourses, they are positioned as ‘mad’. Positioned as different, delayed, deviate and in need of surveillance they are watched over, and their actions are scrutinised, as they present a threat to the ‘normal’ with their unpredictability. They are separated from the ‘normal’ group by the take up of multiple discourses, by teachers, by children and by non-human actors. A sense of anxiety is created around this child, as they might escape, they might make ‘strange’ noises upsetting the peace and order, or they might hurt someone or themselves. Foucault (2006) argues that it is this sense of anxiety that reinforces and maintains the separateness and the need to separate.

Traces of the practices that have been used to ‘deal with’ ‘madness’ over centuries (Foucault, 1967) are still be found in the way we talk about, the way we manage and the way we ‘help’ the marked child (Laws, 2011). The ‘mad’ attracts a level of toleration, that the ‘bad’ do not. Sam’s diagnosis, its characteristics and his actions require a tolerance from the unmarked children as his diagnostic deficits create him as the ‘abject’, object of ‘concern’ or the exceptional. The ‘concern’ is for the maintenance of the ‘normal’. His positioning as ‘mad’ requires some containment and management to sustain a level of order (Foucault, 1967). The ‘normal’ must confine the ‘not normal’ to protect itself. In maintaining and legitimising the ‘normal’, tolerance is enacted to keep order and is encouraged as a preferred alternative to other reactions such as outright rejection, repression or exile (Brown, 2006). Tolerance is enacted on those things and subjects that tolerators think they can change in some way as “we do not tolerate what is outside of our reach, what is irrelevant to us, or what we cannot do anything about” (Brown, 2006, p.29). Eddie positioned Sam as ‘bad’ and the children throwing the bean bags positioned Sam as hopeless to change, as unable to be reasoned with. Eddie did not tolerate Sam because he did not think he could be changed. He was however, encouraged to tolerate and see him as ‘mad’, as having deficits, as needing ‘help’.
"Don’t stir him up"

Michael’s (a child with a diagnosis) play in the home corner was getting rowdier. He loudly called out across the room to Michaela and Rachel (children without a diagnosis). They had left the home corner to go on a ‘holiday’ but Michael wanted them to return to the home corner where he was waiting lying in a small cot. A teacher, Edith, approached the home corner and engaged Michael in a game as it seemed the girls were not going to return. She played with Michael for a short time and then Patrick (a child without a diagnosis) joined the game. Both children were moving milk containers quickly in and out of the fridge. Patrick commented: “Michael the milk might be getting hard …. Better get it out of the freezer” To which Michael replied: “Hurry, hurry, hurry…” as he took all the containers out of the fridge frantically and noisily dropping them all over the floor. Michael and Patrick became very excited in the play. Containers were flying around, they were picked up, thrown into fridge and out again; a flurry of activity, with an increasing level of noise was observed.

A teacher, Anne, moved quickly to the area and said to Patrick, “Don’t stir him up. You can still play with him because he likes it but don’t stir him up”. With this comment, the game ended. Patrick with his eyes downcast wandered around in the home corner talking to himself and randomly touching objects on the table. Michael continued to play with the milk cartons alone. Anne, the teacher then turned to me as she saw me watching and said that Patrick had ‘stirred up’ Michael before by encouraging him to go and play on the computer keyboard and then telling another child to try and take it off him. Again the teacher Anne reinforced this saying: “Patrick tries to wind him up” (Field Notes, 4/5/12, S1, p.15).

Patrick moved into the area quite quickly after the teacher left. It appeared that he was keen to play with Michael. He seemed to be enjoying the game. He was smiling and trying to encourage Michael to play the game at a faster pace. However, the game got ‘too noisy’ for classroom expectations and the teacher stepped in. The teacher seemed to assume that Patrick’s intentions for playing with Michael were questionable as she commented that Patrick tries to wind Michael up. She seemed to assume that Patrick’s motives came from a negative intent. Did her actions aim to protect Michael, Patrick or the social order of the classroom? The teacher, drawing on discourses of regulation and special education, perhaps wished to ‘protect’ the ‘vulnerable’ child with a diagnosis while maintaining order. What were the effects?

Michael is constituted as easily unsettled, easily wound up and potentially a threat to the order of the classroom. ‘Stirring him up’ is thought and said to be ill-advised. Keeping him under control was the aim of this day and most days during my visits. Containing Michael’s potential ‘threat’ maintains the ‘normal’ and the social order of things. However discouraging Patrick from playing with Michael does other things as well. It isolates and separates Michael from Patrick and arguably exposes the traces of the historic practices of confinement and expulsion (Foucault, 1967). Michael is
isolated here from playing with the ‘normal’ Patrick. Patrick is removed and Michael plays alone. Patrick is disciplined and embarrassed and told how to act around Michael. He must not play with Michael in this way and he must be more careful with Michael. He must move away and not stir Michael up and be more cognisant of the potential risk that Michael poses. Michael’s marked position is reinforced and his marginalisation maintained. Patrick can only play in a particular way with Michael, as only certain interactions result in behaviours that are tolerable for the classroom order.

Regimes of truth that operate to individualise particular subjects, those who disrupt or threaten to disrupt the social order are more “strongly individualised” (Brown, 2006, p.43). In modern disciplinary societies, the ‘normal’ subject can usually avoid this individuating discipline by disciplining themselves via the ‘normal’, but those who deviate cannot. They are more often ‘dissected’, regulated and Othered (Foucault, 1977). As Brown (2006) recognises, the tolerated will always be those who deviate from the norm (p.44). Michael deviates from the ‘normal’ and must be tolerated, and often the best way to do this is to leave him alone. The practice of separating Patrick from Michael contains the ‘mad’ in order to maintain order.

In keeping the order, the teacher suppresses the disorderliness of the noise being created and the spontaneous flurry of activity in the game. She is also keeping a check on the possible threat that allowing this activity to continue, might pose to the order. What informed the teacher’s actions? Was she concerned about Michael’s response? Or was her concern about Patrick’s involvement? What might happen if Michael was set off? How did this act of separation constitute subjectivities? Perhaps Patrick did like to stir up Michael. He might have enjoyed the noises Michael made and the ‘wild/mad’ behaviour that Michael was often observed to exhibit. Perhaps Patrick wanted to be able to play in this way too. Foucault (1967) “argues that the confinement of ‘madness’ has nothing to do with any medical concept” (Laws, 2011, p.52). Historically, practices of confinement arose to protect the population from the contagion of disease (Foucault, 1967). This practice over time moved to contain those who were considered a threat to social order, not just because of health alone, but also because of their unreasonable and irrational behaviours (Foucault, 1967).

‘Wild’, noisy play is not encouraged in educational settings and is viewed as ‘unproductive.’ Discourses of ‘play as learning’ (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010) and ‘play as work’ (Cannella, 1997) dominate the setting. Children are thought to learn best through play by interacting with material, other children and adults (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). “Play is viewed as children’s serious real-life work of constructing,
organizing and shaping social orders” (Blaise, 2005, p.37). Play is imagined as productive, not wild and noisy. This observation was one of the few times where an unmarked child made a move to play with a marked child. Michael’s ‘wild’ play when he plays alone can be often tolerated but when an unmarked child starts to play in the same way, this is not tolerated and strongly discouraged. Patrick attempts perhaps to disrupt the ‘norm’ by playing with Michael. But the ‘normal’ is preserved by the teacher as category boundary crossing is restrained and forbidden. Joining the ‘mad’ in play is not permitted, as the ‘mad’ should remain confined and separate. The ‘mad’ must be tolerated but the ‘mad’ cannot endanger the ‘normal’. The ‘normal’ in joining the ‘mad’ might blur or break down the boundary between the two and this could be dangerous for the ‘normal’. If all the unmarked children enacted the ‘wild/mad’ play, what could happen to the classroom?

Tolerance is imposed in order to help regulate the Other and their interactions with the ‘normal’, as presented in the preceding two scenarios. Eddie is encouraged to tolerate Sam as Sam climbs around the playground like a ‘monkey’. He is told that Sam is not ‘naughty’ or bad. Eddie is encouraged to understand Sam differently. If Sam is not ‘bad’ is it possible that he is produced in the classroom as ‘mad’? In the second scenario Patrick is corrected for his play interactions with the ‘unruly’ Michael. Separation of the children is a priority for the teacher. The distance put between the unmarked children and the marked child produces a space. This space produces a separation between the categories and is a contributing constituent of the ‘normal’. Eddie is taught to tolerate the ‘mad’, as they are not ‘bad’, and Patrick is taught that only minimal and controlled interactions with the ‘mad’ are tolerable.

**Chapter review**

Tolerance is often framed as a sign of steady progress toward a more civilised society, cultivated as a way to liberate and empower excluded populations. It is now dominant in both popular and state discourses (Brown, 2006) with toleration now considered as the substantive heart of liberalism (Cohen, 2004).

However, inequalities are suppressed by tolerance discourses (Brown, 2006) and as Phillips (1999) argues, toleration provides “no recipe for better understanding and does little to challenge the prejudice on which tolerance feeds” (p.129). Phillips continues by proposing that those who agree to tolerate, see themselves absolved from any further moves towards better understanding. The hegemonic normative discourses remain at the centre, marginalising those who are not members of this category.
Tolerance, as a discursive practice however, offers little for enhancing ‘inclusive’ practices. In this chapter I have highlighted the discursive power of tolerance in positioning subjects in particular ways that include and exclude. In contrast to the idea that tolerance creates a more ‘liberal’ classroom, I have argued that the enactment of tolerance, as a mechanism of inclusionary and exclusionary practice, operates to regulate and civilise by imposing the ‘normal’ on those who might be considered as different to the ‘normal’. At other times, tolerance confines and separates the ‘not normal’, the ‘mad’, keeping the social order preserved. As Phillips (1999) underscores, toleration makes no obligation about rethinking the basis of the disapproval that warrants the toleration. The marked children, as subjects in need of toleration, are consistently viewed and positioned in the category boundary work as "undesirable and marginal, as luminal subjects or even luminal humans; and those called upon to exercise tolerance are asked to repress or override their hostility or repugnance in the name of civility, peace and progress" (Brown, 2006, p. 28). The discourse of tolerance makes no move to rethink the ‘normal’ or the disapproval of the Other.

In the following and final chapter of my analysis the effects of the production and maintenance of the ‘normal’ will be made visible in the many manifestations of ‘silence’ observed when the unmarked children encountered the marked child in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. Silence as a discursive practice has also featured in sections of this chapter as Eddie was silenced when he said Sam was naughty and Patrick was silenced as he played with Michael. Liam and Spencer became silent in their tolerant resignation of Michael and his actions. Tolerance also contributes to the multiple silences producing a classroom where certain things cannot be talked about or addressed.
Chapter 6

Silence as a discursive practice: the production of ‘taboo’ and ‘the elephant in the room’

In previous chapters, careful consideration has been given to what was ‘seen’, ‘said’ and ‘heard’ and assembled in the classroom. I turn my attention now to the things that were not seen, not said and not heard. The focus of this chapter is to explore the ‘silences’ as they are a critical part of the whole, “the relevant speech act ‘spoken’ beneath the surface” (Mazzei, 2007b, p.xii). ‘Silence’ is considered a discursive practice.

Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies (Foucault, 2008, p.27).

Keeping ‘silent’, being ‘silent’ or not speaking, or perhaps speaking about something in different terms in order to avoid speaking, are examples of what could be cogitated as discursive moves (Mazzei, 2007b). Silences are essential components of my analysis as they contribute to the “meaning between words”, helping me to think about my created data differently (Mazzei, 2007b). These discursive moves work to shape the category boundary of the ‘normal’, while at the same time are also the product of the category maintenance work. What are the effects of ‘silences’? How does ‘silence’ position subjects? In discourse analysis the qualitative researcher looks for meaning but meaning can be masked if one only interrogates the spoken in the data. ‘Silences’ have much to teach the researcher (Mazzei, 2007b).

In examining the ‘silences’, I do not wish to create a binary between speech and ‘silence’, that is between what one says and what one does not say, but instead theorising with Foucault it seems

we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorised, or which form of discretion is required in either case (Foucault, 2008, p.27).
As discourses are taken up they transmit and produce power. ‘Silences’ pervade discourses and become part of the discourse. ‘Silences’ can powerfully exclude and oppress those who do not ‘speak’ from the authorised discourse and in contrast, privilege those who do. I attempt here, to explore how silences contribute to the creation of a separation between the marked and the unmarked, producing a ‘taboo’ around the marked child, that I will argue develops a type of confinement (Laws, 2011) or at least the containment of the marked child, producing the effect of a ‘mobile asylum’ (Harwood, 2010) as was mentioned in Chapter 4. In similar ways, as some of the non-human objects created confinement for the ‘not normal’ in the classroom, I wish to continue theorising with Foucault (2006, 1967) and examine how traces of historical discourses around madness, silence and confinement, along with the recognition of a ‘mobile asylum’, are observable in the many silent practices employed by the actors in the classroom.

To begin this analysis, I wish to contrast the ‘silences’ around the marked child, discussed at the end of the last chapter, with an observation where two unmarked children encounter each other in a sandpit. I hope to draw attention to this interaction, as it juxtaposes the rest of the data in this chapter, where the unmarked children’s encounters with the marked child produce a very different effect.

**Not so silent**

Elliot (a child without a diagnosis) is in the sandpit digging a deep hole and I am sitting nearby.

Elliot: “Come and see how big my hole is.”

Me: “It’s huge!”

Kane (a child without a diagnosis) moves closer to take a look and stands in Elliot’s freshly dug hole.

Elliot: “Get out of it!” (loud and angry)

Kane: “No, I’m not.”

Elliot: (to me) “He’s in my hole……he’s in my hole.”

I do not respond verbally but give Elliot a sad look.

Kane: “I’m not getting out…..it’s everyone’s hole.” (Kane is now stomping in the hole making the sides collapse inward; the big hole is getting smaller)

Elliot: “No, stop doing it........I’m strong!” (standing his ground and looking into Kane’s eyes)

Kane: “I’m strong.” (staring straight back at Elliot)

They start to push each other. Kane uses a spade and pushes it into Elliot’s chest.

Elliot’s twin sister Penny (a child without a diagnosis) moves in on the scene. She gives Kane a big shove in his chest and says: “Don’t do that.”

Kane falls backward onto the sand and out of the hole.

Kane: “I’m going to play somewhere else!” (angry and defeated)

Elliot: “Good!”

Kane runs off and Elliot re-digs his hole.
A teacher who had been sitting at the other end of the sandpit approached me and asked me why I had not intervened. I said that I thought the children could best resolve it themselves. She looked at me with surprise (Field Notes, 18/6/12, S1, pp.166-167).

This scene of a child digging a hole in a sandpit, would be considered a ‘normal’ activity in any preschool day. Sandpits adorn most if not all preschool playgrounds in Australia. Pedagogical, developmental and historical discourses inform early childhood practitioners of the value of ‘sensory experiences’ (Winderlich, 2012) and the potential of sensory learning for development (Froebel, 1974) made available in sandpit play. In addition, the sandpit provides a place for social interactions and social development, as well as a space where fine and gross motor skills can potentially progress (Jarrett, French-Lee, Bulunuz, & Bulunuz, 2010). Sandpit play also encompasses rules about particular ways of playing and being in the sandpit, which turn out to be arguably problematic for children who do not play or ‘be’ in the sandpit in that way. Sandpit play, as a discursively constructed activity, produces a code of conduct that individuals take up to manage the space and each other.

Elliot draws attention to the hole he has dug and enthusiastically asks me to look at it. He positions himself as playing in the sanctioned way. To dig a big hole is considered one of the sanctioned ways to act in the sandpit. His hole digging performance demonstrates his category membership and by drawing adult attention to his achievement reinforces this. However with the arrival of Kane, Elliot now needs to reposition himself to defend his play. Kane disrupts the acceptable way to play by standing in the hole and making movements to cave it in. Elliot responds by asking for my assistance to reconcile the situation. I quietly wait and watch.

Elliot uses the acceptable and endorsed resolution strategy of “use your words” to tell Kane to get out of his hole. “Use your words” is a very familiar phrase, encouraged by adults and children in Western early childhood settings to assist in resolving conflict (Blank & Schneider, 2011). Kane responds with another acceptable strategy saying: “it’s everyone’s hole”. The children are often reminded that preschool equipment and toys ‘belong’ to everyone. This expectation is thought to inspire children to learn to share, as sharing is encouraged. Sharing with others is argued to show a developing theory of mind and growing moral awareness (Arthur, Powell, & Lin, 2014). Sharing with others is an indicator or a milestone in social competency, as it encourages young children to develop friendships (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Everyone is to share everything at preschool.
Both children have drawn on these acceptable and sanctioned discourses in this ‘standoff’. Elliot then comments on his physical strength to which Kane replies the same. The children’s voices increase in volume and emotion, exercising more power with each other. They now take up masculine hegemonic discourses (Davies, 1989; Blaise, 2005) arguably also acceptable in this context, and the ‘standoff’ continues. They become more physical and start to push each other. Elliot’s twin sister Penny moves in to provide a resolution. Penny, by drawing on ‘sisterly’ protective discourses, is looking out for her brother. She is also conceivably drawing on a discourse that produces a particular code of conduct in the sandpit where it is not acceptable to jump into another person’s hole or push someone using a spade.

Elliot at first tried to maintain his category membership by using various strategies to remain recognisable, but as Kane became more aggressive, still drawing on acceptable discourses, Elliot might have appeared to run out of options. Penny reclaimed the hole for Elliot. Kane left the sandpit with the comment “I’m going to play somewhere else”. His way of playing in the sand was not tolerated and Penny and Elliot let him know this. What is interesting here was that Kane’s behaviour was not ignored, it was confronted, spoken about loudly, and dealt with. He left the sandpit. He had been disciplined, put back into place to uphold the social order and a distinct code of conduct. Kane challenged the social order but the children themselves eventually maintained it. Adult discipline was not necessary as the ‘normal’ with the support of Elliot and Penny did its disciplinary work on Kane.

Using reflexivity……..

I recall at the time thinking about the many conflicts between children I had witnessed in classrooms and the way the children positioned teachers as mediators. Elliot wanted me to be a mediator but I declined this invitation. I think at the time I was struggling to position myself as a non-teacher. At an earlier group time session I had observed as Anne (the teacher) instructed the children in how to resolve conflicts between peers. “You need to say, I don’t like it, not one, not two but three times, you need to ask them to stop doing it and if they’re not listening to you then you go and tell the teacher and ask them to help you” (Field Notes, 15/6/12, S1, p.161). Using your words first and then enlisting the help of an adult was accepted protocol. My lack of response to Elliot’s request for help was partly due to my resistance to this protocol and also due to the way I was positioning myself with the children.
As the scene unfolded, the children came to a resolution. I avoided involving myself as I chose to position myself as unable to exercise the power of a teacher to tell others what to do. As a researcher I had decided not to step in and solve the children’s problems but instead observe their negotiations. I was positioned afterward by another teacher as somewhat neglectful in my adult/teaching duties. According to Wohlwend (2007), “in conflicts among young children ... teachers are expected to act as neutral guides who provide emotional support to all children on both sides of a conflict and encourage compromise between cooperative peers” (p. 79). I felt as though I had been positioned as an inadequate teacher in this process as I provided no guidance or support for the children in the conflict as I saw them as quite capable of compromise without it. The teacher had tried to regulate my actions. Nevertheless I did feel somewhat triumphant that I had resisted the protocol and troubled, if only for a moment, the acceptable discourses.

I use this scenario to show how the unmarked children position themselves and ‘act’ in the sandpit with another unmarked child. This scenario, where members of the ‘normal’ category interact and discipline each other, fashions a lucid contrast to the unmarked child’s interactions with the marked child in the sandpit.

Silence ‘does’ things

Silence – avoids

On this morning there is a lot of activity in the sandpit. There are about ten children digging and building. As I start to observe I notice that Michael (a child with a diagnosis) is on the edge of the sandpit with a teacher nearby. Anna, Michaela and Lucy (children without a diagnosis) are sitting in the middle of the sandpit in a circle formation digging a deep hole. Michael, who has been digging on his own about a metre away, stands and moves towards them and starts to stomp on the hole they have been digging. Nothing is said. The girls look at him with their eyes wide and open mouthed. They wait. After about a minute Anna stands and moves, “Hey let’s make a castle over here ……….(pause) over here.” Anna beckons the others to follow as Michael has now destroyed the hole they have dug (Field Notes 18/5/12, S1, p.50).

In the early childhood classroom, authoritative regulatory discourses regarding the right way to play and how to play are ubiquitous, as I discussed in Chapter 3. Normative discourses of social competency and social development contribute to the developmental/ psychological focus. Anna, Lucy and Michaela seem to understand sandpit ‘etiquette’ and have taken up the position of the ‘normal’ sandpit player as Elliot
had done. In performing this position one must know how to act in the sandpit and cooperate with the other children, among other things. A ‘normal’ sandpit player knows that destroying other children’s constructions is not the ‘right’ way to act.

Nevertheless when Michael destroys the hole the children have been digging, they do not outwardly protest, they say nothing. It is the unsaid that makes the discourse visible. Their silence speaks. It articulates and makes public their position in the discourse and their positioning of Michael. Ferfolja (2008) acknowledges that normative discourses on some levels impose ‘silences’ which consequently marginalise those who are positioned outside the ‘norm’. The children, without a word, look at Michael, ‘silent’, eyes wide, mouths open, and referring to each other, they wait momentarily and then move away together. They look in his direction only fleetingly, but do not engage with him. There is a sense of anxiety about Michael’s actions as they are viewed as irrational and outside the boundary of the ‘normal’. To maintain themselves as members of the ‘normal’ they move away from him. Their category boundary work has maintained their category intact, while also reinforcing Michael’s positioning as marked.

This sandpit scene completely contrasts with the previous scene with Elliot and Kane, where the issue of the sandpit hole was overtly, loudly and physically resolved. Elliot strongly challenged Kane and regained his hole in the sand with the assistance of his sister Penny. When Michael takes over the hole the unmarked children respond very differently, ‘silently’ leaving him to it. How did they come to this decision?

The unmarked children here do not say anything to Michael, the abject (Butler, 1993), as they silently move on. Foucault argues, that “people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p.187). The children in their silence and actions ‘do’ something; their actions exclude Michael subjecting him as ‘not normal’, irrational, unreasonable and not the same as them. From their vantage point, they do not acknowledge his way of being and acting. The children’s embodied response and resistance to Michael is made visible as they move away, with scandalous looks on their faces. Borrowing from Foucault (2006, 1967), I argue that the children’s actions reveal historical traces of fear and anxiety, created around the ‘mad’ and discursively re/produced in past centuries (Foucault, 1967). The marked child, as a discursively produced subject, is not spoken of, not spoken to or about, but nevertheless present.

The silence produced by the group of sandpit players generates a shared ‘taboo’ (Douglas, 1966). Everyone in the sandpit space is very aware of the presence of
Michael, but they are compelled by the discursive context to remain silent about it. There is a sense that the marked child is ‘obvious’ to all but nonetheless ‘silently’ avoided. The ‘obviousness’ (Althusser, 1984) of the subject of the marked child is shared and understood by the members of the ‘normal’ category in order to maintain their membership and the overall social stability. Correct membership, involves being able to position oneself as a member of the group, who knows and takes for granted what others might know (Davies, 1993, p.18). The unmarked children, in their relations with the marked child, declare the ‘obviousness’ of their category membership as they move away together, while at the same time the ‘obviousness’ of Michael’s position is a potential disruption to the social order (Davies, 1993). They share the silence and the ‘taboo’. How can we understand this ‘taboo’? How is the ‘taboo’ created around the discursive subject of the marked child?

Douglas (1966) asserts that in any social system there is a fear of the marginal, and the precautions against the dangerousness of the marginal, must come from the ‘normal’, as the marginal “cannot help his abnormal situation” (p.97). Douglas writes that if a person has no place in the social system, they become regarded as a marginal being and she suggests that all ‘cultures’ have ways of dealing with anomalies. One way of dealing with difference is to ‘avoid’ the anomalous, which she asserts “affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform” (Douglas, 1966, p.39). Avoiding the discursively produced marked child affirms the ‘normal’ membership of the unmarked children. Another way of dealing with anomalies, and the events that occur around them, Douglas (1966) continues, is to label them dangerous. Douglas (1966) concedes that individuals sometimes feel anxious when they are confronted with anomaly, and that attributing danger to the anomaly, is one way of putting it above dispute, again helping to enforce conformity (p.40). These cultural provisions for dealing with difference, I would argue, have the effect of producing exclusionary practices in the classroom which is made visible here in the creation of a shared ‘taboo’.

Thinking differently, Michael may conceivably have an alternative perspective on sandpit play, but in the circulating discourses, his way does not fit the created and expected ‘norm’. Sandpit play is produced in a prescribed normative way but Michael’s way is not ‘normative’. The discourses around sandpit play provide limited ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’. and this produces constraints on the ways the children can ‘be’ and what they can ‘do’. and how they position each other and themselves. These discursive
constructions of the knowable and rational sandpit subject, ‘disciplines’ the unmarked children and marginalises the marked.

The unmarked children regulate each other and maintain membership in the category of the ‘normal’. Via the norm, they have the power to discipline each other. This knowledge, according to Foucault (1982), is entangled in social relations producing power that can be applied in regulating how subjects conduct themselves and the conduct of others. “The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others” (Foucault, 1982, p.788).

In the sandpit, the unmarked children’s actions in their ‘silence’, exercises their power in producing the ‘normal’ among themselves, one beckoning the others to move away, creating a way of behaving that is possible in this place. This “exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of ‘conduct’” (Foucault 1982, p.789) of both the unmarked children and the marked children. The norm, in providing a code of conduct, produces identities and regulates individuals, as it shapes how problems and behaviours are to be understood, and ascribes appropriate ways of dealing with and governing conduct (Millei, 2011).

**Silence – ignores**

Ben (a child without a diagnosis) and Charlie (a child without a diagnosis) were busily building and discussing the constructions they are making at a table in the playground. I had been sitting down at the table with them asking some questions about the photos I had on my computer and taping the conversation. The taping had finished when Ethan (a child with a diagnosis) approached the table and sat on a chair that was not at the table but a small distance away but he could still reach the construction toys. As Ethan sat down, the other two boys did not appear to notice him. He did not attempt to touch the construction sticks but sat on the chair and stared into space. Ben and Charlie continued to take more pieces of construction out of the basket and talked about what they would build next. Ethan began to make noises, not words just sounds in a variety of pitches. Charlie looked up from his construction staring with wide eyes at Ethan for several seconds and then looked down again at his construction. Ben did the same but for a shorter period of time. Ethan continued making the noises which got louder and louder. Charlie again looked up but this time with wide eyes and his face wrinkled showing some animosity. Ethan asked, “What’s that......a person on the table?” (There was a wooden doll from the doll’s house on the table). Charlie and Ben did not speak to Ethan. They ignored him and continued their game for a few more minutes. They then got up and moved away. I sat with Ethan and talked about the other wooden figurines. (Field Notes, 21/8/12, S2, p.149).
As I asserted in Chapter 3, certain noises are sanctioned in the classroom. Moreover, sounds are differentiated in the classroom according to their educational value (Millei, 2005). Noises that are not ‘recognisable’ as speech are generally not encouraged. Decipherable speech has legitimised authority with indecipherable speech labelled as deficient. The development of speech and language is regarded as progress and is discursively produced as a universal truth for all human beings (Cannella, 1997). On the contrary the ‘noises’ made by the marked children are unrecognisable and not regarded as speech. They produce an uncomfortable ‘silence’ in the unmarked children and the teachers. As Charlie, and then Ben, stared wide eyed at Ethan, they try to ignore his presence and words, and they show a level of discomfort or disapproval of him at the table, by moving away and separating themselves. This uncomfortable coming together is interrupted.

Ben and Charlie do not speak to Ethan as he joins them at the table. Even when Ethan asks them a more audible, decipherable and ‘rational’ question, they do not respond. Non-speech noises position children in a certain way within the normative discourses, as much younger: “he can’t talk”, “he’s a baby” (Field Notes, 21/5/12, S1, p. 55). The unmarked children know that Ethan is not a baby. They also know that he often talks to himself and does not always use words in a way they can understand or communicate with. Ethan’s unpredictable behaviours perhaps make it awkward to engage with him in this normative environment. They do not and possibly cannot ask him to ‘be quiet’, they need to ignore or at least show they are tolerant by ignoring his sounds. They ignore him together to show they are different and in this way they demonstrate their category membership.

Ethan’s noises could have been his way of saying “Hi I’m here!” His way is not recognised as the ‘right’ way of being or the ‘right’ way to join others at a table. Having speech and/or language delays, in this discursive context, is considered concerning and in need of remediation, as ‘experts’ contend that if it is left untreated difficulties in learning and socialisation will result (Wankoff, 2011). A connection between communication impairments and psychiatric disorders is reported as a finding in medical research, and speech and language deficits contribute to the criteria for the diagnosis of many developmental disabilities (Wankoff, 2011). Psychological and psychiatric discourses often attribute non-speech noises to a ‘lack of reasoning’, irrationality, and a potentiality of a threat (Foucault, 2006). Ethan’s noises are attributed to his diagnosis and his difference. How does this type of ‘truth’, created as expert
knowledge, position children? The category boundary work around the ‘normal’ positions those who make ‘noises’, that are not speech or part of a recognisable game or behaviour, as outside the category, perhaps delayed, a developmental error. In order to maintain the category, recognising and responding to the noises of the marked child is avoided, a shared silence is the solution and moving away is a preferred tactic.

Butler (1997b) posits that, in the process of becoming a subject the starting point is the ‘bad’ or unformed subject and each person has to continually work on realising themselves as the ‘not bad’ in order to become recognisable as an “acceptably formed subject” (Laws & Davies, 2000, p.209), the ‘normal’. The unmarked children engage in this continuous work to stay recognisable as the ‘not bad’, and ignore and avoid the Other as part of this work. Ben and Charlie are working at making themselves the “acceptably formed subject” (p.209). Ethan, on the other hand, is positioned as the unformed subject, as he does not conform.

Ethan is the discursively created ‘unreasonable’ being who makes unrecognisable noises, a potentially threatening subject, better ignored or avoided by the ‘normal’. Foucault (2008) recognises that discourses are made up of things unsaid that may be in some way forbidden (Ward & Winstanley, 2003). It seems as if a ‘taboo’ is created in the classroom around interacting with those who give unrecognisable sounds. However, this discourse becomes dangerous since, as St. Pierre (2000, p.485) explains, “once a discourse becomes ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ it becomes difficult to think and act outside it”.

**Silence – moving away**

As the children in the group finish their morning tea on the verandah they move out into the playground. Sam (a child with a diagnosis) is already in the yard accompanied by a teacher. (He has been making a lot of noise trying to get out of the classroom and into the yard beforehand.) Sam is looking at and touching some hanging orange balls that are attached to a wooden frame and have been set up as an activity in the yard. He is moving them around hitting them with his hand and attempting to catch them. Two children (without a diagnosis) from the group on the verandah move enthusiastically toward the hanging balls activity to play however one of the children pulls the other child away from the area shaking her head and pointing at Sam. They quickly move to another part of the yard (Field Notes, 30/4/12, S1, p.8).

As the unmarked children move into the playground at ‘outdoor time’, Sam is already in the yard. The unmarked children do not talk about Sam being in the yard before the
'correct' time. The teacher has released him as he was making loud 'noises' banging on the locked door trying to get outside. Sam's noise creates a level of anxiety in the classroom. By allowing him to move out before the rest of the group, the teachers avoid the potential risk of a 'scandal' (Gordon, 2013) posed by Sam's 'out of control' and unreasonable actions to the 'normal' group (Foucault, 2006). As seen before in my analysis, the ‘noises’ of the marked child create an uneasiness in the classroom. Anxiety and awkwardness, around the marked subject Sam, contribute to the need to liberate him and therefore silence the noise. Sam’s ‘noises’ disrupt the established orderliness as they pollute the stable classroom and generate a level of disorder (Douglas, 1966). Stopping the ‘noise’ is necessary to return order. The unmarked children understand and share the need for the silencing, as they position themselves as recognisable members of the ‘normal’. The marked child’s separation from the unmarked children is again sanctioned in these actions.

Medical, psychological and psychiatric discourses subject Sam as ‘unable’ to follow the ‘normal’ rational routines of the classroom and so he is permitted to separate from the other children. As Schegloff (2007) contends “failure to measure up to an identity category does not generally lead to an expansion of the scope of the category; rather it leads to pathologising” (p.469). His diagnosis declares that he has impaired communication skills and behavioural problems. Sam is provided his own space to move in, his own rules and his own time. He is made separate to facilitate his remediation, which perhaps reflects the teachers' understanding of his discursively produced diagnosis. He is also made separate to avoid the potential threat or scandal. Moreover, the children's collective avoidance of Sam, and their shared understanding of this, again reveals the ‘taboo’ that is produced around the marked child. This pathologising produces the deviant and the dangerous subject, labelling the difference and enforcing the conforming and 'normal' category (Douglas, 1966).

In the above scenario two unmarked children approach the new activity and appear eager to have a turn. They stop in their tracks when they notice that Sam is already playing with the hanging balls. They don’t speak to each other, but through bodily movements and gesturing, move on and do not have a turn. There is a shared ‘obviousness’ about Sam, his difference and his anomalous status. Interacting with Sam, and talking to or about Sam with words, is ‘taboo’. As one child pulls the other away in silence, they embody this shared understanding.
In another reading, the unmarked children could be seen to be taking up special education discourses that inform them that as Sam needs teacher remediation at all times and staying out of his way is the ‘right’ and ‘normal’ way to act around him. The act of moving away could alternatively be read as the children drawing on moral or tolerance discourses as discussed in Chapter 5, as they give Sam his own space to be with the teacher politely not interfering. In taking up these discourses, they powerfully legitimise themselves as a member of the ‘normal’ and custodians of the moral order. Members of the category seek to defend the status of the ‘normal’ through maintaining the moral order but “membership categorisation is a ‘moral order’ fraught with consequences for the participants” (MacLure et al., 2012, p.452) and making decisions about the right and wrong way to ‘be’ and also how to ‘be’ with others has consequences for the subjectivities of the children in the classroom.

Alternatively, the children’s actions could be read as a taking up of the regulatory discourses that circulate and encourage a ‘civilised’ (Leavitt & Power, 1997) way to ‘be’. The unmarked children stay away from Sam because they don’t want to be recognised as being like him, as his actions, inside and outside of the classroom could be considered ‘uncivilised’. As Davies (2006a) suggests, “category maintenance work is actively going on as part of the hard work that individual subjects engage in to separate themselves out into the binary category to which they have been assigned” (p.73). The category maintenance work upholds their recognisability, but also keeps them ‘separate’ from the discursive ‘deviant’ and keeps the ‘deviant’ separate from them. Reason and unreason are kept apart by discursive practices.

In Foucault’s original thesis, *The History of Madness* (2006), he traces the silencing of unreason, along with the limitations placed on unreason, by reason. Unreasonable beings were thrown into ‘oblivion’ at the end of the eighteenth century in a battle with the dominance of reason (Carrette, 2000). The exclusion of those who do not ‘fit in’ is a distinctive focus of Foucault’s work. Those without reason were produced as disruptive subjects, incapable of work, unmanageable and undisciplined. They became the “objects equally of fear, revulsion and human sympathy” (Gordon, 2013, p.93). The power and knowledge exercised by medical science and other psy-sciences (Rose, 1999) initiated the call to separate, segregate and intern unreason. Foucault’s (2006) work examines how past societies experienced and defined the limits of unreason and how these limits were produced, based on a fear. It seems that the discourses in the classroom produce the marked child as unreasonable and irrational. The practice of silence employed to manage unreason is historically traced in Foucault’s work where
silence works to both protect the ‘normal’ but equally to allay any created fear or anxiety.

**Silence – moving past**

As I walked toward the preschool car park one morning I could see a woman getting out of her car with an infant on one hip and holding the hand of a crying preschool aged child. I recognised this child as I got closer as Hugo (a child with a diagnosis). He was crying loudly and resisting his mother’s attempt to take him through the preschool gate. His mother persisted and dragged him into the preschool building with difficulty. As I followed them and moved into the foyer of the building I saw Hugo just inside the door lying sprawled out with a sheet covering him. He was now alone.

Another parent and child pair had followed me into the foyer and they stared down at Hugo as they moved around his body in the restricted space. As I stood in the foyer a teacher approached Hugo and tried to coax him further into the building but this was unsuccessful. As I moved down the hallway I could hear the mother discussing with the teacher her resolve to leave him at the preschool as she was sure that he should not “get what he wants if he chucks a tantrum”. I did not hear what the teacher’s response was.

The mother then returned to the foyer and picked up Hugo by the arms saying, “You can’t stay here someone might trip on you and sue me.”

The mother took Hugo to the classroom and left him on the floor but he immediately stood up and returned to the foyer crying loudly.

Many parents, carers and children were arriving through the front door during this encounter. The adults stopped briefly, looked and frowned, all the time holding the hand of their child. The children moved through the area, they glanced briefly at Hugo and then moved on (Field Notes, 23/10/12; S3, p. 15).

Hugo was upset at the beginning of the preschool day, as children often are, and his actions make this position quite clear. As the unmarked children entered the centre they moved quickly and silently passed him to reinforce their unmarked ‘normal’ category membership. They positioned themselves as being independent and not crying or showing their emotions at the beginning of the preschool day. They seemed to disregard Hugo’s loud wild crying. The teachers also appeared to take this position of ignoring Hugo. He was positioned as a child with a diagnosis and his actions reinforced the characteristics of this diagnosis. This diagnosis, his diagnosis created him within a deficit discourse (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009; Purdue, Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Madden, & Surtees, 2009) and a member of a homogenous group of other subjects similarly diagnosed. His diagnosis described ‘who he was’, a unitary (Davies, 1989) and an irrational (Rose, 1999) being. Special education discourses provide strategies to remediate deficits and leaving Hugo in the foyer and waiting for him to calm down might be one of those strategies. Hugo, as a pathological subject, is an individual of ‘concern’, who is in need of careful scrutiny. One reading of this scene via
special education discourses would consider that Hugo needs extra support, patience and tolerance for his morning transition to preschool. From this perspective over time Hugo might be remediated and become more like the ‘normal’.

Alternatively, by turning the gaze towards the ‘normal’, a different reading of this scenario could interrogate the actions of the unmarked children and teachers and the ‘silent’ way they move around Hugo’s body sprawled across the foyer floor, noisy and unavoidable. If one’s body does not seem to fit the ‘normal’, one is still produced in relation to the ‘normal’ (Cadwallader, 2007). Hugo’s body collapsed in the foyer does not ‘fit’ the ‘normal’. The discursive ‘normal’ offers only limited possibilities for the body and the way it can ‘be’ or ‘act’. In their shared silence, the unmarked children position Hugo as Other, the abject. They see and hear him because his presence is ‘obvious’, but they do not see or hear him, as recognition of him is ‘taboo’ since his behaviour at this time is ‘scandalous’. Hugo as a discursive subject is ‘the elephant in the room’. Very present but avoided by everyone. Evading Hugo’s discursively produced being affirms and strengthens the definition to which his does not conform (Douglas, 1966).

Hugo, in locating himself in the foyer and loudly expressing his ‘unbridled’ emotions, makes his position very visible to everyone as they arrive. This public space performance may have worked for him before. His actions were not attributed to his dislike of preschool but were read as a characteristic of his diagnosis. His mother also positioned him in this way, drawing on the contextual discourses, as she entered the space seeking the assistance of the ‘experts’ to transition him into the classroom. She positioned herself as the mother of the Other, somewhat ‘helpless/powerless’, while positioning the teachers as the ones with the power to advise and help, and relieve her of the embarrassment of her son’s actions. She conceivably wants to drop her son off in the same way that other mothers do, the ‘normal’ way. Hugo’s mother joins in with the teachers, drawing upon the circulating discourses, that inform her of the need to ‘correct and coerce’ (Foucault, 1977) and remediate Hugo.

Her positioning as the marked child’s mother might attract sympathy, as being the mother of a diagnosed child is often created as tragic. Discourses often position the parents of a diagnosed child as different to other parents. They are created as having special needs that require that they learn special skills to ‘help’ them with their child and the difficulties they present (Grace et al., 2008). Burman (2008) notes that as developmental discourses pathologise difference, they render parents subject to blame and scrutiny (p.50). Hugo’s mother could just as easily be regarded as a ‘bad’ mother who cannot control her child, but because of Hugo’s marked status his pathology
affords her sympathy. Stereotypes frequently depict ‘disorderly’ children and their families as problematic and include value judgements about their caregiving abilities (Harwood, 2006).

Overall, there is a feeling of angst, awkwardness and anxiety, in the foyer on this morning. No one seems to know what to do. When Hugo’s mother picks him up and moves him into the classroom, he goes back to the foyer so that his ‘protest’ powerfully remains on show. Hugo seems to understand the powerful effects of using this public space at this public time. As Laws and Davies (2000) contend, power acts on the subject, making the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formation. Additionally, power also acts as what is taken up by the subject and retold in the subject’s own acting (Laws & Davies, 2000, p.207). The angst of the teacher and Hugo’s mother could be explained by Hugo’s power in lying in the foyer. They become positioned as unable to act, powerless, as Hugo’s actions cannot be managed in a rational way, as he is subjected as irrational. Hugo’s subjection is made possible in this context by the power of psychological discourses, and by his own acting. Hugo’s irrational behaviour is ‘loud and large’ in the foyer. Silence becomes the best way to contain this subject, as unreason must be curtailed and silenced (Foucault, 2006).

Hugo’s mother’s comment, that he is having a tantrum, is possibly an attempt to draw on ‘normal’ discourses about young children’s behaviour. How would an unmarked child acting in a similar manner in the foyer be positioned? Would they be regarded as naughty and ‘bad’ and be disciplined? Would the adults have a rational discussion with the child? Hugo's diagnosis subjects him as ‘not normal’ and his tantrum is considered pathological rather than normative. As pathological behaviour, the tantrum is no longer normative but an act of the unreasonable.

Using reflexivity……

I wondered whether this was a common scene. I felt uncomfortable and awkward for Hugo and for myself as I stood around watching, taking down a mental note (as a good researcher should) and then jottings in my notepad. This was potential data wasn’t it? As the children moved past Hugo I moved past him too, but I went back to have another look, like a member of the ‘paparazzi’ trying to gain the best vantage point. As a researcher of ‘inclusive’ practices this was the kind of data I wanted and needed to collect. How would the classroom manage this disruption to the order? I wanted to see how the children would react but I was also surprised by my own reaction. I stood around nearby and waited to see what would happen, but I felt uneasy as though I
didn’t want to be caught watching. Thinking about this more and turning back on myself (Pillow, 2003) I wanted to be positioned as the ‘normal’ too. I wanted to be seen as ignoring Hugo too. I did not want to be the one who disrupted the scene by getting in the way or looking for too long or giving Hugo too much attention. I now think that the position I took at the time and my actions show the gravity of the ‘normal’ at that moment as it contained and constrained us all.

The performance of ‘silence’ speaks and requires our attentiveness (Mazzei, 2007a) as it is shaped by and shapes subject formation and discursive practice. Derrida (1992) affirms that silence is a strategic response and, “polite silence can become the most insolent weapon” (p.18). The children do not say anything to him or say anything about his actions as that is ‘taboo’. In this scene nothing was ‘said’ by the children as they made their strategic move (Mazzei, 2007b, p.28) around Hugo in the foyer, moreover, it was the ‘unsaid’, that was shaping their subjectivities and Hugo’s.

Foucault (2006) explains that historical discourses constructed unreason or ‘madness’ in such a way that it necessitated the ‘normal’ to silence it, to separate it and contain it. The ‘asylum’ was created to perform these functions. The silence, separation and containment observed in the classroom, do not compose ‘physical’ containment by walls, doors and locks as the ‘mad’ was contained historically. Nevertheless, it is a performance enacted in the classroom to protect the ‘normal’, to maintain the social order and to remediate the ‘mad’. The discursive practice of silence, as an exercise of power, maintains and protects the ‘normal’ from ‘madness’.

**Silence – keeping quiet**

Teacher Odette has been struggling with Sam (a child with a diagnosis) for about 15 minutes trying to keep him away from the door. She looks to Anne, another teacher, and says, “Just debating whether I should let him go?” As she speaks the director Sue arrives on the scene, leaving her office possibly because of the noise Sam is making, crying and banging on the door. Sue picks Sam up off the floor near the door and takes him back inside the room. He kicks and screams even more loudly. A group of children are sitting on the verandah nearby eating their morning tea but only two of the group turn to look briefly at Sam and the director Sue. The rest of the children just continue not seeming to notice the disruption (Field Notes, 28/5/12, S1, p. 79).

How did the children not respond to Sam’s loud crying and screaming or did they? Their response was to ‘silently’ ignore and maintain correct conduct. By not noticing or talking about the unreasonable marked child ‘the elephant in the room’ again emerges.
Silence creates and preserves the ‘taboo’ of not addressing unreason, keeping reason safe and separated.

Psychological and psychiatric discourses, that disseminate the concept of the developing rational being (Rose, 1999), are ever present in the classroom. The rational being was produced in the ‘age of reason’ (Foucault, 1967) and contrasts the irrational, the ‘mad’ as not fully human (Hekman, 1990). Reason privileges particular knowledges and ways of being, marginalising and violating others. The concept of reason is created as an objective ‘truth’ or a foundation of ‘true’ knowledge (St. Pierre, 2000, p.488). Foucault (1984) interrogates the substance of rationality in his examination of historical discourses and reminds us that the history of reason:

> was born in an altogether ‘reasonable’ fashion – from chance; devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of competition – the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason (Foucault, 1984, p. 78).

Rationality was produced through passion, not objectivity, but is presented as an ‘objective reality’. Rationality, and its expected development in each individual, contributes powerfully to the ‘normal’ in the early childhood classroom. Nevertheless, it limits possibilities and marginalises those who do not perform within its restricted boundaries. Moreover, it creates the Other as a subject to be feared, a subject created in and through historical discourses, a contagious and ‘tainted’ subject. Foucault (1967) argues that the medical knowledge, the “homo medicus” and its associated knowledges came about “as a guardian to protect others from the vague danger that exuded through the walls of confinement” (p.195). The discourses that prevail in the classroom are taken up to contain what might be contagious and mitigate any anxiety about this contagion.

**Silence – shows disapproval**

Michael (a child with a diagnosis) is inside a large, hard plastic, blue ball. It has large holes in the sides of it and has been set up with a balance beam going through it as a climbing activity out in the yard. The children walk along the beam and then climb over the large, blue ball shape to continue on the other side. Michael is sitting inside the ball and he is kicking the sides with his feet and hitting the hard plastic with a wooden spoon from the sandpit. The children are staring at him looking unhappy and alarmed about this.
Anna: (a child without a diagnosis) “Stop it Michael!” she says loudly as she crosses over the beam.
Michael starts to squeal making wooing noises. He looks to be having a good time but is not listening to Anna.
Rachel (a child without a diagnosis) is standing on the balance beam waiting her turn to cross over on the beam following Anna but she hesitates. She looks worried about moving any further, closer to Michael. She stares at Michael eyes wide with her mouth open. She wants to climb over the blue ball but stops to watch Michael. More of the children started to tell Michael to stop.
A staff member moves towards the scene reminding the group of the rules about the equipment. The rule is that only one child at a time can be on the beam at one time. Rachel’s hesitation has meant that several children are waiting their turn on the beam breaking this rule. Nothing is said to Michael by the group of children or teacher.
With the arrival of the staff member all the children move away leaving Michael to it (Field Notes, 4/5/12, S1, pp. 20-21).

Michael’s presence in the blue plastic ball in the middle of the climbing game is not welcome. The game on this equipment has particular rules or expectations about how it ‘should’ be played. Play is organised, classified and divided into tasks (Foucault, 1977) in early childhood classrooms. This leads to its normalisation and activities are regulated and monitored (Foucault, 1977). Activities prepared by teachers produce certain actions, ways of playing, stimulate development or learning outcomes. The children take up the normative discourses of play and its associated regulation. Michael however does not follow this same understanding of the game. He plays in the blue ball, squealing and calling out, enjoying himself as he laughs and repeats his actions over and over. Michael actions are ‘out of the ordinary’ and the children recognise this.

When Anna however repositions herself and attempts to discipline Michael saying loudly “Stop it Michael”, she draws attention to Michael's actions, possibly trying to engage others to help discipline him. Anna's attempt at disciplining Michael made his actions more 'obvious' to everyone. Most often the unmarked children do not discipline the marked child so this interaction was more unusual. Michael's response to this disciplining was to add some extra volume and ‘wooing’ to the noise mix. Anna’s attempt to ‘normalise’ or remediate Michael’s actions did not seem to work. When Rachel moved onto the beam but stopped short of crossing over the top of Michael, she stood silently. She said nothing, she just looked at him, with trepidation, in silence. She did not speak, but waited, possibly wanting some intervention from someone. The silence did its work here to position the children. Michael, inside the blue plastic ball positioned as the irrational, and the ‘normal’ positioned as the rational, following the
rules of the game. Rachel takes up silence as a discursive practice to possibly show her disapproval of Michael's actions, but in her silence she also expresses a level of fear and anxiety. She does not act as Anna had done in her attempt to discipline Michael. She instead imposes a silence, the effect of which creates Michael as the unreasonable being. Furthermore, her silence maintains her membership of the 'normal'.

As more and more children line up, they are unable to cross the beam and some of them try to 'rein' Michael in with their words, but with no success. Again the 'use their words' (Blank & Schneider, 2011) strategy for resolving the situation does not seem to work. They try to regulate and remediate Michael and move him out of the blue ball to play in the 'correct way'. The 'noise' they create in trying to stop Michael along with the 'noise' being made by Michael catches the teacher's attention. The teacher defers to the rules and regulations of the game and the number of children on the beam at one time. The teacher avoids an encounter with Michael, keeping silent about his actions. The unmarked children having 'broken' the rules of the game move away in silence.

'Silence' strongly positions Michael as the teacher ignores his presence as she moves into the area. Unreasonableness, is managed by not addressing it, by not disciplining it, for fear of 'setting him off'. Setting Michael off cannot be tolerated as discussed in Chapter 5. The teacher's actions or lack of actions here strongly reinforces the 'taboo'. The teacher maintains and promotes the 'taboo' as this seems to be the best way to work around the marked child. As they share the 'taboo', the unmarked children move away, leaving the equipment to play elsewhere in the yard. They are re-positioned as rule breakers by the teacher and each other, a position they did not wish to occupy, and left the scene quickly. Michael was left inside the blue plastic ball alone playing the game differently and unacceptably. Reason and unreason are separated again, as Michael's way of being is excluded as it does not 'fit', and he is left isolated in his own space.

Silence is nuanced. Silence has many moves and manifestations and as a discursive practice silence has many functions. It works to avoid the marked child, separating them from the unmarked children who share this discursive practice. Silence quietens disruption and shows disapproval. The enactments of silence produce and re-produce the 'normal' and maintain it. The 'taboo', around the marked child, contributes to this silent engagement and also reinforces the 'normal'. 'Taboo', as a shared understanding, requires no discussion but works to contain any danger. How can this
‘taboo’ be explained? Whatever we imagine the ‘taboo’ to be and whatever form it could take it seems that there is something in the ‘inclusive’ classroom that cannot be spoken of and cannot be addressed. Is it the diagnosed child? Is it disability itself? What is ‘the elephant in the room’ that cannot be attended to?

In the classroom silence as a discursive practice, an absence of words, works towards the category maintenance of the ‘normal’ and powerfully shapes a divide, shoring up the boundary between the marked child and the unmarked children. However sometimes in the data ‘silence’ takes a different form. The ‘silence’ is not an absence of words, but a limitation on words, as only certain things can be said and only certain discourses can be drawn on. The normative discourses act to silence certain ways of speaking and ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ while producing sanctioned ways of describing the actions of the Other.

**Silence produces other ways to speak**

*Talk about something else*

This conversation occurred after a group of children (without a diagnosis) witnessed Jasmine (a child with a diagnosis) resisting a teacher’s request to complete an activity.

Me: “What has happened to Jasmine?”
Chelsea: “Who?”
Me: “Jasmine over there?”
Jackson: “She’s having a heart attack.”
Me: “Does that happen often?”
All: “Yeah, yeah, yeah.”
Me: “Does that happen to you?”
Both children: “Nope.”
Jackson: “We don’t have a heart attack.”
Tyler: “Someone on the TV I saw had a heart attack.”
Me: “Tell me more.”
Tyler: “……Well ummm a doctor was trying to fix someone and then he’s gone out …so… he goes outside and then he just had a heart attack.”
Me: “How did you know he was having a heart attack?”
Tyler: “Cause he just fell over.”
Me: “Why does Jasmine do that?”
Tyler: “Cause she always sits down when she tells ummm….when the teachers tell her to do something, like painting and …er…drawing.”
Me: “Why does she have to do that?”
Chelsea: “Cause she has to do what the teacher tells her to do.”
Me: “Do they tell you to do it?”
Chelsea: “No but we do it.”
Me: “Why do you do it?”
Chelsea: “Cause we know we will get in trouble.”
Me: “And she doesn’t know that?”
Tyler: “No cause she’s little.”
Chelsea: “And she’s just learning.”
Tyler: “She’s just learning… she’s five …. she is a big girl.”
Chelsea: “She doesn’t know a lot of things cause she’s talking really young and she’s talking funny.”
Tyler: “Yeah… she’s talkin funny yeah…..but she can say hello good like bye, bye.” (Field Notes, 20/11/12, S3, pp.93-94).

Jackson is quick to explain Jasmine’s actions of lying on the floor, screaming and struggling with the teacher as a ‘heart attack’. He has seen it before perhaps and does not appear concerned about it, as he returns quickly to the conversation with his friends. Jasmine has obviously recovered from her ‘heart attacks’ in the past. He draws upon available discourses and sanctioned ways of being to understand Jasmine’s actions. He does not have heart attacks, he is ‘normal’. Tyler draws on medical discourses and knowledge gained from television viewing. Drawing on these authoritative discourses from outside the classroom, both children positions themselves as somewhat imperious. They are confident in the way they deliver this information, as the normative discourses privilege the mature and conversant as ‘being’ more adult like. The ‘normal’ maintains limits around speakability, what can be said, who can/cannot say it and what cannot be said.

The unmarked children talk about Jasmine as if she is quite different to them, and taking up regulatory discourses, explain how she does not want to do what the teacher wants. They do what the teacher wants to avoid getting into trouble. Doing what the teacher wants is viewed as important. They position themselves as knowing the rules and conforming to them, avoiding punishment and securing their membership in the category of the ‘normal’. In a setting where the adult/child binary dominates, being positioned as a knowing, more adult-like being, is privileged with power. They position Jasmine as not knowing how to act, explaining that she is only “little” and “just learning”. Tyler comments that Jasmine is little, but then corrects himself, saying she is just learning, “she’s five….she is a big girl.” Tyler knows that being five is supposed to position a person as big. He seems to be struggling with himself on how to position her in this discourse, as her age and actions do not fit together in the normative discourses that he is drawing on.

The ‘silence’ takes a different form in this observation. The children draw on the available and tolerable discourses to talk about Jasmine. They do not talk about her as being ‘naughty’ or misbehaving as they might about another child who avoids doing what the teacher wants. Instead they explain her actions as a “heart attack”, a medical
concern, something that perhaps Jasmine cannot control or regulate. She is described as young, and “just learning”. The ‘silence’ here is not an absence of words but a discursive practice (Foucault, 2008), where only certain things can be said. The unsaid is replaced by what is permissible and available. The power of the ‘silence’, or the unsaid, or that what is said in its place, is made visible as the unmarked children draw on sanctioned knowledges that are privileged in this context. The children could have discussed the “heart attack” as a ‘normal’ tantrum, like Hugo earlier, but the medical terminology used produces a difference, and places an emphasis on the medicalised and pathologised discourses and ways of being. The medical is approved of and can be spoken of, but only in terms of a medical condition, a biological condition, and not in terms of the psychiatric, the unreasonable or irrational. Jasmine is not described as having a tantrum, as she is ‘not normal’ and only the ‘normal’ have tantrums. She has something else going on and to use the medical terms produces her and her actions as something quite different.

The unmarked children give the impression that they are comfortable in their knowing, positioning themselves as different and more ‘grown up’ than Jasmine. Walkerdine (1999) contends that discourse informed by developmental psychology privileges a certain representation of normality to the degree that particular children are Othered, and they become the object of pathologising discourses (p.2). Jackson’s description of Jasmine’s actions as a “heart attack” announces his take up of these pathologising discourses. However “these pathologising discourses are, Butler (1997b) argues, central to the formation of the subject” (MacLure et al., 2012, p.449). These same discourses position Jasmine outside the limits of the discursive ‘normal’ and create her as a subject or object of pathology, the ‘abject’, possibly a patient and someone who needs medical attention. She is firmly positioned here as the unreasonable, and in need of the teacher’s containment. The unmarked children seem to expect that the teachers will guard Jasmine, protecting her and them in the process.

In the following scenario I answer the following question and note in my analysis how unreason creates discomfort and a level of anxiety. How have medical and psychological discourses, so embedded in the classroom, come to create those regarded as the ‘normal’ as fearful of the ‘not normal’?
Silence - no way to speak

Not seen, not heard

A group of children Michaela, Spencer, Patrick, Ethan, Anna and Rachel (children without a diagnosis) have gathered around my computer to look at photos I have taken. The first photo I show them is of Oliver (a child with a diagnosis) in his wheelchair with two teachers either side of him. Oliver in his chair is in the centre of the photo frame.

Me: “Let's look at this picture here.”
A child is coughing in the background so I ask again.
Michaela: “Chris.” (teacher’s name)
Me: “Can you tell me what’s happening in this picture?”
Long pause (in the picture the two teachers are standing either side of Oliver trying to get his headphones to operate)
Patrick: “That’s ………… Edith……..ummmm” (another teacher)
Me: “What is happening in the picture Spencer?”
(silence)
Patrick: “I can see……ummmm……”
(silence)
Spencer: “Ummm… there’s ….umm I can see umm, I can see something citing.”
(exciting)(moving in his seat, not wanting to answer)
Me: “Who’s in the picture?”
(silence)
Spencer: “Thomas.”
Me: “Thomas? Where’s Thomas?” (Thomas is not in the photo). “Who is in the picture Ethan?”
Ethan: “Chris.”
Michaela: “And Edith” (a teacher)
Anna: “And not me I can’t see.”
Me: “No you’re not there Anna. Who else is in the photo?”
Ethan: “Thomas, Thomas, Thomas.” (pointing to a boy in a hooded jumper with his back turned to the camera).
Me: “I think that might be Lucas.”
Patrick: “Where’s Thomas?” trying to move the conversation on I ask.
Me: “And who’s in the middle?”
Very long pause……. (silence and children looking around the room)
Me: “Who is this in the middle do you know who that is Patrick?” (my direct question and pointing finally resulted in Oliver’s identification)
Patrick and Michaela: “Oliver” (Field Notes, 25/5/12, S1, p.69).

The children in this conversation seemed to work hard to avoid identifying or saying Oliver’s name. The awkwardness and discomfort about naming Oliver, at the beginning of this conversation, is palpable. The long pauses, the uneasy movement of bodies, the squirming in seats, and the many “ummmm’s” in the children’s responses, makes visible the ‘taboo’ around the marked child. This child’s name cannot be spoken. In between the silences, the children look in other directions, as I ask them to identify Oliver. Some look away from the computer screen and out into the room. Oliver’s location, in the photo in the centre of the frame, is ‘obvious’, as his wheelchair is large and
cumbersome. My questions presented the unmarked children with an awkward brief. The physical signs of their discomfort took me by surprise. They tried to name everyone else in an attempt to avoid using Oliver’s name. The children it seems do not have the words to talk about Oliver. Things that are unsaid remain that way because in some ways they are forbidden (Foucault, 2008). Naming Oliver was hindered by the available discourses, and possibly forbidden by the ‘taboo’, that surrounds the marked child in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. By remaining silent and not naming Oliver, all the while naming everyone else in the photo, the unmarked children show in this performance that there are certain things that need to be left unsaid. Possibly they don’t wish to mention Oliver as they might be asked questions about him that might be awkward and they cannot answer. If they name ‘the elephant in the room’, it would no longer be ‘the elephant in the room’, the ‘taboo’ would be broken and they would not know how to speak of it and so they avoid saying Oliver’s name.

Using reflexivity……

I took this photo of Oliver in his large wheelchair and placed him in the middle of the frame to elicit comment and conversation. I wanted to construct some understanding of how the children thought about Oliver, the ‘disabled’ boy, within the circulating discourses. The marked child was being conceptualised by me as a catalyst to procure data related to in/exclusionary practices. I wanted the children to talk about the Other in the classroom as I wanted to be able to describe and analyse discourses. My power as a researcher was being exercised as I provided the children with this photo. The awkwardness that surrounded this encounter was not what I expected. I don’t know why. As the conversation progressed (or faulted) I persisted in asking the children to talk about something that they did not seem to want to speak of. My questioning I think made everyone uncomfortable. Looking back I ‘forced’ the words and the silences as I exercised my power as the adult researcher. My photo and questioning positioned Oliver as the Other. What was the effect of my questioning on the subjectivities of Oliver and the children? Have I produced the awkwardness? Did children feel uncomfortable because they expected me to ask about Oliver? Did they want to avoid my questioning? What were they uncomfortable to answer?

Teachers refer to Oliver as a very disabled child. His diagnosis and impairments define who he is, and what he does, and not only pathologise him, but also objectify and de-humanise him. The director and teachers on several occasions referred to him as ‘the boy with cerebral palsy’ before using his name (Field Notes, S1). This could explain, in some ways, why the children could not recall his name immediately in our
conversation. Oliver is described by his pathology and via medical discourses, as an ‘object of concern’ and often as an ‘object of sympathy’. The teacher’s often made comments such as ‘the poor thing’ and ‘the poor family’. A discourse of personal tragedy is taken up by the adults in this classroom, particularly for this child, Oliver, but also for the other marked children as commented on earlier. Comments such as “I don’t know how the parents cope” and “Can't imagine what it must be like for his poor parents” (Field Notes, 4/6/12, S1, p.134) belong to tragic discourses.

Oliver is talked about mostly by the teachers in terms of the severity of his impairments and his need for specialised equipment and constant supervision. Non-human actors, in the form of specialised pieces of equipment, including the wheelchair, leg splints, and headphones, all powerfully contribute to the discursive production of Oliver as a subject. His subjecthood is created via a long list of deficits. The children use developmental and sanctioned discourses to describe Oliver, “he can't walk”, “he can only talk like a baby” and “he always cries”. In this classroom, there is an objectivisation but also an infantilisation (Robey, Beckley, & Kirschner, 2006) of Oliver by both the children and the teachers. The teachers respond to Oliver as one would an infant. Oliver is four years old. They offer him food, a nappy change or they take him for a walk around the yard in his wheelchair to try and settle or stop his ‘noises’. Oliver’s ‘noises’, as with the other marked children in this study, produce a cause for concern and stopping them is a matter of urgency. At other times, they decide that he is tired and in need of sleep (Field Notes, 18/5/12, S1, p.42). His ‘noises’ are not interpreted by teachers and children as a different way of communicating, that might need to be explored, but instead are attended to like the cries of an infant.

Oliver is also subjected by discourses that judge his embodied physical differences as a failing, incomplete and inferior and “not so much for what it is but what it fails to be” (Shildrick, 2005, p.756). Shildrick (2005) argues that the anomalous disabled body represents an “uncomfortable reminder that the normative, 'healthy' body, despite its appearance of successful self-determination, is highly vulnerable to disruption and breakdown” (p. 757). Shildrick goes on to say that as “disability is viewed this way it is always the object of institutional discourses of control and containment” (p.757). The ‘normal’ from this perspective feel threatened by Oliver’s disabled body and the potential risk to their own body, vulnerable to break down. Borrowing from Foucault, (2006) on this line of theorising, there are historical traces in the classroom of the threat of contagion. Oliver is ignored by the children as they experience an uncomfortable anxiety and fear of contagion constructed around Oliver as a subject.
**Fear of ‘disability’ – the embodied abject**

Oliver (a child with a diagnosis) is lying on his back on a mat in the yard. A younger child George (without a diagnosis) from the other classroom sits next to him with me and his teacher. He stares at Oliver as if he has not seen him before, his eyes wide and his body pensive and uneasy. He is closely watching Oliver's every move. The teacher notices and comments that Oliver has kicked off his socks and while putting them on remarks in a playful way that Oliver's feet are very cold. She says to George, “Feel his toes, they are so cold”. George shakes his head, a look of shock and moves his body further away (Field Notes, 15/6/12, S1, p.152).

George does not wish to touch Oliver’s feet. He sits and stares at Oliver for a short time looking somewhat apprehensive. Oliver is positioned as the anomaly in the classroom and the ‘abject’ (Davies, 2006a) in this encounter. Young (1990), in following Kristeva (1982), posits that abjection brings about feelings of aversion and animosity, while at the same time, the abject is seen as fascinating, it also draws the subject in, in order to repel it (Young, 1990). The separated self that abjection creates, needs to keep the border firm for fear of disintegration. Young (1990) writes, “The abject must not touch me for fear that it will ooze through, obliterating the border between inside and outside” (p.207). The abject provokes fear because it exposes the border between self and other, as constituted and fragile, and it threatens to dissolve the subject, by dissolving the border. The abject poses a threat to identity itself, as “people from groups marked as different fulfil the function of what lies just on the other side of the borders of the self, too close for comfort and threatening to cross or dissolve the border” (Young, 1990, p.208). The fear and threat of the abject can be managed by maintaining a level of separation.

George is drawn to Oliver but looks at him as though he is scared of him and when he was asked to feel his cold feet he looks more alarmed. Oliver’s positioning as the ‘disabled’ boy, whose body functions in ‘different’ ways, might seem fascinating to George, but at the same time Oliver is the abject and remaining separate is vital for maintaining one’s own subject positioning. George’s interest in Oliver, in moving over to the mat initially, was somewhat unusual in this classroom, as most of the children did not seem to engage with Oliver at all. His aversion however firmly positioned Oliver as not a member of the ‘normal’ category and a potential threat that needs to be repelled.

Fear, awkwardness, silence and abjection are again observed in the following observation.
An uncomfortable fear of ‘madness’

Hugo (a child with a diagnosis) approaches the small trestle table to have his fruit break. He sits down with his banana shaped container but as he cannot open it he hands it to me without a word. I open it for him. As the other children at the table continue to eat Hugo turns himself around so that his back is now facing the children opposite and he begins to make loud roaring noises. Sitting at the table with the pre-schoolers is a child who is having an orientation visit with his parent. Hugo stands and walks toward the parent roaring loudly at them with his face very close to their face. The parent, eyes wide and mouth open and then frowning, turns her body away from Hugo and looks around her. She does not respond to Hugo. The other children at the table look at Hugo and then at the parent with wide eyes and open mouths also. All continue to eat their fruit (Field Notes, 17/10/12, S3, p.13).

At fruit break the unmarked children sit quietly and eat their fruit. They do not make unnecessary noises or play while sitting at the fruit break trestle. If they do they are usually disciplined by the other children or teachers. Eating your fruit has regulatory norms on one’s body and the space of the small trestle table restricts what can be done.

When Hugo ‘roars’ into the face of the visiting parent his ‘noise’ and uninhibited actions are met with ‘silence’. Silence is constructed by the discourses that surround it but also constructs discourse in return (Ward & Winstanley, 2003). Neither the children nor the visiting parent say anything. The parent’s immediate response is to turn her body away. She looks outward, anywhere other than at Hugo, appearing very uncomfortable in the presence of his ‘roaring’. She looks around the playground possibly scanning for someone to help her, to explain. She could not deal with the potential danger that Hugo posed to the dissolution of order, and the border that separates the self from Other (Young, 1990). Hugo’s roaring ‘noises’ and his ‘roar’ into the face of a visiting mother is an act that positions him, in this discursive context, on the “other side of the border” (Davies, 2006, p.75). The ‘roaring’ noises reinforced Hugo as the irrational subject, as the ‘unreasonable’. There was no explanation offered about Hugo’s behaviour, no diagnosis heard, but Hugo was positioned. The dominant medical and scientific discourses create the ‘normal’ as superior and Hugo is the opposite to it. Theorising with Foucault (1967) Hugo’s performance could be considered as the act of ‘unreason,’ and as such, a threat to ‘reason’.

Foucault’s (1967) historical consideration contends that there is an awareness and alarm around “the precariousness of reason that can at any moment be compromised
and definitively, by madness" (p.201), and the ‘normal’ must be vigilant so as not to become compromised. He refers to a growing fear of madness in the sixteenth century and suggests that the threat of ‘madness’ resumed its place among the emergencies of that century (Foucault, 1967). Historical reactions to ‘madness’, he argues, closed the possibility of a dialogue between reason and unreason due to this fear, and what followed was isolation and confinement. Here in the playground at the morning tea table there was no dialogue between Hugo and the parent or the other children. Was it because no one knew what to say, or was it due to fear? Hugo’s loud roaring seemed to create a level of apprehension, in particular for the mother, who had no experience of Hugo. The discomfort of everyone at the table was tangible.

Using reflexivity…….

I watched on and made a mental note. I thought that the parent’s response was unusual at the time. I felt uncomfortable and constrained by the ‘normal’ being performed by us all at that moment. I wondered why the mother did not roar back at Hugo or respond to him in some ‘playful’ way. To respond to him in this way would have been very familiar. My reading of the mother’s response could be viewed as constructed to support my argument as I was looking for these kinds of responses for my data collection. I use reflexivity to question the construction of my representation here as there are potentially many other ways to create and read the data. I may have looked at this scene with too much familiarity. I may have been the only one positioning Hugo as the Other in collecting this observation. Nevertheless the press of the ‘normal’ in performing the ‘right’ way it seems is inescapable for us all in this scene.

Foucault (1977) maintains that the mechanisms of power that uphold the ‘normal’ produce a constant division between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’ to which every individual is subjected. Butler (1993) contends that the normative force of performativity works through exclusion. The normative forces powerfully excluded and delegitimised Hugo’s performance as not acceptable, deviate and alarming. Hugo, positioned as the ‘mad’, is silenced by the ‘normal’ and the created ‘taboo’ that contains and separates him with silence. Hugo is obvious, like ‘the elephant in the room’, everyone at the table knew he was there, but he could not be looked at or addressed; the demand for conformity here leaves the elephant well alone.

In another reading Hugo could have been playing a particular game or creating a character using his imagination. He could have been attempting to invite the others to join in his game or he may have been using his roar to welcome the parent or extend
an invitation to play. Here the effects of the normative discourses limit possibilities and ways of ‘being’, and understandings of others. Authoritative, normative discourses create inclusionary positionings for the ‘normal’, re/producing and maintaining their position. However, these same discourses powerfully produce exclusionary thinking and practice for those positioned to be outside the boundary category.

The analysis in this chapter explored the unmarked children performances of category boundary work and the many nuanced ways that they enacted ‘silences’. The silence was shared among the unmarked children, teachers and the parent as they sidestepped interactions with the marked child by ignoring, avoiding, moving away from, or ‘talking about’ in sanctioned and acceptable terms. I observed the notion of a ‘taboo’ being created and enacted around the marked child, a discursively produced subject, ‘obvious’ to everyone but often unacknowledged. The ‘taboo’ was adhered to via the social and discursive practices of the classroom creating an unaddressed anomaly, the classroom version of ‘the elephant in the room’.

How does ‘the elephant in the room’ emerge? How does the marked child, the discursively produced ‘disabled’ come to be ‘taboo’? From my readings of the data I have come see a link between the discursive construction of what we today call ‘disability’ and the historical construction of ‘madness’. It seems ‘disability’, despite policies and best practices pushing for inclusivity in the early childhood classroom, can only be addressed in particular ways, by other legitimate discourses, and is at best tolerated and/or silenced and ignored. I wonder what the avoidance and fear of ‘disability’ expressed in these ways do and also produce in the ‘inclusive’ classroom.

Foucault's work (2006, 1967) offers a cultural and historical understanding of how anxiety, fear and separation have been constitutive of ‘unreason’ and ‘madness’ over centuries. The pathologisation and objectification of individuals who do not conform to the ‘normal’ – as a more contemporary exploit of medical science, is arguably a similar practice to the separation of the ‘diseased’ and the ‘mad’ that occurred during past centuries (Foucault, 2006). The marginal Other has been produced in numerous gestures of segregation and “the fact that the internees of the eighteenth century bear a resemblance to our modern vision of the asocial is undeniable” (Foucault, 2006, p.79). Assorted ‘modern’ terms such as ‘disabled’, ‘disability’, ‘diagnosis’, ‘additional needs’ and ‘special needs’ are firmly attached to the subjecthood of the marked child, and the positioning of this child as different to the ‘normal’, and in need of separation from it.
Fear, separation and ‘asylum-like’ practices

How society experiences and defines its limits and what a ‘culture’ rejects and makes exterior is of interest to Foucault (Gordon, 2013). Foucault (2006, 1967) studied places of otherness, in particular the establishment of asylums for those deemed as diseased, and later those subjected to discourses of ‘madness’. Foucault’s thesis (2006) is described “as a history of the other: the forms of its delineation as other, of its exclusions, its expulsions and/or closure into dedicated spaces of otherness” (Gordon, 2013, p.89). Foucault reflects on how fear became pivotal in these exclusions and expulsions. My exploration of classroom observations has shown how the ‘normal’ defines the limits of subjecthood, creating category boundaries and a separateness from the Other, that is robustly maintained, when the unmarked children encounter the marked subject.

Fear

Suddenly, in the space of a few years in the mid-eighteenth century, a fear emerged. It was a fear formulated in medical terms, but deep down it was animated by a moral mythology. People were in dread of a mysterious sickness that apparently emanated from house of confinement and was soon to spread throughout the cities (Foucault, 2006, p.355).

This fear, Foucault (2006) suggests, originated in the tales and stories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about the spread of disease, prison fevers, and men in chains moving through cities, leaving diseases behind them as they went, leaving the air tainted and contaminated. ‘Unreason’ also became associated with disease and illness and was created as contagious, evil and guilty of deviation. Foucault (1967) poses that fear has

surrounded madness from the outside, marking a boundary of reason and unreason, and enjoying a double power: over the violence of fury in order to contain it, and over reason itself to hold it at a distance; such fear was entirely on the surface (p.233).

Fear encircles ‘madness’, producing the limits and boundaries of reason and unreason. Fear exercises a ‘double power’ (Foucault, 2006) as it can contain unreason by marking its limits, and also regulate reason, as it advises reason to stay away from unreason. Fear of the Other, and its double power, is observable, enacted and enabled
in the classroom. Fear, first, produces the boundaries that the ‘normal’ negotiate as they encounter the ‘not normal’ and second, fear produces exclusionary actions. Sometimes in the classroom, the fear was a fear of disruption to the ‘normal’, and at other times it appeared to be a fear that could be linked to a threat or perhaps the risk of contagion (Foucault, 2006) or contamination of the ‘normal’. The ‘normal’ has functioned over the centuries to guard against its own corruption (Foucault, 2006).

Fear of disruption and risk to the ‘normal’ infiltrates much of the data. The wrist band and the lock in their assemblages with the teachers and the marked child emerge as ways to ‘guard’ the ‘risky’ deviant from a possible escape. He is subjected as a ‘flight risk’ and there is fear for his safety, fear for the safety of the ‘normal’, and fear for the teachers who must accept responsibility as ‘guards’, and avoid the possible consequences of the child’s escape and/or the possibility of disruption. The non-human and human assemblages produce fear and provide a visual reminder of the danger and threat. Fear, or being fearful, defends the ‘normal’ safe from corruption. Fear creates exclusionary practices and actions as the children become tolerators, as tolerance is a way to sustain a threatening entity (Brown, 2006). Tolerance also works to dampen the fear, as it is thought to manage ‘dangerous’ difference in society. There is a fear of those who are positioned as ‘uncivilised’ (Brown, 2006), those who cannot abide by timetables, the correct use of space, the rules of play and other regulations. ‘Civilising’ them becomes the imperative of the ‘normal’, and via tolerance some corrections can be crafted and imposed, but a discursively produced fear remains palpable. Tolerance produces and maintains subjectivities of virtue, those positioned as the ‘normal’ are shaped by fear and act through it. In reinforcing their category membership and the need for protection they further create a divide between themselves and the Other. In my reading of the data, fear similarly produces silence as a practice in the classroom. In silence, the unmarked children’s acts of ignoring and separating from the ‘not normal’ illuminate fear of the Other along with fear of the ‘risk’ they pose. Separation and/or preserving a distance are discursive practices enacted to manage the fear and reduce the ‘risk’ to the ‘normal’.

**Separation**

Fear of disruption and fear of contagion historically led to places of otherness where the limits imposed by society were “initially aimed at confining those with a range of moral failings (including poverty and promiscuity amongst others) in poor houses and
asylums” (Mckenzie & Macleod, 2012, p.1085). Foucault identifies the leprosarias as the first dedicated Western spaces of exclusion (Gordon, 2013). The lepers were considered dangerous and treated as plague victims, they were excluded and “cut off from all human contact” (Foucault, 2006, p.199). New asylums created for ‘madness’ “were built on the same spot where lepers had previously been kept, and it was as though centuries later these new tenants brought a new form of contagion” (Foucault, 2006, p.356). The fear of contagion, associated with leprosy, stayed with the residents of these confinement houses. Foucault saw that ‘unreason’ became marked with an imaginary stigma of disease, which he believes “lent it its power to terrorize” (p.358). The former exclusionary treatment that had been applied to the lepers, now applied to ‘madness’. All forms of ‘unreason’ took the place of leprosy and disease and became banished to the margins (Foucault, 2006, p.357).

The notion of confinement historically, allowed the ‘normal’ to expel heterogeneous elements that could be considered harmful (Foucault, 2006). Foucault (1967) argues that the confinement of ‘madness’ was an instance of order and the community acquired the ethical power to eject from the world of the ‘normal’, all forms of the ‘abnormal’. Separation from ‘unreason’, observed in the data, is performed to avoid the risk of a scandal (Gordon, 2013) and the possible risk of contagion. In my reading of the analysis, the ‘noises’ made by the marked child are judged as ‘scandalous’ and they activate practices of silence or avoidance. Non-speech sounds are measured to be produced by ‘unreason’, the irrational, by those who discursively embody ‘madness’. The marked child’s noises are awkwardly ignored as the children pass by. At other times they are dismissed as ‘immature’, in the sanctioned circulating discourses, but nevertheless regarded, for the most part, as a ‘not normal’ way to communicate. Separation, avoidance, and the quietening of these noises, are all read as attempts to evade the marked child, to avoid or at least minimise the impact in the classroom. Their ‘noisy’ and obvious disturbance requires an active effort on the part of the members of the ‘normal’ to maintain their position. Avoiding the obvious, produces ‘the elephant in the room’, as taking notice of the anomaly is ‘taboo’. A shared silence becomes a strategic response, and an insolent weapon (Derrida, 1992). In its many nuanced forms, silence is read to explicitly exclude those who do not fit in.

Confining and separating ‘unreason’ from ‘reason’ generated historically places of purification, where the intention was to prevent the spread of disease, or at least achieve its neutralisation. The specialised confining institution of the asylum, exercised its power with its medical curative authority, and offered a place that could dispel the
fear of reason and contain ‘unreason’: “an asylum where unreason would be entirely contained and offered as a spectacle, without threatening the spectators; where it would have all the powers of example and none of the risks of contagion” (Foucault, 1967, p.196). These places were isolated from the population so that they could be surrounded by “purer air” (Foucault, 2006, p.359). To achieve this purer air, a distance had to be fashioned between the threat and the population. These historical reforms envisioned a ‘cure’, some degree of purification for ‘unreason’, that could be achieved by creating a distance between the two. In the discursive context of the early childhood classroom, the imperative to ‘cure’ the diagnosed child is overwhelming, which in turn produces separation for a ‘cure’. The unmarked children and their teachers, engage in practices that are designed to ‘cure’ and ‘remediate’ the marked child, with the legitimised authority of medical and scientific discourses. They help those who are ‘just learning’ or ‘haven’t learnt yet’ to move closer to the ‘normal’. The medical and scientific discourses, taken up in early childhood classrooms, reveal resilient connections to the past in current everyday practices. Practices of ‘special’ education are read as exercises that confine and isolate the diagnosed child, as they work to ‘correct’ the child’s body and mind under constant surveillance. More recent policy reforms in education have halted the practice of segregating and isolating children with ‘special’ needs in separate institutions and/or classrooms. Nevertheless the discourses that inform practices in ‘inclusive’ education have not undergone parallel reform (Slee, 2011). The unrelenting scrutiny and surveillance, sanctioned in segregated ‘special’ education, is still regarded as crucial for the child in mainstream education, as reaching a prescribed level of development is obligatory. This remediating work is no longer carried out in a different institution, or within a ‘special’ unit in the school. It is now accomplished in the classroom and viewed as ‘inclusive’, but how can that be? The discourses and practices of ‘special’ education separate and isolate in the classroom and actively create a ‘somewhere else’ for the marked child to ‘be’ and ‘be cured’.

Places of confinement were crafted with multiple purposes in mind: to silence by isolation, to dispel any fear or threat to the ‘normal’ and to ‘cure’ what was created as ‘unreason’. Even though those diagnosed ‘disabled’ or constituted as ‘madness’ no longer live or are educated in the asylums described by Foucault, what form does their liberty take? In Foucault’s thesis, he argues that “the liberty of the madman was given free reign, but in a space that was more enclosed and more rigid, less free than the always slightly indecisive space of confinement” (Foucault, 2006, p.514). Even though the walls and chains that thwarted the madman’s free will have been removed, the ‘mad’ have been stripped of any free will by the rigorous mechanism of determinism.
and the doctors and other professionals that uphold it. The madman is now seen to be “free in the open space where his liberty had already been lost” (Foucault, 2006, p.515). As the psychiatrists and doctors of history imposed freedom on the ‘mad’ releasing them from confinement, they then went about locking them into certain truths about ‘madness’. The walls are removed but today’s confinement is multiple. How can the notion of ‘inclusion’ be spoken of when exclusion and confinement are re/produced in the discursive context and social practices performed in the ‘inclusive’ classroom?

**Asylum-like practices**

The image of an asylum disrupts the taken-for-granted idea of ‘inclusion’ as it creates visions of exclusion and isolation. “Asylum is a loaded word” (Boldt & Valente, 2014, p.202) as it conjures up the inhumane treatment of children and adults with disabilities. The asylum is undoubtedly regarded as a part of history, and not part of the present. Nevertheless, my research in looking otherwise, has made obvious the traces of historical discourses that continue to inform contemporary thinking and practice, reiteratively taken up by the children and teachers in the early childhood classroom. These discursive practices cannot continue un-interrupted. In examining and disrupting the prevailing discourses, my study opens up the classroom to many questions about the authority and power of the discourses that create the ‘normal’ and the ‘not normal’ in educational settings. ‘Asylum-like’ practices operate in the classroom, and act as a protection for the ‘normal’, promoting its legitimacy, without the need for solid and fixed walls. While authoritative medical and psy-disciplines exercise power in the classroom, spaces of separateness for the Other will continue to be produced and maintained.

As individuals are made subjects in the classroom, by the ‘truth’ and power of psychopathology and medicine, they are separated in the category boundary and maintenance work around the ‘normal’. Harwood (2010) asserts that psycho-pathologisation of the individual produces a “personal, portable, and psychiatric prison” (p.437), where the marked child is separated and guarded in the classroom. The psycho-pathologisation of children in educational institutions produces what Harwood has labelled, a ‘mobile asylum’ (p.438) as previously mentioned. This is a portable creation that moves with the marked child. A produced effect that remains invisible and insidious, as it is maintained within the prevailing discourses. It is also a space of separateness, an insistent marginalising space, that remains unaddressed.
Exploring the discursively produced obscure nature of the mobile asylum in the classroom, "permits a view [that] has the potential to ascertain the workings of power, and thereby more closely appreciate the experiences of the child" (Harwood, 2010, p.445). The experiences of the marked child bring into focus how exclusive 'inclusive' practices can be, as the marked child is contained, limited and fixed by a category dispensed to them. Harwood (2010) argues that the asylum can no longer be thought of as distinct from the world of the everyday as it was historically. We need “to look instead to the exercising of power that produces asylum-type effects” (p.447). The asylum, mobile and personal, exists in the classroom and its asylum-like effects have been exposed in this study. The asylum is not distinct from the everyday. In the reading of the data it can be made visible every day, when ‘practice as usual’ is challenged, and the ‘normal’ is investigated and interrupted. The ‘mobile asylum’ is continuously created, as practices of the ‘normal’ are readily and repeatedly taken up by the children and their teachers, and assemblages of human and non-human actors emerge, contributing to the constitution of becoming subjectivities in the classroom.

The ‘mobile asylum’, as a produced effect of the constitution of the ‘normal’, creates an imperative for ‘inclusive’ early childhood education to insist on a continuing problematisation of the ‘normal’ and the power it exercises, in delineating limited ways of being and doing. As I noted at the beginning of this work, the marked child was not the focus of my study but a catalyst for viewing the constitution of the ‘normal’. Nevertheless, the alternative understandings presented in this work do have implications for the marked child, the unmarked children, and the ‘inclusive’ classroom. I have opened up to interrogation the position and power of the ‘normal’ and its part in ‘inclusive’ and exclusive processes, as it powerfully operates as a mechanism in the subjection of individuals in the early childhood classroom. Fear, separation, and ‘cure’ are produced as effects, as the children take up subject positions, defining and defending the category boundaries of these positionings. The ‘normal’ exercises its ‘muscles’ as it maintains itself, by staying away from, and by not recognising the discursively produced Other. ‘The elephant in the room’ endures unaddressed in the classroom.
Chapter 7

Shifting the focus of ‘inclusive’ education: opening up possibilities

In undertaking this research I have come to realise that my perpetual questioning has been concerned to some extent with how we come to know ourselves and how we come to know others. As Foucault (1984) contends, “the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (p.50). I have examined the limits imposed on subjects in the ‘inclusive’ classroom by the discursive ‘normal’, its historical construction, and its effects on inclusionary and exclusionary processes. I have analysed and scrutinised the re/construction of these limits with the promise of hopefully ‘going beyond them’. Rather than seeing my thesis as a body of new ‘stable’ and long lasting knowledge, I see it of course as endless as we are always in the process of beginning again (Foucault, 2007). Ultimately my work has introduced other possibilities for viewing the ‘inclusive’ classroom and as a whole I hope that it creates promise for a shift in focus and practice in these early childhood classrooms.

According to Foucault (1988a), it is not our role as researchers to propose alternatives to others that we imagine could be useful to them as this can only have effects of domination. Instead Foucault proposed that “what we have to present are instruments and tools that people might find useful” (Foucault, 1988a, p.197). Following this I am not presenting ‘solid’ proposals or new ‘strategies’ for working in the ‘inclusive’ classroom. I am offering a productive approach which attends to the continuous work done in the classroom, towards the production and maintenance of the category of the ‘normal’. I trust my exploration of the discursive ‘normal’ using particular ‘tools’ of poststructural theory might be useful for others who may wish to also interrogate and trouble the ‘normal’. Combining Foucault’s conceptualisations of discourse, power and subjectivity, along with Harré and van Langenhove’s (1999) analytical tool of positioning theory and Davies’ (1989) concepts of category boundary and maintenance work, I have opened up other ways of viewing the operations of power in ‘inclusive’ education. Butler (1997a) also adds to my tool box as I use her work on performativity and recognisability of the subject to illustrate how the children get this work ‘done’.

Returning to the first lines of my thesis I said that my motivation and driving force has been the pursuit of new ways of seeing, thinking and doing ‘inclusion’ in early childhood
education. I wanted to look for a different way to think about ‘inclusive’ processes for children like David, assessed as needing ‘inclusion’, but ‘judged’ to be not suitable for it. I looked for other ways, as I was disillusioned with the practices that I and others performed as teacher/‘experts’. In researching the field I found that I was not alone in my disillusionment with current ‘inclusive’ practices in early childhood classrooms. ‘Inclusion’ in education as a practice is questioned (Allan, 2010; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Boldt & Valente, 2014; Graham & Sweller, 2011). Concerns are often raised on the issues of teacher preparedness with families reporting that they feel their child is overlooked or not accepted (Allan, 2008) in mainstream classrooms. ‘Inclusion’ “appears to be in something of a sorry state, characterised by confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion” (Allan, 2008, p. 3) and practices in early childhood education have been described as “far from ideal” (Grace et al., 2008, p.18). Warming (2011) maintains that ‘inclusion’ has occurred in quantitative terms, but in qualitative terms ‘inclusive’ practices are still challenged, as they have not addressed the issues of equality, social justice or participation nor have they eliminated all forms of exclusionary assumptions and practices. Thinking in terms of how to do ‘inclusion’ better, Slee (2013) maintains, is not the challenge, it is instead, learning “how to detect, understand and dismantle exclusion as it presents itself in education” (p. 905). My study has done this work, in detecting how the ‘normal’, within the sanctioned discourses of the classroom, operates as a legitimate authority enacting exclusionary practices.

Fundamentally, what initially underpinned my study was a concern for how the field constitutes the child with a diagnosis. After grappling with a large body of literature, and contemplating the conflicting paradigms in the field, I came to poststructural theory, via Foucault, as it provided me with a conceptual framework that I thought might provide an alternative to the deficit view of the child, and its associated practices. By disrupting the ‘truth’ and questioning the power exercised by medical and psy-sciences, and turning my gaze away from the child with a diagnosis, toward the un-interrogated ‘normal’, I could begin to see things differently. In my study, I challenge the discursive practices and power of the ‘normal’, with a view to interrupting the taken-for-granted and ‘naturalised’ ways of thinking about the subjected individual. The importance of troubling the certainty of discourses that dominate ‘inclusive’ education, is central to my work. There is for me a desire to arrest “inclusion’s need to speak of and identify otherness” (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2002, p. 5), as I see this working to shape both the margins and a centre, through the ‘privileging of “universal categories and a romanticised, universal subject” (Lather, 2003, p. 260). The ‘normal’ is discursively
created in the classroom, in the humanistic tradition, as progressive and superior and serving as a method of social regulation (Cannella, 1997). Scrutiny of the power exercised by it, and its effects on subjecthood, I think holds promise for ‘inclusive’ research and education.

Without understanding and acknowledging how power operates and is exercised (Foucault, 1982), and how in/exclusions are enacted by the children in their daily, continuous, and ‘unremarkable’ performances, we cannot know how subjects are positioned. Some are positioned in more privileged ways, while others are marginalised, avoided and ignored. How the subject comes to be ‘normal’ via their actions and their speaking is worthy of a more critical focus in ‘inclusive’ educational research. I would hope that the perspective I have taken might contribute to further work and analysis in the field. In exploring the micro-workings of power in the classroom, observing the discursive practices and processes, I offer another way of analysing how inclusions and exclusions are not only exercised but are also achieved. I think an educational research methodology focusing on the processes of discursive in/exclusion is a productive way to view how “some acts, articulation and bodies ‘make it’” (Petersen, 2004, p.199) in the classroom, as they are constituted as a successful individual in the context, while others are constituted as “not getting it right” (p.199).

Throughout I have demonstrated and analysed, using positioning theory and category boundary work, how children in the ‘inclusive’ classroom struggle to achieve and maintain recognition as legitimate members and relevant subjects of the ‘normal’ in relation to others and themselves (Petersen, 2004). I am aware that in the discursive context, the illustrated in/exclusionary boundary work performed by the children, could be considered by some as misplaced or misinterpreted. Many educators and researchers in the field might regard my readings of the data as incorrect, instead, they might view the children’s embodied actions and words as innocent, and unknowing, not yet moral and not yet mature or socially aware. It has not been my intention to condemn the practices of the classroom, or to look harshly on the actions of the children, their teachers, or myself as researcher. I do not want to represent research participants as innately or wholly bad, as they go about their daily lives. What I hope I have come some way to achieve, is to show that the constituted character of the subject, is preconditioned for its agency, desires, sense of freedom and choice (Petersen, 2004). Foucault argues the point that “not everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 256). I hope
that this work gives us ‘something to do’, in the classroom, and this work might in some small way, be a beginning to this work. The discourses of the ‘normal’ are on ‘notice’; ‘new’, different and multiple discourses need to be valued and constructed in the classroom. Not enough has been deduced from the ‘normal’ concerning the ambiguity of its meaning, as in the classroom as teachers we are happy enough to point out its existence but not look further to see it as a problem in itself (Canguilhem, 1991).

If in ‘inclusive’ education we could suspend the dominant circulating discourses and focus more on studying “the way a human being turns him or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p.327) and not accept as ‘truth’ the psychologising and pathologising that is assigned to children, it may be possible to think and act differently within in/exclusionary processes. Following Foucault (1988b), ‘inclusive’ education might find more promise if researchers and teachers were “more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self” (p.19). In this exploration of the social and discursive practices of the classroom over several months, I have illustrated how powerfully and actively the children’s words, actions and silences, legitimise and delegitimise certain ways of being, and how they have ‘done’ this work on themselves. Discourses of development, that would view children as merely passive recipients of adult socialisation, are interrupted by my study, as children demonstrate how active they are in this positioning work. ‘Inclusive’ education research can no longer overlook the children who are ‘already included’, the children without a diagnosis, as they are implicated and enmeshed in how inclusive/exclusive processes operate.

Steering and enriching my analysis Foucault’s History of Madness (2006) has allowed me to trace the connections between the historical practices of past centuries, with regard to ‘madness’, fear, separation and ‘cure’ to present practices in the classroom. While investigating the discursive constitution and the children’s take up and performance of the ‘normal’, I observed as effects anxiety, fear, separation and an imperative to ‘cure’ or at least remEDIATE. As the children produced and maintained themselves as recognisably ‘normal’, their speaking, acting and ‘being’ produced these discursive effects as a way to maintain and protect their membership. Protection of the ‘normal’ was also an historical imperative for the development of places of isolation like the asylum (Foucault, 2006). In examining the links between past and present, I hope I have come some way in drawing attention to the ‘dangerous’ limitations and the cruelty (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000) of scientific discourses, and ‘regimes of truth’ of the past and
present that re/produce the ‘normal’ and position individuals as fixed and deficient (Cannella, 1997). As researchers and teachers “we have to know the historical conditions that motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance” (Foucault, 1982, p.327). An awareness of the past has the promise to teach us that there are options that we are free to choose, that there are other possibilities, and that we do not have to merely adapt to the continuities of the past (Hutton, 1988).

From my own perspective this research questions everything that I had ‘known’. As an early intervention teacher, my knowledge has been questioned and my practices challenged. However this is important work and I agree with Laws when she writes:

> For, once coming to a kind of agency where one is able to see the discursive practices that hold us in one place, we are better able to shift to another place – still within discourse but better able to see the ways we are bound and to loosen those ties even for small moments in time (Laws, 2004, p.126).

My research has allowed me to see the discursive practices that hold me in place however I continue to grapple with my shifting understandings and my own subjection. I hope that by opening up the ties that firmly keep the boundaries around my ‘normal’ I have made some shift to another place, and a different seeing. Right through this study, I have attempted to be cognisant of my own positioning in troubling my take up of ‘normal’, while at the same time feeling the gravity of it on me, to perform in particular ways. The ‘normal’ is not a neutral instrument in the early childhood classroom, but a technology of power and it creates limited options for children and adults, who either conform or not to the discursive norms. As a reflexive self, subjected to and within the available discourses, I have tried to account for my own becoming but I recognise my serious limitations in doing this work.

In the introduction chapter, in discussing my experiences as an early intervention teacher, I wondered how I could have done things differently. Even though I have come to see this as an ongoing challenge and a never-ending process, I think my study has some implications for how I/we could do things differently if not ‘better’. I think we need to consider some of the things that we could stop doing. We could stop applying labels and looking for new labels for children who do not conform, we could stop creating difference as problematic and something that needs to be changed or fixed, we could stop speaking of ‘otherness’ and instead challenge ‘sameness’. Above all we could stop our incessant obsession with developmental and psychological discourses that
construct and maintain the ‘normal’ and the ‘not normal’. For policy makers and professionals who assume ‘inclusion’ is a finished product (Slee & Allan, 2001), this research draws attention to how difficult, unfinished and exclusive it is, not just for young children but for society more widely. Moreover, the involvement of young children in the processes of inclusion and exclusion in the classroom can no longer be overlooked or regarded merely as a passive position. Professionals must reflect on how the ‘including’ group operates to include and exclude. Funding structures that uphold ‘special’ education practices in the ‘inclusive’ classroom need to be ‘shaken up’, rethought and de-naturalised as they continue to rely on the identification of deficits in the child, and the level of disruption that this child’s diagnosis produces for the ‘normal’. While ever the ‘normal’ exercises unquestioned power in creating homogeneity in the classroom, difference will be maintained as a marginalised position. In our everyday interactions as teachers with children and parents, we could do ‘better’ by remaining vigilant and critically reflexive about how we speak of ourselves and others, and how we act and ‘be’ with each other. Emphasising the constituted character of the subject and the fluid nature of subjection can offer us, in ‘inclusive’ education, an alternative and less limiting understanding of ourselves and each other.

By problematising everyday practices and understandings in the classroom, I, like other Foucauldian researchers (if I can be so bold), seek new understandings, enabling a ‘practice of freedom’, by opening up possibilities for thinking and acting ‘otherwise’. In thinking otherwise would it be possible to give up all references to things being ‘normal’ or ‘natural’? Would it be possible to take seriously the notion that everything (people, categories, classrooms, diagnoses, etc.) is continually made and that we are all implicated in this making? Would it be possible to interrupt the privileging and power of cultural and historical discourses? Could this provide promise for ‘inclusive’ education? For me there is promise if we can begin to shift the focus from the ‘objectifying’ of the subject toward a discursive understanding how “human beings are made subjects” (Foucault, 1982, p.326), and begin to grasp how the operating power of the ‘normal’ creates effects for subjection. There is promise if we can come to recognise that we are all implicated and complicated in our own making as discursive subjects, and also, in the making of others.
References


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