Citizenship and inequality

The Teach for Australia program and the people who enter it

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Abstract

This study examines the aims, philosophy and assumptions on which an Australian Commonwealth Government initiative - Teach for Australia (TfA) are based, and considers the values, perceptions and experiences of a number of teachers who entered Victorian Secondary Schools at the beginning of the 2011 school year as part of the TfA program. Modelled on the American version Teach for America and the British version Teach First, the Teach for Australia Organization claims its purpose and mission is to supply “outstanding... inspiring and passionate young Australians to teach in disadvantaged communities...to drive the systemic change needed to eliminate educational disadvantage in Australia”.

This research asked two core questions. First, what are the assumptions the TfA organisation presents in its mission and vision statements and promotional material, in relation to its program addressing educational disadvantage in school settings? Second, how are the recruited teachers’ perceptions of their capacity to fulfil Teach for Australia’s mission of changing lives in classrooms and leading systemic change, affirmed, challenged or modified during their classroom experiences?

Theoretically this thesis draws on a range of theories and concepts from educational sociology. In particular Bourdieu’s thinking tools of habitus, cultural capital, and fields offer a language and starting point with which to analyse the collected data. Using qualitative data generated through interviews, email correspondence and document analysis the research sought to uncover the sociological and policy assumptions underpinning this model of teacher recruitment. The participants in this study were drawn from the second cohort of TfA and interviewed over a two year period.

The thesis shows that the advertising and policy assumptions of the program appeal to recruits by emphasising both altruism and eliteness, as well as leadership as a way to disrupt the problem of disadvantaged schools. The key findings of the research indicate that the people who embark on the TfA pathway into teaching do so holding in tension the desire to be of service to disadvantaged communities, with the desire to progress their careers in both the corporate sphere and as leaders in the schools they enter. The stories the participants of this research tell warn of the dangers of expecting new teachers to have meaningful impact on systemic change that requires the setting up of a group of teachers that are considered elite and to stand in contrast to the existing teaching workforce.
Declaration

- the thesis comprises only my original work towards the D.Ed.
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
- the thesis is fewer than 60000 words, exclusive of tables, bibliographies and appendices.

Sally Windsor

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Contents

Foreword ..................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter One - Introducing the study .......................................................................................... 6
    Research questions ................................................................................................................. 9
    Significance of this study ......................................................................................................... 9
    Structure of the thesis ........................................................................................................... 11

Chapter Two - Context and Origins of the Teach for Australia Program ......................... 14
    Inequality and the Commonwealth Government involvement in school education .......... 14
    Neoliberal education ideology .............................................................................................. 22
    The “Teach for” (in) Australia ............................................................................................... 24
    The Teach for Australia Organisation 2009 - 2014 ............................................................... 30
    Teach for Australia and the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) ................ 31
    Teach for Australia, Teach for America, Teach First and the Teach for All network ........ 32
    Teach for Australia recruits – The Associates ....................................................................... 34
    Chapter summary .................................................................................................................. 35

Chapter Three- Literature and debates .................................................................................... 36
    Attracting quality teachers .................................................................................................... 37
    Revolving-door in and out of teaching .................................................................................. 41
    Effectiveness of “Teach for” teachers ................................................................................... 43
    Quality teachers from and part of an elite group ................................................................. 46
    Altruistic and ‘active citizen’ teachers .................................................................................. 48
    TfA as a corporate education reform .................................................................................... 51
    Pierre Bourdieu’s framework on schooling culture and inequality ...................................... 53
    Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ - field, cultural and social capital, and habitus ......................... 53
    Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 58

Chapter Four - Methodology ..................................................................................................... 60
    Study design .......................................................................................................................... 62
    The Participants ..................................................................................................................... 62
    “Disadvantaged Schools” in the study ................................................................................ 65
    Data Collection Methods ...................................................................................................... 68
    Data Analysis ......................................................................................................................... 74
    Trustworthiness .................................................................................................................... 75
    Ethical considerations .......................................................................................................... 76
List of tables

Table 1: Features of the “Teach For” programs in Australia, the Unites States and the United Kingdom ................................................................. 33
Table 2: Participant information ........................................................................................................................................... 64
Table 3: School information for 2011 ........................................................................................................................................... 66
Table 4: ICSEA Quartiles 2011 ........................................................................................................................................... 68

List of figures

Figure 1: Newspaper Article from The Australian .................................................................29
Figure 2: Mission statement from the Teach for Australia website ................................. 80
Figure 3: “The Problem” page from the Teach for Australia website................................. 81
Figure 4: Facebook post from the Teach for Australia Organisation................................. 86
Figure 5: Brochure excerpt............................................................................................................ 87
Figure 6: “Our impact” page from the Teach for Australia website................................. 92
Figure 7: Brochure to Principals excerpt................................................................................... 97
Figure 8: Newspaper article from The Age ........................................................................ 99
Figure 9: Section of online application form........................................................................ 100
Figure 10: Newspaper editorial from The Age ................................................................. 104
Figure 11: “Leadership development” page from the Teach for Australia website....106
# List of acronyms used in this thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEU</td>
<td>Australian Education Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>The Australian Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATAR</td>
<td>Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank. This score determines entry into tertiary education courses for students whom complete Year 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>Business Council of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCG</td>
<td>Boston Consulting Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments. This council is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia and made up of the State and Territory premiers, chief ministers and the respective portfolio ministers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYI</td>
<td>The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>The Victorian (State) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWWR</td>
<td>The (former) Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP</td>
<td>Disadvantaged Schools Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSEA</td>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>The Teach for Australia Leadership Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-NCP</td>
<td>The Liberal National Country Party (1970s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNP</td>
<td>The Liberal National Party also referred to as the Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGSE</td>
<td>The Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Secondary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TfA</td>
<td>Teach for Australia. TfA refers to both the incorporated organisation and the pathway into teaching. If the organisation is being referred to it will appear as “the TfA organisation” in the body of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education. This the leaving certificate awarded upon successful completion of Year 12 and dictates the ATAR score of school leavers.</td>
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I am the eldest child of two school teachers which meant growing up as a “teachers’ kid” where social occasions were dominated by teachers. However, I was not a “born teacher”. The start of my own teaching career was what could be considered unusual. After a number of years travelling, which included a short stint teaching English to adults in Japan, I returned to Australia where I enrolled in a Postgraduate Diploma of Education (Dip Ed.). Within weeks of enrolling in this part-time course I responded to an advertisement for a teacher in a “hard-to-staff” school, for which there were no other applicants. The following week I was standing, alone and unqualified, in front of classes of Year 8 and Year 9 students wondering what to do next. I had never taught a class of school-age students and had little knowledge of just what that would entail.

What I did know, very quickly, was that I did not know how to teach. I had a limited capacity to help struggling students, who were the ones that needed it most. I was aware that at the beginning of my classroom teaching career that my teaching was ineffective, unimaginative, and teacher-centred. Without the learning theories, pedagogy and teaching strategies I later learned from both amazing and generous colleagues and from further study the students I taught would have suffered. I continued to undertake study during the first two years of my full-time teaching position and gained a diploma in education. While this was a unique start to teaching (at that point in time), it has long been the case that teachers are placed in classrooms before they have adequate, if any, official teacher training and certification.

A number of years later I was lucky enough to reside in Sweden and gain a teaching position in a small Swedish Middle and Primary school. We lived close to the school, a place with mostly public housing or council-owned apartments and people from all over the world, a true melting pot of a neighbourhood. Not only was I amazed by the students and families I met there, but the work of the school impressed me with the harmonious community it helped build. The students and their families were from places as diverse as Libya, Sudan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, Iraq, Iran, Australia,
India and Sweden. What intrigued me most was that many of the students attending this school were, what in Australia would be referred to as, “disadvantaged”. Although a few students were Swedish children, most were newly-arrived refugees, or the Swedish born children of refugees and immigrants, some from broken or single parent low-income families, and a few others were the expatriate children of researchers at the local university. There was a wide ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and family diversity in the school, yet educational outcomes for the students were not diverse and could not be predicted from the personal background of the students. In fact this school has been repeatedly ranked in the top 10 schools in Sweden for student achievement in national testing (UNT, 2011). This national testing occurs just once, at the end of Year 9 when students are about to enter Gymnasiet i.e. Senior secondary or High School.

What was working at this school could largely be attributed to the teachers. Most teachers had worked there a long time, and all mentored teaching students at least once a year. I too, mentored student teachers during my tenure and became interested in how their training at university and with me in this unique school interacted. Questions of social justice, equal opportunity to learn, and cultural and ethnic diversity played on my mind and I wanted to explore how teacher educators could assist those training to teach in the building of harmonious and cohesive classrooms and communities. What did pre-service teachers need in their preparation before entering diverse and disadvantaged schools?

In 2009, back on Australian soil, I had what Anthony Giddens (1991) coined my “fateful moment”, a time that “the ‘business as usual’ attitude that is so important...is inevitably broken through” (p. 114). I was teaching in the Masters of Teaching (Secondary) program at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) when a student showed me an article in The Age newspaper titled “Best, brightest ‘to turn to teaching’” (Drape, 2009) and asked me what I thought. The article described a “plan” called Teach for Australia where:

[Top university graduates will be coaxed in front of blackboards with the offer of fast-tracked teaching degrees, mentoring and a guaranteed corporate career after]
they leave the classroom...Through Teach for Australia, "high-achieving" graduates will sign up for an intensive two-year placement in disadvantaged schools (Drape, 2009).

I was intrigued by what I read in that article for a number of reasons. First, the fact that a student teacher brought it to my attention and was interested in what I thought. This student had already formed the opinion that he would want to be involved in such a program but he felt “it was bit late now, besides I would never be a top uni grad”. What did such an initiative mean for people like this student, who had desired to become a teacher for a number of years, but would not be admitted to the program? Were the “top university graduates” the right people to be targeted to enter teaching?

Second, I felt an affinity with the people who might be part of such an initiative, in so far as they would be teaching before they had either a) any (realistic) classroom teaching experience; or b) training or teaching qualifications. That they would be enabled, even “fast-tracked” to complete teaching degrees and provided mentoring was, in my mind, an exciting albeit necessary component of such a plan. Seeking both collegial mentoring and a teaching qualification was something I had to initiate personally when I started teaching so the claim that these new recruits would be provided this bode well in my opinion.

Third, the claim that these new teachers would enter disadvantaged schools “where they can make the greatest difference” (Julia Gillard quoted in Drape, 2009) serendipitously aligned with my developing interest in diverse and low SES schools that create cohesive classrooms. Here were new teachers being targeted to enter schools that had been labelled disadvantaged (and, I assumed, diverse) and being expected to create and lead classrooms that ensure their students were learning and standards were being met. What tools would these new teachers need to build their classes? Did they already have these tools? Was equipping them with a set of tools good enough to make a difference?

Finally the notion that these recruits would gain a “guaranteed corporate career after they leave the classroom” warranted investigation. At the time this seemed to me, as
one with little knowledge of this type of pathway into teaching, counter-intuitive. I knew how hard the first two years of school classroom teaching were and fully understood why teacher retention rates were of concern to schools and policy makers alike. Why recruit these “high achievers” if not to keep them in the classrooms where they can make the greatest difference? Why only expect them to teach in the two years they are learning to teach?

The following year I was asked to teach the introductory educational psychology component of the Teach for Australia course. I met the second cohort of “best, brightest” university graduates about to embark on a teaching career and wondered how they would progress along the pathway. After my teaching involvement in the program was completed, I embarked on the research project that is the subject of this thesis – a study of the thinking and experiences of people drawn into the program, as a way of reflecting on the program, what it promises and what issues are embedded in these promises.
Chapter One - Introducing the study

This qualitative study is an investigation of Teach for Australia’s (TfA) mission to address educational disadvantage through recruiting outstanding graduates, and how the graduates’ perceptions of engaging with this mission are affirmed, challenged, or modified during their teaching experience. TfA is a distinctive form of recruiting and training teachers premised on the philosophy that “top university graduates” (Drape, 2009) can be fast tracked into school settings to confront and improve existing practices and inspire disadvantaged students to learn (TfA, 2011a). Its rationale makes particular assumptions about how the program will appeal to a group of university graduates that differs from those who would not otherwise enter teaching. The TfA program, promoted as a “new pathway into teaching” (DEEWR, 2010a), is built on the assumptions that these “high flyers” (MGSE, 2009; Tudge, 2010) who commit to teaching for two years will change lives in classrooms and lead systemic change to eliminate educational disadvantage in Australian Schools.

This introductory chapter links to my professional background, experience and influences described in the foreword. It offers a brief overview of the TfA context that frames the study, which is elaborated in Chapter Two and provides an overview of the study’s focus. The research questions are introduced and the significance of investigating the experiences of new teachers recruited through the TfA program is discussed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis chapters.

The Teach for Australia program is part of what is known as the “Teach for All” network. This network “comprises 30 social enterprises that pursue [a] unifying mission around the world” (“Teach for All: Locations & Programs,” 2013). They provide alternative pathways into teaching, modelled on the original program “Teach for America” and the younger British sibling “Teach First”. While similar in philosophy to Teach for America and Teach First the Australian model “has been modified to ensure the pathway provides an accredited alternative employment-based pathway into teaching” (Wheldon, McKenzie, Kleinhenz, & Reid, 2012, p. vii).
The original program, Teach for America, was Wendy Kopp’s “idea for a teacher corps that would place elite college graduates in teaching positions in the neediest urban and rural districts in the United States” (Labaree, 2010, p. 48). Teach for Australia was founded by another American Melodie Potts-Rosevear in 2008, who after spending time in an Indigenous community in Cape York, far north Queensland saw a need to address educational disadvantage by “inserting real talent”.

Teaching pathways such as Teach for Australia could be studied in a number of different ways. In the light of a vast body of sociological literature on educational inequality and disadvantage and an increasing literature either advocating or criticising teaching pathways of this type, I had three particular areas of interest for this study related to the kinds of claims being made for this program. The first is to explore the implication of the view that those becoming teachers by undertaking this pathway are valuable Australian citizens because of their willingness to serve and make a difference to the lives of others. This is, as David Labaree (2010) described in reference to Teach for America, an opportunity for those involved in the program to “do good” (p. 48). It has long been held that one of the requirements of the job of teaching is a strong sense of altruism (Lortie, 1975). In this pathway the sense of altruism is heightened because the new teachers are entering the profession in settings that are described as both “disadvantaged” and “hard to staff” (Rickards, 2009) and where they “can make the greatest difference” (Julia Gillard quoted in Drape, 2009). By naming the program Teach for Australia teaching and citizenship are linked. By being funded wholly by the Australian Commonwealth Government there is little doubt that it is considered an important part of a national approach to teacher recruitment.

My second interest is the notion that it is considered strategic to address disadvantage by recruiting the right type (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006) of person to work in schools even for a limited time. With claims that teachers are considered the “greatest in-school factor” affecting student outcomes (DEEWR, 2010a; Hattie, 2003, 2012), it follows that the people entering schools to teach must be teachers of quality (Dinham, Ingvarson, & Kleinhenz, 2008). Thus, the premise that
those who have high achievement levels at university - the “high flyers”- will become teachers of the highest quality underpins this type of recruitment plan.

Third, is the premise that when high achieving university graduates enter social fields such as disadvantaged schools as teachers, they become role models whose presence will be transformative for their students. It is their habitus and understanding of the “rules of the game”- the school or education game (Bourdieu, 1977a) - that allow those involved to be “change makers” who can address educational disadvantage. Is this what happens?

These three foci coupled with my interests in inequality, disadvantage and social justice in education informed the aims of this study:

- to investigate the framework of thinking that the TfA program invites through its mission statement and promotional materials in relation to addressing educational disadvantage; and
- to explore the perceptions of the new teachers, referred to by TfA as Associates, and their experiences of the TfA pathway to teaching in relation to its mission and framework.

Using qualitative data generated through interviews, email correspondence and document analysis, responses to these questions are sought. A number of Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas are instrumental to the framing of this study, in particular his “thinking tools” of “fields, habitus and capital” (Bourdieu, 1977b, 1984, 1986, 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), discussed in Chapter Three. These “thinking tools” are used to support the critical analysis of the data.

The six TfA Associates who volunteered to participate in this study entered Victorian Government High Schools and began teaching at the beginning of the 2011 school year. They had completed an intensive teacher education course of six weeks duration, known as Initial Intensive at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education (MGSE) in December 2010 and January 2011. The initial intensive is a residential course where a teacher education component is undertaken during the days and the Teach for Australia Organisation offers “social and cohort building
activities” in the evenings, which included sessions on leadership. This marked the start of their teacher education course, a course which involved further study alongside their teaching responsibilities that would continue for the academic years 2011 and 2012. Upon successful completion of all the units of study, the new teachers were awarded a Postgraduate Diploma of Education (TfA) from the MGSE and would satisfy the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) requirements for full registration.

Research questions
The following questions framed the study:

What are the assumptions about teachers, active citizenship and effectively addressing disadvantage in schools evident in the TfA organisation’s mission statements and promotional material?

How are Associates’ perceptions of their capacity to fulfil Teach for Australia’s mission of changing lives in classrooms and leading systemic change, affirmed challenged or modified during their classroom experiences?

Significance of this study
At a time when the prevailing view of government schools servicing students from poorer areas is that “[t]hey had become sick schools, denuded of student numbers and resources, and thanks to these changes, repositories of academic failure” (Lamb, 2007, p. 2), and when teachers are considered the “greatest in-school factor” (DEEWR, 2010a; Hattie, 2003, 2012) affecting student outcomes, gaining insights into an initiative claiming to address academic failure or more specifically disadvantage by supplying quality teachers holds value.

This research allows for reflection on what six beginning teachers, say about their experiences in their specific situations. Because this is a close up study of the thinking and experiences of a limited number of participants it cannot make claims about the Associates as a whole, yet it does allow a perspective on the claims and rhetoric of the program and its orientations from the perspectives of some of those who have been drawn into it. This study also seeks specific knowledge about the claims of an expanding program that has received bipartisan support and considerable funding
from the Australian Commonwealth Government. In fact, in April of 2013, before taking government in the September election of that year, the opposition spokesman on Education (who has since become Education Minister) Christopher Pyne stated:

Teach for Australia’s future is rosy under the Coalition. Teach for Australia is one of the few government education investments that has been successful in the last six years.

(quoted in Topsfield, 2013)

Despite claims of TfA’s success such as that made by Minister Pyne, there have not yet been any definitive studies undertaken that provide evidence for better student outcomes due to the presence of TfA Associates. The current research gathers an understanding not of the success or otherwise of the people involved (there are many testimonials claiming the Associates are successful) but of the Associates’ perceptions of why they were selected as likely quality teachers and of their understanding of how and whether they contribute to student success for these reasons. Globally, quality teachers are being identified as key drivers in ensuring the success of students who will sustain the success of their nation in the future (Barrett, 2009). How seriously do new teachers, teachers who are told they are teaching for their nation take this responsibility? As a small scale study, of what is to-date a small scale teacher recruitment initiative, this present study does not map the experiences of all the people entering TfA or provide a definitive account of what it does or does not achieve. Rather, it seeks to investigate how the program speaks to potential participants, and what is borne out or challenged as they proceed in it. Although as a small scale study this research provides a limited story of what is happening in the TfA program, its close-up view provides a salient means of speaking back to the literature and the program’s framing.

In addition to providing a perspective and reflection on TfA as a framework and pathway into teaching the research also adds to the wider body of knowledge about new teachers and their experiences. As such it has the potential to challenge teachers and educational leaders to think about the experiences they offer and the cultural boundaries placed on new teachers in schools, particularly when there is a dislocation
between the cultural and social worlds of the schools and the new teachers entering them.

**Structure of the thesis**

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research project.

In **Chapter Two** a brief review of Commonwealth policy responses to educational disadvantage in Australia between the 1970s and 2008 is presented in order to explain the political and educational landscape in which TfA was established. Following the historical policy review, the origins of the Teach for Australia program as recounted by the organisation’s founder is given. To conclude the chapter an outline of Teach for Australia and similar models is given.

**Chapter Three** contains a review of literature in the main domains to which the current research is directed. TfA as a reform strategy, implemented and supported by the Government, is one that emphasises the value of recruiting high flyers to address disadvantage. The chapter discusses literature in relation to the kinds of issues embraced in the program: attracting and retaining teachers of quality; teaching as a form of active citizenship; and, corporate and market-based education reforms. Chapter Three will finally discuss the work of Pierre Bourdieu as it pertains to schooling in order to provide a language to describe the situated nature of this study.

In **Chapter Four** the methodological framework that guides this research is introduced and contextualised. The chapter includes broad biographical and demographic information about the research participants, and some more details of the schools they begin teaching in. The research methods are presented and data analysis techniques discussed.

Chapters Five and Six present the research findings. **Chapter Five** examines the assumptions and implicit understanding of citizenship found within the TfA promotional material as well as newspaper articles related to the initiative. The chapter examines the evidence of the Associates motivations for entering teaching through TfA, their views on school leadership and their aspirations within school education.
Chapter Six examines how the life structure and experiences of the participants of the study contributes to their understanding of disadvantaged students and schools. The chapter builds a narrative that monitors how the perceptions change over the time of the two-year TfA commitment.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven reflects on the findings of this research.
Chapter Two - Context and Origins of the Teach for Australia Program

Teach for Australia has emerged at a time where there is a global trend towards such initiatives, in a nation that has a long history of providing free and compulsory education for its future citizens. It is a program that has grown from the “Teach for” model of teacher recruitment and is part of the “Teach for All” network, a network of like programs in 30 different countries ("Teach for All: Locations & Programs," 2013). This chapter will provide a brief historical overview of the Commonwealth Government of Australia’s changing levels of involvement in school education, focusing on policy related to addressing disadvantage, until the Teach for Australia Pathway entered Australian education in 2009. A detailed account of the origins of the Teach for Australia program as recounted by the organisation’s founder in an interview for this study follows. The chapter concludes with further information on both the TfA Organisation and the pathway it promotes, as they existed in the period in which the current research was undertaken.

Inequality and the Commonwealth Government involvement in school education

In 1872 the colony of Victoria implemented the Education Act (Parliament-of-Victoria, 1872) which was to set a precedent and thus strongly influence later education Acts in the other five British colonies in Australia. This act, which was to become known as the Act for “Secular, compulsory and free” education (Grundy, 1972), “provided for the establishment of a Ministry of Public Instruction...[and] effectively paved the way for a national system of state-controlled elementary schools” (Bessant, 1984, p. 5). Between 1872 and 1895 each colony had passed free compulsory and secular education Acts which made school education a state responsibility (Potts, 2000). Upon Australian federation in 1901, each of the states and territories were left “holding residual power over education because the new Constitution made no decisions about federal responsibility for education. Thus there was no national system of education” (Babacan, 2007, p. 148).
In Australia, currently there are eight different government school jurisdictions. Within each school jurisdiction provision is distributed across three sectors – Government, Catholic and Independent each with “different characteristics, including different resourcing systems” (Keating, Annett, Burke, & O’Hanlon, 2012, p. 6). While responsibility for school education lies with the State and Territory governments, especially in the government sector, it is now recognised schooling in Australia operates as a partnership between the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the non-government school sector. This partnership recognises a range of national objectives and outcomes, as well as a number of shared reform directions of national significance…Funding for schooling is shared between state and territory governments and the Australian Government [in] a complex funding environment (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 37).

A partnership model such as this requires reciprocation. The Commonwealth Government of Australia has “limited constitutional power in respect of schooling, and the authority it has relates mainly to the power to make grants” (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 38). These grants supply funds to the state and territory education systems which are awarded on “such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit” (Keating et al., 2012, p. 9), which in effect ties such grants to government policies. Tied to funding agreements are expectations of schools that they operate towards national objectives and outcomes and participate in reforms designed to enhance the national interests.

This is not a new phenomenon in Australian schooling. According to Albert G. Austin (1961), Australian state schooling has always addressed three main social issues linked closely to the developing national identity. The first related to instilling respect for law and order in the ever expanding group of children between the ages of five and fourteen. Second there was the need to educate those who would be voting in the future, which meant following democratic processes. Finally, education was assumed to be a “necessity in order to gain national prosperity” (Austin, 1961, p. 173).

Although elementary schooling had been compulsory and free for a century across the nation, it was not until the 1970s that the Australian Commonwealth government
became systematically involved in combatting inequality via funding mechanisms to the school education system which was riding an industrial boom and driven by enormous increases in demand at the secondary and tertiary level. They inherited a tradition in which social justice in education was satisfied when the state provided a uniform basic education service for all children. However, the state never accomplished this and by the end of the 1960s the failure within the boom was becoming increasingly obvious.

(Connell, White, & Johnston, 1992, p. 448)

In December of 1972, Gough Whitlam’s Federal Labor (ALP) government ended a long period of conservatism in Australian Parliament and recognised that the ‘failure within the boom’ included manifest growing inequalities in school education. Differences in educational outcomes were increasing between children of different classes even while the same basic school education was being provided to children of all class backgrounds (Connell et al., 1992). In keeping with an election promise Whitlam promptly commissioned a report into school funding. The results produced the influential report, “Schools in Australia” (Karmel, 1973), which became widely known as the Karmel Report. It stated:

Out-of-school experiences, levels of aspiration and affective ties linking the individual to family and peer group are more powerful determinants of capacity and motivation for formal learning than anything done in schools (p. 23.)

The Karmel report reflected the views of the prominent American research report Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966) seven years earlier conducted by James Coleman. The Interim Commission recommended:

The Coleman study in America indicated that the concentration in a school of pupils of comparatively low aspiration and achievement was in itself an important source of disadvantage.....[and so] special grants should be made available to improve the quality of educational services and of life in schools identified as being disadvantaged on the basis of characteristics of the neighbourhoods from which they draw pupils.

(Karmel, 1973, p. 111).

The Karmel Report was the first, in Australia, to describe schools as “disadvantaged”. It specified that the term disadvantage was chosen to indicate systemic disadvantage rather than individual or cultural deficit (Karmel, 1973), and so, the term “disadvantaged schools” entered Australian education policy and research literature discourse. Schools were categorised as disadvantaged according to the “Index of
Disadvantage”, a statistical tool that used census data to identify the most in-need school catchment areas.

The Whitlam government lasted just one electoral term; it governed from 1972-1975, but was to have an enduring effect on education in Australia. In his account of leading the Labor government Whitlam noted:

For the first time, national resources were harnessed for the express purpose of providing adequate standards in education. For the first time, all students could expect to achieve equal opportunities in education.

(Whitlam, 1985, p. 315).

Yet before the Australian Labor Party lost power in 1975, funding cuts to much of this “adequate standards in education” provision were already taking place (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). The subsequent Liberal-National Country Party (L-NCP) Coalition Government under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser’s leadership adopted a discourse that reflected its new directions. Terms like “freedom of choice in schooling”, “assessment”, “evaluation”, “excellence”, and “rationalisation” (Morrow, 2004) became used more frequently than terms such as equity and disadvantage. The main agenda throughout the capitalist world “was not to repair the welfare state, but to dismantle it: by reducing public services, deregulating the economy, [and] privatising public institutions” (Connell, 2002, p. 323). Fraser’s aim when coming to government was to cut both Commonwealth and State spending in order to reduce inflation, so “discussion of education under the Fraser government must be seen in this context” (Spaull, 1979, p. 134).

During the 1980s there were changing social and economic conditions in Australia (indeed the world over) that altered and restructured the labour market in what is characterised as the neo-liberal political paradigm. This fundamentally changed the “ideological environment of schools” (Connell, 2002, p. 323) and saw a strengthening of neoliberal agendas in policy making entering education (Apple, 2006; Connell et al., 1992; Lingard, 2000; Skourdoumbis, 2012).

The incoming Labor (ALP) government in 1983 under Prime Minister Robert (Bob) Hawke spent the remainder of the decade in a “period of conflict and uncertainty
about equity policy” (Connell et al., 1992, p. 450). As Connell and colleagues (1992) argued, because the Hawke Labor Government was operating in a global neoliberal context while the numbers of children living in poverty in Australia rose steeply it “faced an increasing need to justify itself to the labour movement rank and file” (Connell et al., 1992, p. 50). This resulted in different justifications being given for federal involvement in education during the Labor years of the eighties and nineties than under the earlier Whitlam government. Whitlam had argued that federal involvement was crucial for social reasons, whereas Hawke (Prime Minister 1983-1991) and Paul Keating (Prime Minister 1991-1996) “argued the national importance of education, but largely because of the putative economic significance of education in producing the types of workers required in a globalised post-Fordist economy” (Lingard, 2000, p. 27).

The eighties under the Labor Government was a time characterised by deregulation and the increasing effects of globalisation, and as noted earlier, strong voices of economic rationalism. Simon Marginson (1997) observed that in Australian education, again taking the lead of the USA and Britain, “All other objectives in education including social equity, were joined to and subordinated to the primary goal of economic competitiveness” (p. 152). The Commonwealth therefore demanded value for money, and to measure this, required the demonstration of quantifiable outcomes. As Connell (2002) noted, “equity programs came under pressure to justify themselves in terms of cost-effectiveness” (p.324), which of course, they found difficult. This further highlighted that the “discourse of what education was about had changed markedly since the 1970s” (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 30).

After the election of a Liberal-National Coalition Government under Prime Minister John Howard social justice was pushed off the agenda at the Commonwealth level with “the newly elected conservative government instructing its public servants not to use the expression” (Jupp, 2007, p. 14). There were a “number of radical changes to Commonwealth education funding policy [that included] huge increases in funding to private schools [and] a new funding model biased to the more wealthy private schools” (Babakan, 2007, p. 148). At the same time the longest running federal equity
program in the world - the Disadvantaged Schools Program (Connell, White, & Johnston, 1990) was axed immediately by the new government. This was but one example that demonstrated a shift away from strong policy emphasis on equity, access and participation in education towards a discourse where education is viewed as a commodity to be bought and sold. Schools were expected to compete with each other and appeal to consumers i.e. parents and students to win market share (Reid, 2009).

Thomson and Holdsworth (2003) suggest that the late 1990s was a period in which the production of privilege was “reinvigorated and realigned…. [the privileged could attend] high status public and publicly funded private schools and enjoy gifted and talented classes and an ‘academic’ curriculum…. others could have training in poorly funded state schools” (p.377). The reinvigoration of privilege that came with the funnelling of public funds into elite public schools and private schools led to a growing resentment of “the education profession who were becoming tired of the tactic of denigration of schools and teachers by Federal Education Ministers” (Reid, 2009, p. 3).

By the turn of the century Commonwealth funding for schools was conditional on the acceptance of teaching prescribed (and conservative) values under the Howard government. Prime Minister Howard had criticised public schools for being “too politically correct and too values neutral” and wanted “to recast values at the centre of…education policy” (Clark, 2008, p. 4). Education Minister Brendan Nelson had grown “impatient with having to win the support of the states and territories in order to implement his government’s ideas… the new tactic was to threaten to withhold funds from the states and territories unless they agreed to implement certain curriculum changes…determined unilaterally by the national government” (Reid, 2009, p. 3). This type of coercive federalism (Reid, 2009) saw the birth of a number of values-pursuing (in contrast to disadvantage addressing) initiatives which demonstrated a nationalist agenda. The values policies were widely criticised as providing a “simplistic and uncontested national narrative” (Clark, 2008, p. 9).
The participants who are entering Teach for Australia and who are the subject of the current study were children of this era in Australian education. Their entire secondary schooling was undertaken under the Howard Coalition Government and they each were beneficiaries of the high status public and elite private schooling that reinforced their privilege. This was at a time characterised by policies leaning towards nationalism and the political rhetoric surrounding the teaching force implied neglect or disinterest.

The 2007 election of Kevin Rudd as Australia’s Prime Minister, in many ways echoed the election of Whitlam 35 years earlier. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) came to power, ending the conservative Coalition Government’s 12 years in office, with one of its central promises being the delivery of an “education revolution” (Reid, 2009). Education Minister Julia Gillard immediately stated that the Federal Government wanted to foster cooperation on the provision of school education with the States and Territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Focus remained on the economic priorities and human capital building effects of education on the nation, but the new Labor Government once again directed discourse to educational equity claiming it as a “moral issue for our country. A nation that thinks of itself as essentially egalitarian can’t sit by idly while those from disadvantaged backgrounds are denied...life opportunities”(Gillard, 2008b).

The Rudd government, with Gillard as Education Minister, implemented a form of capital investment entitled “Smarter Schools – National Partnerships” which was a joint initiative between the Australian Commonwealth Government and each of the State and Territory Governments and was an attempt to “ensure every child receives the highest quality education possible” (DEEWR, 2010c). “Smarter schools” included three key areas, and then created corresponding national partnerships. These were the Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities (LSESSC) National Partnership, the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy (LAN) and the National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (TQNP). The TQNP was premised on the assumption that “quality teaching can overcome location and other disadvantages and is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and
achievement” (DEEWR, 2010a, 2010c, 2011d). Education Minister Gillard claimed that “the better the teachers, the better the education system” in an address to the Business Council of Australia (BCA). She went on to state:

To improve school performance I believe we need to do four things:
We need to get the right people to become teachers;
We need to develop them into effective and inspiring educators;
We need to lift the standards of teaching for all students and target excellent teaching at those students who need it the most, particularly those from the most disadvantaged communities; and
We need to ensure that school leadership, facilities and curriculum enable us to do all of the above to an unsurpassed level of excellence.

(Gillard, 2008a)

One of the broad areas for reform (and the first stated) of the TQNP partnership was “attracting the best graduates to teaching through additional pathways into teaching” (DEEWR, 2010a, 2011d). This was then further expanded by naming the “Teach for Australia initiative [as a] key reform under this National Partnership” (DEEWR, 2010a).

In November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

[A]nnounced the objective of the agreement- to create a genuinely national, quality teaching workforce by targeting critical points in the teacher ‘lifecycle’ by:
Attracting the best entrants to teaching;
Training them through a world-class education system

(Wheldon et al., 2012, p. 3)

At the same time as the aforementioned National partnerships were being implemented as Commonwealth policy priorities, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) released the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008) which specifically stated the intentions of the DEECD to move towards a model of teacher recruitment based on existing overseas programs. It stated:

We will create a wider range of entry points for the teaching profession in government schools, including establishing a scheme from other fields to enter teaching. This will be modelled on the best elements of existing successful programs, such as Teach First in the UK and Teach for America in the USA.

(DEECD, 2008, p. 27)

The alignment of the Commonwealth and Victorian Government’s intentions to create alternative pathways into the teaching profession meant that the formation of such an alternative became possible in the Australian state of Victoria. Fertile ground
was provided for the new pathway to grow and clear existing regulatory hurdles that had previously prevented unqualified teachers from entering classrooms. However, the alignment of intent of these two governments for different pathways into teaching was a catalyst only, the implementation of such a program was handed to an external body Teach for Australia- the incorporated organisation, headed by an American expatriate with a “passion and the knowledge of effective models working overseas” (TfA 2013).

The Teach for Australia initiative is a fast-track teacher recruitment and placement plan based on a program that started in the United States of America (USA). The original program, Teach for America, was the vision of Wendy Kopp while an undergraduate student at Princeton in 1989 (“Teach For America - Our History,” 2012). Kopp's thesis outlined the idea for a teacher corps that would place elite college graduates in teaching positions in the schools most in need throughout urban and rural districts in the United States (Labaree, 2010). The college graduates would commit two years of their lives working with people who were often denied any privilege (Popkewitz, 1998) where it is claimed as Corp members they “could have a real impact on disadvantaged kids. Because of their energy and commitment, they would be relentless in their efforts to ensure their students achieved” (Kopp, 2003, p. 6).

Neoliberal education ideology
Before discussing the Teach for Australia program in Australia the wider ideological context of education is discussed. As Sedenary (1991) noted, there was a distinct way in which education was viewed at the national level during the 1980s, which coincided with the global uptake of neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism is the theory that the “invisible hand of the market” is considered to most objectively drive all interactions within society (Harvey, 2005). Those who advocate for neoliberal reform do so with the argument that markets can more efficiently and effectively provide the social goods that have traditionally been provided by public institutions (Apple, 2006; Clarke & Newman, 1997). Schools and teachers accordingly have been reframed as service providers, and the students and their families as consumers in a market where
education is treated as a commodity to be bought and sold (Apple, 2006; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Labaree, 1997; Saltman, 2009). Neoliberalism in the educational context is characterised by competition, standardization, school choice and test based accountability. The Director General of the National Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation Finland Pasi Sahlberg (2011, 2012) refers to this using the acronym GERM – Global Education Reform Movement. The GERM is characterised by five features, which Sahlberg explains, are missing from the Finnish school system. The five features are: borrowing reform ideas from the market; standardised teaching and learning; mandated teaching of prescribed curriculum; focus on literacy and numeracy; and test-based accountability and control. These five features do not appear in the Finnish school system, which consistently tops international comparisons of schools such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Sahlberg also notes that Finland do well in other areas of society (Sahlberg, 2012) and it is a network of interrelate factors – educational, political and cultural that ensure the success of Finland’s school system (Sahlberg, 2007) Michael Apple (1995) agrees that it is a mistake to undertake school reform in isolation when he argued in Education and Power that “we need to understand much more thoroughly the connection between education and the ideological, political, and economic spheres of society and how the school partakes in each of them” (p. 7).

In neoliberal rhetoric schools are positioned as failing in many ways and market-based managerial policies are seen as the answer. School failure may look like a lack of innovation, or lack of accountability or that schools are suffering under the heavy weight of bureaucracy or because they are staffed with teachers of poor quality (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2007). A commitment to remedy such failings in neoliberal ideology, relies on the methods of what Clarke and Newman (1997) refer to as, the “managerial state”, one that is highly technical, formulaic in the extreme, and more often than not falsely presented as unbiased and apolitical. An explanation of one aspect of the managerial paradigm is the encouragement of public organisations to develop closer links with the private sector through a panoply of ‘partnership’ arrangements. Underpinning many of these attempts to bring about
change has been a belief that public organizations must be exposed to some variant of market forces in order to bring about any fundamental cultural shift

(Clarke & Newman, 1997, p. 85)

David Labaree (2010) described Teach for America as “one of the most successful efforts in social entrepreneurship in recent history [and] a major player in the world of education reform and educational policy” (p. 48), as evidenced by the rapid expansion of the organisation, and the kudos that expansion has earned from a variety of political and business leaders. Framed as a social enterprise, Teach for America has prospered in America’s neoliberal climate. Similarly in Australia a neoliberal ideology has allowed partnerships between TfA and Australia’s commonwealth and (several) state and territory governments to flourish. These partnerships are indicative of the managerial paradigm, and are crucial to the inception and subsequent survival of the organisation. On the Commonwealth Government side of this particular educational partnership, the TfA it is able to fund a national teacher recruitment strategy that is designed to ensure “quality teachers” enter schools with students that most need them (Gillard, 2008a), throughout the nation.

The “Teach for” (in) Australia

This research sought to understand not only the aims and rationale of the TfA program but also how such a program was initiated in Australia. An interview with the founder and CEO of the Teach for Australia organisation Melodie Potts-Rosevear was undertaken in order to get her perspective on the background and creation of the program. The section that follows provides information that is drawn primarily from this interview, in which Ms Potts-Rosevear granted permission to be quoted. Information was also gleaned from other published reports and interviews.

Melodie Potts-Rosevear grew up in the American state of North Carolina (Potts-Rosevear, 2012), and upon graduation from university worked at the Boston
Consulting Group (BCG)\(^1\) as a management consultant. One of the projects she worked on for BCG was a:

School reconfiguration and achievement gap reduction project in Atlanta, Georgia [where there was] literally a set of railroad tracks that divided the community. North of the tracks white and south of the tracks black. You could predict their outcomes on what their race was.

(Potts-Rosevear 2012)

This was Potts-Rosevear’s first experience with school education policy, outside her own schooling. She had neither been a Teach for America Corps member nor involved with Teach for America on the “school reconfiguration and achievement gap reduction project” although she did have a number of friends who had been Corps members. Potts-Rosevear explained, that she had one friend in particular “who worked for Teach for America and it fundamentally changed his life....I actually lived with him [at the time]” (Potts-Rosevear, 2012) which she claims gave her a good view of the impact a Corps member can have in schools. Working on an “achievement gap reduction project”, having friends work as Teach for America Corps members, and then moving to Australia combine to form part of the narrative of Teach for Australia’s beginnings. Potts-Rosevear, recounted her journey to Australia and what she claims as the beginnings of TfA.

I’d been accepted into the Kennedy School of Government [Harvard] at this stage but I was debating whether to combine that with an MBA and thought the best way to decide if it was business or policy was to look for something completely different, and through BCG came across the Cape York Institute\(^2\) (CYI). The CYI had just been funded by the Queensland and Federal governments, but had not been started. [The] business plan and operating model was not yet there, but they were actively looking for people to come and help set it up. I looked [Cape York] up on a map and moved over.

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\(^1\) Boston Consulting Group is one of the largest corporate sponsors of the Teach for America program and claims “A founding relationship since 2009 with Teach For Australia, a pioneering social initiative to confront educational disadvantage in challenging schools in Australia” (BCG, 2013).

I met Noel [Pearson] when I arrived and we kind of hit it off and I became a very close thought partner of his for the next two years. This was a very interesting introduction to Australia and to Australian politics for me. Noel is a quite connected and quite complex individual and has such clarity of passion and thought when it comes to his own...people. I however, benefited from being not from Australia so could ask stupid questions.

The seminal moment for me, it wasn’t a lightning bolt but one in a series of little mustard seeds that had been planted was when I was in Aurukun, which is a community on the western part of the peninsula that probably has about 1200 to 1500 people. [It is] Rather large and often in the news for all kinds of unsavoury reasons. I was at the general store and there was this poster... an A3 poster that said “Celebrating the fantastic attenders for Term 2 for the Aurukun Western Cape College campus” and it listed by name all of the kids, 100% attendance, 95%...all the way down to 60%. There were 47 names on the list and then some really small print that said that 47 kids came to school 3 or more days per week on average, per week this term 198 kids came to school for 2 or less days...so you know, let’s all do better. What I thought was really ironic and bittersweet and complex about that poster was all that it said about what was going on. And more than I knew, right? So what it said was we are celebrating kids who come to school three days a week because things are so bad and we as a white institution don’t know what to do about it so we are going to celebrate the kids that are there with 70-75% attendance and name them publicly. And you just think ‘how warped is that?’ Yet you can understand why they would have done it, right? There is, well 198 kids who weren’t there, no sense of what the school is going to do about that. And yet the kids that were on the list at 90/95/100% attendance we knew who they were, there was just a couple of family names there. We knew that even the best kids from that school were rocking up in Brisbane 7-8 years behind.....the best kids who had the most resilience were attending school were really far behind. So the kids aren’t coming, why is that? Yes there are multiple social problems. The school is celebrating mediocrity and they’re not sure what to do about it. And those kids that are there have such poor outcomes.....So to me.....I took a photo of the poster and thought this is worth effort.

So I was a real expat, from another country, but most of them [the people working for the CYI] were people out of Sydney or Brisbane. Most had done amazing things with their lives...you know... real talent...working alongside community development people who had been there for ages. And that powerful combination of an injection of talent that was not necessarily of the institutions and of the community, combined with people who were, led to a renaissance of...well to Noel he has said as much, a renaissance of his own thinking of how these social challenges could be tackled through programs, through policy change, through programs, through a whole bunch

3 Noel Pearson is the Head of the Cape York Institute, a prominent Aboriginal Elder, lawyer, activist and academic who in 2007/2008, first floated the idea of an initiative “to recruit experienced teachers and the brightest graduates to work in the most disadvantaged indigenous communities by offering performance linked incentives of up to $50000 a year. Called Teach for Australia” (Ferrari, 2008).
of different mechanisms. So I guess what I saw was that combination. I was thinking about fresh perspectives and talent combined with local experience and this fundamental human right issue of education...to me kind of...it's a logic that I am posing in retrospect, but it really gave me hope for a TfA type of idea, where you are trying to attract people who might not otherwise have come into the profession, and they've got very different kind of skills they need to learn, new schools and their communities....I saw a different version of that playing out. 

(Potts-Rosevear, 2012)

In Cape York Potts-Rosevear had witnessed “such poor outcomes” for students and a school “celebrating mediocrity” that she developed an understanding that for change to occur in these communities with such entrenched problems “real talent” from the city was needed. These people, who had chosen to be in Cape York came with “fresh perspectives”. This anecdote importantly reveals some of the local Australian conditions encountered and in which Potts-Rosevear found an opening in the educational landscape for an organisation such as TfA to enter. Using the CYI as an exemplar Potts-Rosevear was able to convince the Australian government that TfA could offer value by ensuring they recruited “real talent” in order that “these social challenges could be tackled” (Potts-Rosevear, 2012).

After the experience in Cape York, Potts-Rosevear returned to the United States and attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to complete a Masters Degree in Public Policy. In an interview for this research she described that during this time her studies,

[F]ocused on non-profit management and social policy, [I] took courses in child development, education policy et cetera et cetera... And I ended up taking that class on social enterprise and followed that up with a class on business planning and so I wrote the original business plan for Teach for Australia while I was at the Kennedy School. And when I had opportunities to do research for other courses I chose things... for example ‘The Harlem Children’s Zone’, so I did a thesis on that and I looked at the critiques of Teach For America and the evidence of success for Teach For America. There were lots of Teach for America and Teach First alumni at the Kennedy School. And there was another individual there that, unbeknownst to me - we only kind of connected in the last three months I was there, who was involved in setting up Teach for Chile. So randomly, there were two of us, and then more recently someone else that was there has been working on setting up Teach for South Korea. So there was something in the water, there was an idea that perhaps its international time had come.
In this section of Potts-Rosevear’s narrative the language of the market utilised by the TFA Organisation emerges and demonstrates how such a program may appeal directly to those in government as well as those who identify with the corporate sector. Potts-Rosevear went on to explain how she had convinced two government bodies to employ the TfA Organisation as a “third party” in new teacher recruitment.

I incorporated the organisation, so there would be an entity to deal with. I had the support of Macquarie University’s Vice Chancellor to really support my endeavours. We didn’t know if it would get up in Sydney or NSW first or not. So he was willing to play, almost the role of venture capitalist or venture philanthropist to kind of give me a bit of a home base. The Rudd Government had been elected, Gillard was talking about Education Revolutions, the Victorian Blueprint had included some stuff on a Teach First style initiative. So there were little snippets of rhetoric, sort of happening amongst politicians. So [I] managed to get what I felt was traction happening in Victoria, before I got traction from the Feds. In Victoria the department decided they wanted to explore what was in their blueprint. They weren’t convinced they needed to have a third party entity, they thought it could be a government program. I was pretty convinced that that wouldn’t work. That it needed to be a partnership, that the people we were going to try and target, you know, weren’t generally entering government service anyway so, you know, the value proposition needed to be different.

But nevertheless I rolled the dice, I had the relationship with Teach for All, which was also something that had developed in the time that I was considering all of this. [I] had that relationship, and I said [to the Victorian DEECD] I will give you all that I know, whatever that I have collected in my head- for free! I hope that at the end of this you will see value in a third party being involved, but I’m going to take a risk. The risk is that I give you everything I know and then you, government, are going to do it yourself and I’ll just hope it all goes well.

[So] right towards the end of November 2008 Julia Gillard announced at COAG⁴ that the Federal government would be pushing new pathways into teaching. So the Victorian government was already ready to put their money in. They had about eight million [dollars] they were going to put in, and then the Federal government says ‘we’ll do it’. So what is right about that is that the stars aligned and the Feds picked up the bill rather than the State, which has other consequences later on in terms of trying to get everyone contributing. But the Feds say we’ll pick it up, we’ll pay, the

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⁴ COAG is the Council of Australian Governments which is the “peak governmental forum in Australia. The members of COAG are the Prime Minister, State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The Prime Minister chairs COAG. The role of COAG is to promote policy reforms that are of national significance, or which need co-ordinated action by all Australian governments”(COAG, 2012).
state says fine we’ll supply the schools and spots and it kind of went from there… But that said I don’t think I did it. Right? I think it was an idea whose time had come and I think there was a predisposition and an interest and the fact that I was in the right place at the right time with a bit of, you know, thought having gone into the idea. I’m not saying that I aligned the stars (laughs)...I’m saying that it is serendipitous and when I heard about those things happening, I was able to go and say ‘have you thought about this? I’ve been studying this. I have written a plan.

(Potts-Rosevear, 2012)

Potts-Rosevear described the alignment between the political machinations or “snippets of rhetoric” during 2008 and her own preparation and availability to work on the program as “serendipitous”. It is unclear if any other person or organisation was prepared to the same degree to implement the “New Pathway in Teaching Initiative” (DEEWR, 2010a) being floated on a national level at that time. Although Noel Pearson had suggested the idea and the name Teach for Australia in 2007 he was unable to clear regulatory hurdles in the state of Queensland and create a program that would speak to his vision to “supply the brightest graduates to work in the most disadvantaged indigenous communities”(Ferrari, 2008) as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Newspaper article from The Australian (Ferrari, 2008).
Being able to create a new pathway into teaching in this manner required seizing the opportunities opened by the Commonwealth resolve of the time but also the willingness of the Victorian State Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to be involved. The DEECD was willing to hand over recruitment of a number of new teachers, negate teacher registration hurdles that require teachers to be certified in a Teacher Education program before entering classrooms, and provide teaching positions for those recruited in this pathway.

The Teach for Australia Organisation 2009 - 2014

Based in Melbourne the capital city of the State of Victoria, the Teach for Australia (TfA) Organisation became the coordinating body for a Commonwealth-backed new pathway into teaching in November 2008. The organisation became “responsible for the selection and recruitment of high calibre, non-teaching graduates for the program....to help secure our nation’s future” (DEEWR, 2010a). It was claimed to be an “initiative [that] enables top graduates from fields including maths, commerce, law and science to teach in schools where they can make the most difference” (DEEWR, 2011d). The Teach for Australia pathway, based on “effective models working overseas” (TfA, 2011g), aligned education policies on addressing disadvantage with those that would assist getting the best and brightest into school and providing a new supply of quality teachers.

The TfA Organisation describes itself as “an ambitious social movement working to confront educational disadvantage in Australia [by] transforming outstanding individuals into exceptional teachers and inspirational leaders...with an influential voice in Australian Education” (TfA, 2011c). It recruits “some of our country’s most outstanding individuals”, (TfA, 2013d) university graduates who can demonstrate high levels of achievement at university and have a commitment to “make a difference in the lives of the students [they] teach” (TfA, 2013d). Recruits are also identified as having communication and influencing ability, organisational and planning ability, resilience, and humility. These recruits are known as Associates.

Along with recruitment, another aspect of the TfA Organisation’s role is organising the placement of Associates in a school as classroom teachers. All Associates enter
secondary schools that have been deemed “of educational disadvantage, as determined by socioeconomic and student performance measures [and TfA work[s] closely with schools to ensure they fit our disadvantage criteria, [and] provide an environment that will enable Associates to make an impact” (TfA, 2011d). Associates are placed in a school recognised as not only disadvantaged (although the demographic makeup of the schools in the study raises some questions about how disadvantaged they are as will be discussed in Chapter Four) but also hard to staff, for a period of two years The majority of the schools that take TfA recruits are government schools in the state of Victoria, but there are a small number of Victorian Catholic Schools, and Government schools in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Northern Territory that have taken recruits throughout the first four years of operation.

The final role of the TfA organisation is to deliver a “Leadership Development Program” (LDP) to new recruits. TfA claim the LDP has been developed to support Associates in their mastery of core leadership practices.....has been designed to incorporate the common leadership practices of successful leaders in challenging contexts.....[and is a] set of unique and highly transferrable skills along the way that few other graduates can boast.

(TfA, 2011b).

The TfA Organisation provides Teaching and Leadership Advisors who act to “support [the]development as a leader and provide rigorous, ongoing coaching in line with the Teach for Australia Leadership Development Framework” (TfA, 2011b)

**Teach for Australia and the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE)**

In 2009 the Commonwealth Government announced that, after a tender process, the task of providing teacher education and a teaching qualification would be given to the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education (MGSE) for the next five years to “design and deliver the academic curriculum and the mentor development program” (MGSE, 2009). The MGSE was responsible for the provision of an accredited program of study beginning with an initial pre-service residential intensive and
continuing for two years that leads to the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (TFA).

The participants in this study were taking part in the program which was organised by the MGSE so it is this relationship that is described here. MGSE had the responsibility to provide a residential initial teacher education intensive course of 6 weeks duration, occurring in the summer immediately before the start of the school year\(^5\), known as the Initial Intensive. Associates were introduced to core education subjects that included theories of learning, studies in pedagogy, social and policy issues in educational contexts and method area studies conducted by Teacher Educators. Upon completion of the initial intensive they were then placed in schools where they were supported by an existing school staff member who acted as a mentor and a Clinical Specialist employed by the university to observe and support the Associate in their classroom practice. While teaching they completed a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching (TFA) through further short intensives and online study. The teaching load of Associates was 80% of a full time load in order for them to continue undertaking university course work, to meet with Mentor teachers, clinical specialists and fellow associates and to prepare for the classes they taught.

**Teach for Australia, Teach for America, Teach First and the Teach for All network**

The Teach for Australia program is a member of the “Teach for All” network. The original program, Teach for America, spawned Teach First in the UK in 2002 and has since grown to “30 social enterprises that pursue [a] unifying mission around the world” ("Teach for All: Locations & Programs," 2013). They provide alternative pathways into teaching, for elite graduates to enter low-income or disadvantaged schools (Labaree, 2010). The college graduates entering Teach for America were called corps members “[a]s if to evoke the image of the Peace Corps” (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 9). The British Teach First program uses the term Participants and the Australian version uses Associates. The label given to participants is but one

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\(^5\) In Australia the school year and the calendar year are aligned so the Initial intensive (II) runs from December of one calendar year until January of the next.
difference between the various programs. Table 1 provides an overview of the similarities and differences between Teach for Australia, Teach First and Teach For America.

| Table 1: Features of the “Teach For” programs in Australia, the Unites States and the United Kingdom |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                                  | Teach for Australia             | Teach for America               | Teach First (UK)                  |
| Recruits named                                   | Associates                      | Corps Members                   | Participants                      |
| First cohort                                     | 2010 - 45 participants          | 1990 – 500 participants         | 2003 – 186 participants           |
| 2011 Cohort                                      | 42 participants placed          | >9000 participants placed       | 772 participants placed           |
| Graduate Recruitment                             | Federal Government              | Business and charitable sources, schools (fee per recruit) | Business and charitable sources, schools (fee per recruit) |
| Accredited teacher education provider for initial 6 weeks | Yes, by: MGSE 2010-2014, Deakin University from 2014/2015 | No – training is provided by the TFA organisation | Yes, by a university in the local area |
| Accredited teacher education provider course leading to teacher qualification | Yes, a 2 year post-graduate diploma, by a university, partnering with TFA | Varies- participants must usually pass a content knowledge test or have completed a major related subject they teach, then while teaching, complete coursework provided by a local college, a school district or a non-profit organisation (such as TFA) depending on state legislation | Yes, a 1 year QTS course through a university partnering with Teach First |
| Sources of funding for Teacher Education         | Federal Government              | US Government via Americorps service programs grants. Some school districts provide assistance. Participants pay any costs not covered. | UK Government (DCSF via TDA), schools (fee per recruit) |
| Funding for participant wage                     | From school budget- wages are provided by the DEECD. Associates are employed for and teach 80% of a full time load. In the first year Cohort 1. Associates were extra-numerary (Scott, Wheldon, & Dinham, 2010). This was an incentive designed to get the program up and running and did not continue thereafter. | From district/school budget | From school budget |
| Post-program organisation and funding            | Yes – Alumni, initial funding from the Federal Government | Yes – Alumni, funding from business and charitable sources | Yes – Ambassadors, funding from business and charitable sources |

(Table adapted from ACER Teach for Australia Evaluation Report 2 of 3 Wheldon et al., 2012, p. 5)
Another difference in the programs to-date is the scale of participation. For example in 2011 Teach for America placed over 9000 Corps members in schools throughout the United States (USA) ("Teach For America Annual Report," 2011) whereas Teach for Australia (TfA) reported that 40 new Associates formed the third cohort of recruits in the same year bringing the total Teach for Australia Associate numbers to 120 in 2011 ("Teach For Australia Annual Report," 2011). The fourth and fifth cohort contained no more than 48 Associates in each. Another notable difference between Teach for America and Teach for Australia is that participants in the Australian version must attain a university provided teaching qualification which is done concurrently with teaching in the first two years. In some American states, school districts have agreements with partner universities for a similar path to teaching qualifications but this is neither mandated nor widespread.

Teach for Australia recruits – The Associates
Potential Associates are required to hold not just a Bachelor’s degree but will also have “a track record of achievement – in their studies, work and extracurricular activities” (TfA, 2009). The first phase of recruitment involves the completion of an online application, followed by an interview that takes place over the phone. The final stage in recruitment is attendance at a selection day where teacher candidates “complete two interviews, a group activity, a sample teaching lesson, and a problem solving test” (TfA, 2009). During the selection process TfA informs interested schools that,

Specifically, Associates will have clearly demonstrated:
- Leadership and achievement
- Resilience and a relish for challenge
- Strong critical thinking skills
- Superior organisational and motivational ability
- The ability to communicate and work with people from a variety of backgrounds
- Humility and an openness to learn from others

(TfA, 2011f)

By December 2014 four cohorts of Associates had completed the program (i.e. the two years teaching service). In the first cohort there were 45 Associates, the second 42 and the third Cohort of 39 Associates finished in December 2013. Cohort Four, completed its second teaching year in 2014, and has 47 Associates. The fifth Cohort of
48 commenced teaching in January 2014 (by June of that year this cohort was 42 in number). The participants in the current study are from the second cohort of Associates.

**Chapter summary**

This chapter began with a brief review of Commonwealth policy responses to educational disadvantage in Australia between the 1970s and 2008 in order to explain the political and educational landscape in which TfA was established, a period in which Australia’s Commonwealth Government became increasingly involved in school education. The chapter then traced the origins and organisational form, of Teach for Australia and like organisations within the Teach For All network. It showed that the origins of the TfA in Australia stem from the bringing together of Commonwealth and Victorian State political objectives and the availability of an American expatriate with a commitment to develop this type of program.

The structure of the TfA Pathway for the first five years (2009-2014) was then described. Recruiting is carried out via the TfA Organisation and recruits were then given an intensive teacher education course at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), before entering schools. The advertised recruitment criteria were also outlined. TfA as a reform strategy, implemented and supported by the Government, is one that emphasises the value of recruiting high flyers to address disadvantage.
Chapter Three- Literature and debates

The previous chapter identified the Commonwealth Government’s responses to disadvantage that preceded the creation of Teach for Australia (TfA). Having established this context, this chapter discusses research literature relevant to the ways in which the initiatives for the Teach for All global network partners have been framed. Teach for All partners are independent organisations but they share a common mission and model. While there are many arguments supporting and critiquing the Teach for All model and Teach for America specifically, there are certain claims about this model of teacher recruitment that warrant exploration of the research literature against which this study of the experiences of the participants is set.

Potentially there is other literature, such as that on teacher belief systems or on disadvantaged schools that would be relevant to this study yet reviewing it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus the chapter discusses four strands of literature relevant to the project. Because of the assertion that “high-flyers” and “best graduates” (Gillard, 2008a) will make the best new teachers in schools through participating in TfA, the first sections of the chapter considers some key literature pertaining to the attraction and retention of quality, effective or exceptional teachers. Next the chapter contemplates literature related to the changing expectations of the Australian polity and how young people may contribute to their nation. The notion that teaching in disadvantaged settings, is viewed as a form of active citizenship, a way to demonstrate service to their nation is considered. The third part of this chapter considers how the corporate and market based policies have increasingly driven education reform over the past two decades, the Teach for All model being one example. The final section of this chapter discusses the work of Pierre Bourdieu in relation to the world of schooling. Bourdieu’s ideas provide a language to describe the structures and experiences that have shaped the Associates’ lives prior to entering TfA, the situated nature of the study within different social structures, and the social interactions of the study’s participants.
Attracting quality teachers

It is “widely agreed that teachers are among the most, if not the most significant factors in children’s learning and the linchpins in educational reforms of all kinds” (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p. 1). John Hattie’s (2003, 2008) much quoted meta-analysis research, in which he synthesised an extensive body of previous research studies, identified that 30% of the variance in students’ achievement outcomes is due to the teacher. Hattie (2003) recommends that, “We need to identify, esteem and grow those who have powerful influences on student learning” (p. 34) and suggests that school systems “should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference – the teacher” (Hattie, 2003, p. 30). This section does not seek to summarise the “many lists of what makes an effective teacher” (Hattie, 2003, p. 36) as there is no consensus on how the concept of the quality teacher is defined in the existing literature (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Wang, Lin, Spalding, Klecka, & Odell, 2011). Rather the focus of this section is on literature examining why there is such a policy debate about drawing certain types of people into the teaching workforce (Rice, 2007) and how alternative pathways such as Teach for Australia and Teach for America claim to “attract the ‘right’ candidates to teaching” (Sinclair et al., 2006, p. 1133).

In the light of the research emphasis on its importance, teacher quality has become an increasing and widespread focus of policy debate (Connell, 2009) that “puts faith in teacher quality as the solution to what many see as the education quality ‘problem’” (Gore, 2014, p. 17). Byrne (2005) suggests that teachers, on the whole, are angered by the focus on the quality of “the teacher to the exclusion of all else” (p. 8), and that it is a political ploy by “conservative politicians from all persuasions to retreat from the big budget implications of adequate funding” (p. 9). Berliner (2005) acknowledges that this type of discourse is problematic because the notion of a quality teacher is an almost indescribable concept [and] defining quality always requires value judgments about which disagreement abound...Under the best of circumstances it would be difficult to define a quality teacher; under political mandate to do so, it is likely to lead to costly and compliance-oriented actions. (pp. 206-207)
Connell (2009, 2013) and Gore (2014) call the focus on teacher quality in the Australian context into question. Gore stresses that good teaching can be learned and so the focus should shift from teachers to teaching in order to make the greatest gains on delivering high quality education.

One of reasons that teacher recruitment is an imperative is because there have long been concerns about the ageing nature of the teaching workforce in Australia (Richardson & Watt, 2006). A survey conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in 2010 found the most common age of teachers in Australian schools to be between 51 and 55 years of age (McKenzie, 2012). The great numbers of teachers who entered the profession in the expansionist decades of the 1960s and 1970s (Connell, 1991, 2009) are retiring and “Teaching is becoming a young person’s profession again” (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 12). Not only is teaching becoming a young person’s profession again but it is becoming so in a world that is, as Hargreaves (2005) described, “changing profoundly” (p. 12). It is, therefore, important to understand who enters teaching, how effective they are and if they will stay in the profession.

Wang and colleagues (2011) suggest that from a cognitive resource perspective the central predictors for quality teaching are associated with teaching qualifications and found where competence is demonstrated on academic and professional tests. From this viewpoint the type of person who will become a quality teacher, is one who can demonstrate high levels of academic achievement and “generally have compiled impressive dossiers of high test scores” (Wang et al., 2011, p. 331). The assumption is that high test scores, or outstanding university grades indicate that the individuals receiving such acclaim are of high academic ability and provide evidence of the personal resources thought necessary for teachers to hold to become of high quality.

In a report for the Business Council of Australia (BCA) Dinham, Ingvarson and Kleinhenz (2008) argued that previous attempts to drive teacher quality improvement by attracting, retaining and recognising accomplished teachers had failed, in part, because the “entry standards [of teacher training courses] are too low” (p. 14). The implication is that those entering established teacher education courses do not
always have the cognitive resources to be quality teachers. One of the recommendations Dinham and colleagues made to the BCA was that it was necessary to draw new teachers with strong personal resources from the pool of high performing people in (or likely to enter) other fields (Dinham et al., 2008). However Gore (2014) points to research that shows high numerical test scores are not a sufficient predictor of how well a teacher will teach. A study undertaken in Sweden by Grönqvist and Vlachos (2008) found that higher university entrance scores for students entering teacher education courses did not correlate positively with student performance in standardised tests.

Many attempts have been made to predict the cognitive resources held by people with the potential to become quality teachers and this is something both Teach for America and Teach for Australia pay close attention to in their recruitment processes. By targeting “very high calibre graduates and young professionals [TfA claims] to raise the career profile of the teaching profession…. [by] making an important contribution to the idea that our country’s finest young individuals, can, and should, consider teaching as their chosen career path” (TfA, 2013c). Originally, Teach for America held that the best candidates for Corps service, those who held the greatest personal resources, were found in Ivy League schools (Foote, 2008). Subsequently the organisation came under attack as an elitist and white supremacist organisation (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014) and was forced to change tactics in recruitment. In Australia, while entry into teaching via the TfA pathway is not obviously linked to elite institutions, recruits are drawn from a pool of candidates that can be considered part of an academic elite that hold the personal resources, connections and potential to become a part of the “power elite” (Mills, 2012).

Glazerman, Mayer, and Decker (2006) claim that certification is a “long standing barrier to entry” (p. 75) for potential teachers. They state that alternative teacher programs such as Teach for America have as their goal to “lower the barriers to entry and tap previously untapped pools of potential teachers” (Glazerman et al., 2006, p. 75). The cognitive resource associated with a teaching qualification or certification that Wang et al. (2011) describe, is an omission in the Teach for America program.
specifically and fosters the belief “that there is no reliable link between pedagogical training and classroom success” (Zeichner, 2009, p. 13). In the Australian program teacher certification is mandated, but occurs after the two years of a TfA contract and is not a requisite to enter the classroom, so can be viewed as a position that views short-term readiness as the main requisite for classroom teaching (Lovatt & McLeod, 2006). Gore (2014) argues the danger is assuming learning to teach is not necessary for academic high achievers:

There is limited evidence of a relationship between such academic backgrounds and outstanding teaching careers. After all, teaching – indeed, good teaching- can be learned; teacher education programs exist for this very reason (p. 17).

In his book *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland* (2011) Pasi Sahlberg explains that all Finnish teachers are required to gain a Masters degree, ensuring that teachers are trusted and respected as highly qualified and professional, and this in turn allows teachers to have greater autonomy in the classroom, and a high occupational status. Sahlberg points out that because Finland has resisted the neoliberal reform movement that advocates standardised testing and unrealistic accountability of teachers, and includes a resistance to the “Teach for All” model of teacher recruitment, Finnish students consistently top international comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The lack of training and certification resulting from participation in traditionally structured (i.e. longer and more intense) teacher education programs, led to the earliest and most persistent critique of Teach for America and like programs. Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Heilig (2005) found that participation in teacher preparation courses, which lead to certification is the most important resource to retain for ensuring teacher classroom effectiveness. Because Teach for America does not require teacher education that leads to certification, it is claimed that the model serves to de-professionalise and de-regulate the teaching profession as a whole (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Zeichner, 2009). Linda Darling-Hammond (1994) maintained in an early critique of the model, that Teach for America is damaging to the teaching profession because it “cheapens education” and says that “anyone can teach”. She further argues that there must be “alternatives to
putting ill-prepared recruits in classrooms for a revolving-door trip into and out of teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 33).

Revolving-door in and out of teaching
One of the aims of Teach for All programs is to attract different and varied people to teaching because they appeal directly to those who would not otherwise seek a teaching position over an alternative, more prestigious career. The challenge of attracting people who are “potentially good or high quality candidates” (DEEWR, 2011c, p. 8) to teaching has been a concern in Australia for a decade or more (Dinham et al., 2008; Hattie, 2003; Reid, 2009). The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2011c) reported in an issues paper that teaching has a low level of appeal as a career (particularly in a strong labour market), and its poor pay dispersion in comparison to other occupations, lead to potentially good or high quality candidates not seriously considering teaching as a career (p. 8).

A possible reason to explain why quality people choose not to enter the teaching profession is the opportunity costs associated with becoming a teacher. When a prospective teacher chooses to enter teaching over other available occupations they lose the opportunity to gain certain rewards (be them monetary or status based) that come with those occupations. The lost rewards are known as opportunity costs and “individuals who would incur high opportunity costs by choosing teaching will be less likely to make this choice” (Guarino, Santibananaz, & Daley, 2006, p. 173).

The fast-track approach of the TfA counters the opportunity costs in two ways: by significantly reducing the non-earning element of (further) studying to enter into teaching; and by offering the program as a potential track to other higher paid or more prestigious job opportunities. Although it is well documented that in Australia teacher salaries are poor in comparison to other occupations (APH, 2007; DEEWR, 2011b; Scott & Dinham, 2008), the salary of graduates entering teaching starts at comparative levels. The opportunity costs to salary at a graduate level are therefore not too great.
The costs inherent in such a program lead different types of people to enter teaching but possibly only for a limited time (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Labaree (2010) affirms that potential career opportunities and a contractual commitment of only two years cause a high attrition rate as corps members move into professions outside the classroom. The attrition rate of the new teachers embarking on this pathway into teaching is of concern to many researchers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Heilig & Jez, 2010, 2014; Ravitch, 2013). In the USA this pathway is not considered successful at keeping people in the classroom teaching. Over 50% of American Corps members leave teaching after two years and over 80% after three (Heilig & Jez, 2014). In the UK, Teach First claim that 54% of those who have completed Teach First remain teaching but go on to state that “40% of Teach First participants were teaching five years after starting their course compared to 63% of those doing a mainstream [teacher education course]” (Freeman, 2014).

In contrast to the high attrition rates of Teach for America and Teach First teachers, the Teach for Australia Organisation claim that the TfA pathway is more successful than traditional teacher education in retaining graduates as teachers. Citing a newspaper article referring to unpublished research findings that “close to 50% of Australians who graduate as teachers leave the profession within the first five years” (McMillen, 2013) the TfA Organisation contrasts the career trajectories of TfA Associates;

A total of almost 70 per cent of TFA Associates and Alumni continue to teach. Beyond the classroom, 13 per cent of TFA Alumni work within education, whether with government, social ventures or universities. Much has been written about teacher retention rates and the issue continues to be a challenge for the industry as whole. It is important to note that the TFA rate of retention is higher than that of traditional teacher education pathways. 95 per cent of TFA Associates graduate teacher education and teach in disadvantaged schools for at least two years.

(TfA, 2014d). This statement, made in a press release and appearing on TfA’s website does not make clear that the 95 per cent of Associates who successfully navigate teacher education and two years of teaching because they are contractually obliged (and paid) to do so. However, it is true that much has been written about the retention of teachers. In the UK, North America and Australia a trend has been detected that
between 40% and 50% of beginning teachers are leaving the profession in their first five years (Burghes, Howson, Marenbon, O’Leary, & Woodhead, 2009; Hong, 2010; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Scheopner, 2010).

Effectiveness of “Teach for” teachers

It is generally agreed that teaching delivered by teachers who are academically strong is most important in order to improve student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Hattie, 2003; Palardy & Rumberger, 2008; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). In Australia there is currently no published research on the effectiveness of TfA Associates. In the final TfA evaluation report (Wheldon, McKenzie, Kleinhenz, & Reid, 2013) released by researchers at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in July 2014 it was noted that the scope of the evaluation did not extend to assessing Associates effectiveness. However, the report claims that “Associates are generally considered to be effective teachers” (p. xvi) and referred to the average results Associates had achieved in the university supplied Teacher Education component of the TfA program to support their claim.

In light of the lack of research into outcomes for the students or the schools in which Teach for Australia Associates enter, the claim of effectiveness attributed to teachers from this model comes from evaluative research undertaken on Teach for America. In the years up to 2013 Teach for America issued a number of press releases that repeatedly stated that Corp members were effective in helping “their students achieve academic gains equal to or larger than teachers from other preparation programs, according to the most recent and rigorous studies on teacher effectiveness” (see for example the archives in the "Teach for America- Press Room,"). In relation to this effectiveness, the organisation went as far as to claim that “Corps members make as much of an impact on student achievement as veteran teachers” ("Teach for America - On the record," 2013). These claims draw on evidence from “a substantial body of high quality research on the instructional impact of Teach for America teachers” ("Teach for America: What the Research Says," 2014).

The substantial body of research consists of twenty-one studies. Only six of the studies cited by Teach for America are peer reviewed and of those, three studies
found Teach for America teachers to be more effective than other teachers in the area of mathematics teaching. A study by Xu, Hannaway and Taylor (2010) that investigated “the relative effectiveness (in terms of student tested achievement) of TFA teachers” (p. 3) of mathematics in secondary schools found that “secondary school TFA teachers are more effective than the teachers that would otherwise be in the classroom” (p. 25). A report from the American Institute of Education Sciences and Mathematica Policy Research (Clark et al., 2013) revealed that Teach For America teachers were more effective at “teaching secondary math compared with other teachers teaching the same math courses in the same schools” (p. xx). The third study that provides evidence of effectiveness was conducted by Glazerman et al. (2006) and claims that students taught by Teach for America teachers have higher average mathematics scores than similar students taught be other teachers. This study also showed that reading scores for students taught by Teach for America teachers were no different than control teachers.

By contrast to the aforementioned studies, research by Darling Hammond et al. (2005) found that when Teach for America teachers were compared with teachers who had completed standard training and gained certification that there was “no instance where uncertified Teach for America teachers performed as well as standard certified teachers of comparable experience levels teaching in similar settings” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 20). Further, Heilig and Jez (2010) found that Teach for America teachers may be as effective as other non-credentialed teachers but were less effective than certified and experienced teachers in raising test scores. Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) drew similar conclusions to Darling-Hammond and colleagues, and Heilig and Jez, when in 2002 they showed;

1) that students of TFA teachers did not perform significantly different from other students of other under-certified teachers, and 2) that students of certified teachers out performed students of teachers who were under certified.

(Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, p. 2)

It is this research that has been taken up by the one body most vocally opposed to the TfA program - the Australian Education Union (AEU). In 2009 the AEU stated its official opposition to the TfA program.
In announcing the scheme, the Government claimed that “pathway programs for top graduates such as Teach First in the UK and Teach for America in the US have been shown to deliver better student outcomes and help raise the status of the profession.”

This is offensive and demeaning to the profession. It is also untrue. A study led by Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Stanford’s School of Education in the United States, concludes that “certified teachers consistently produce stronger student achievement gains compared with uncertified teachers. These findings hold for TFA recruits as well as others…uncertified TFA recruits are less effective than certified teachers, and perform about as well as other uncertified teachers” (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

(AEU, 2009)

The research cited by Teach for America to claim effectiveness has been critiqued because it is largely not peer reviewed. Heilig and Jez (2014) assert that in the years between 2010 when they released the report Teach for America: A Review of the Evidence, and the 2014 release of the Teach for America: A Return to the Evidence report there was only one “article on the impact of TFA on student achievement published in a peer reviewed journal” (p. 5). The article by Xu, Hannaway, and Taylor (2011) was based on the same study covered in the Making a Difference? The effects of Teach for America in High School. Working Paper 17 that the authors published in 2010. Kovacs and Slate-Young (2013) reviewed the twelve studies that until 2013, Teach for America cited as evidence of their teachers’ effectiveness. They found that four of the studies were irrelevant to the claim that Corp members were effective in raising test scores, and seven were “problematic” because of inconclusive results. The one study that did show a positive effect of Teach for America teachers supplied no data set so, they concluded, it may be misleading. This led the researchers to conclude that “if powerful enough interests have money, science no longer matters. For more on this ask the scientist trying to address global warming” (Kovacs & Slate-Young, 2013, p. 8).

The research on Teach for America teachers mentioned so far had a common and narrow focus on standardised test scores of students taken as a proxy for teacher

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In October 2014 Teach for America updated a document called ‘What the research says’ which summarises 21 studies of the effectiveness of Teach for America teachers ("Teach for America: What the Research Says," 2014)
effectiveness but fails to connect students’ achievements to the teachers who taught them accurately (Heilig & Jez, 2010, 2014). In what remains the only qualitative study of Teach for America teacher training completed by anyone outside of the Teach for America organisation Thomas Popkewitz (1998) conducted an ethnographic study of Teach for America initial training institute in 1990. Popkewitz concluded that corps members approach the students they encounter with a deficit model in mind, which positions them to administer an antidote, and to impart and develop positive qualities. Popkewitz’s study took place before the reforms that endorse standardised tests, that are taken as the main indicator of success in the current research of the model (discussed above) and is a description of the corps members’ training as opposed to their subsequent effectiveness.

Barbara Veltri completed a long term study of Teach for America corps members that she was to mentor through a partnership with her university and Teach for America, which she claims gave her an insider perspective of the Teach for America experience (Veltri, 2010). Through the voices of corps members Veltri describes how they felt generally unprepared, that they were “still learning on [the students], experimenting on them, working on their time” (Veltri, 2010, p. 162). This study is important as it describes qualitatively how ineffective corps members felt themselves to be, and the measures those teachers took to improve their teaching. Veltri found that even when the corps members felt that they had learnt to teach effectively, 90% left after the third year of teaching and that they challenged the assumption that they had made any difference to the lives of the students they taught.

Quality teachers from and part of an elite group
Despite the lack of definitive evidence linking high academic achievers to the best quality teachers, this criterion still plays an important part of the Teach for All model of teacher recruitment. Building an academically elite group - a movement- that holds the power to effect change in an academic world is heavily promoted. Writing in the period after WWII, as the United States became the most prosperous nation in the world American sociologist Charles Wright Mills (1956) who is credited as the founder of modern conflict theory coined the term the “power elite”. He claimed that
“[f]amilies and churches and schools adapt to modern life; government and armies and corporations shape it” (Mills, 1956, p. 6). The government, the military and corporations, he contended, were the most powerful institutions in America and those at the top of these institutions form a single ruling majority; the power elite. Mills claimed this group “is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences” (Mills, 2012, p. 230). The elite, whether they were a chief-executive, a political statesman, or a military general all shared similar backgrounds, attended the same schools and universities, belonged to the same clubs and attended similar social gatherings. The shared background “ensures the unity and exclusivity of the upper echelons” (Mills, 1956, p. 251) as well as the possibility of interchanging roles within these institutions, thus executives could hold multiple board seats, politicians might move seamlessly into corporate governance positions and military officers might enter politics. The backgrounds that ensure exclusivity of the upper echelons are not just of the family but are cultivated at schools.

As Mills’ theory was one of the few studies of power structures in American society “that did not start with a class-struggle perspective” (Domhoff, 2006, p. 547) it was debated and dismissed by Marxists as much as liberals and conservatives. The main criticism leveled at The Power Elite at the time of its release was that it was unscientific in its methodology and lacked evidence to support the assertions it made (Quadagno, 2007). It has been pointed out that this theory’s strength lies in its appeal rather than any hard evidence (Domhoff, 2006). This appeal comes from Mills’ description of a clique of men, who move between positions in the institutional hierarchy but there is no proof of their use of power or influence in decision making. Highlighting the common background of elites and the interchangeability of institutional positions is insufficient without showing how they actually use power (Hayden, 2006). As Mintz et.al pointed out

A decision maker who is recruited from elite origins does not necessarily represent the elite; he or she could enact anti-elite policies in order to please and remain in office. A decision maker from a non-elite group does not necessarily represent the
group: he or she may enact elite oriented policies in order to retain campaign financing or to move into business after serving in public office. Therefore, we must conclude that investigations of social background have limited utility in relation to the power structure debate.

(Mintz, Freitag, Hendricks, & Schwartz, 1976, p. 317)

Regardless of the lack of evidence that Mintz and colleagues (1976) point to, Mills’ elite theory “still has an astonishing relevance and freshness in many of its characterizations of how the country operates” (Hayden, 2006, p. 547). And it is this theory that might explain the rise of Teach for America, in particular, as one of the “most successful efforts at social entrepreneurship in recent history” (Labaree, 2010, p. 48).

Altruistic and ‘active citizen’ teachers

This chapter now turns to literature that links the claims that TfA Associates can “make a difference” with the notion “that quality teachers and teaching are central to the development and maintenance of an intelligent, informed citizenry” (Richardson & Watt, 2006, p. 27). By naming the program Teach for Australia, and being funded entirely by the Australian Commonwealth Government at its inception the program is considered an important national education reform that holds the ideal of altruism at its heart. Education has long played a role in building of national identity as Basil Bernstein (1996) noted:

In all modern societies the school is a crucial device for writing and re-writing national consciousness and national consciousness is constructed out of myths of origin, achievements and destiny. Essentially national consciousness transforms a common biology into a cultural specific in such a way that the specific cultural consciousness comes to have the force of a unique biology...It is inevitable under these conditions that education becomes a crucial means and an arena for struggle to produce and reproduce a specific national consciousness. (p.10)

In Australia, this understanding of schooling gained renewed favour throughout the 1980s when Commonwealth governments proposed a vision dependent on “a citizenry whose productive capacities, necessarily grounded in formal education, became a key mode of identity with and commitment to nation” (Sedunary, 1991, p. 2). These comments offer a starting point when considering the politics of commitment to “teach the nation” (Sedunary, 1991, p. 2) or to Teach for Australia,
and resonate with TfA’s intent for its “exceptional teachers…. [to] drive the systemic change needed to eliminate educational disadvantage in Australia” (TfA, 2014c).

While not unique in this respect, Australian governments have increasingly sought to shape the conduct of citizens by circulating a discourse of the “active” citizen as the “good” citizen (Apple & Beane, 1999; Kennedy, 2008; Macintyre, 1995; Warburton & Smith, 2003; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a). This discourse aims at “creat[ing] the entity of the ‘active citizen’, one who is self-governing and can therefore regulate him/herself towards good citizenship behaviours. Active citizens take responsibility for themselves thereby decreasing their reliance on government” (Warburton & Smith, 2003, p. 774). This type of citizen does not rely on bureaucratic and public modes of operation and manifests as the self-sufficient non-dependant worker, who reflects the “cultural myth of rugged individualism” (Thomas, 2013, p. 220). By extension this discourse portrays the citizen-teacher as one who makes personal sacrifices to make a difference to the lives of their students; the story of the altruistic teacher.

The story of the altruistic teacher who has a keen desire to make a difference has been drawn upon regularly to attract people into the profession. Lortie (1975) argued that “[t]he definition of teaching as service to other is a recruitment resource of some significance” (p.29). The narrative of altruism commonly found in teaching portrays the profession as being characterised by hard working teachers seeking satisfaction in their jobs by “making the difference” (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982) to the lives of the students they teach, despite it being a low-paid and stressful role (Moore, 2004). This narrative, however, is paradoxical as Lortie (1975) notes in his classic study School teacher: A sociological study. He described the paradoxes present in the public perception of teaching, highlighting that teachers are simultaneously “honoured and disdained, praised as [undertaking] ‘dedicated service’ and lampooned as [undertaking] ‘easy work’” (p. 10). These kinds of paradoxes inherent in the public perceptions of the teacher have, Lortie argued, meant that “social ambiguity has stalked those who undertook the mission, for the real regard shown those who taught has never matched the professed regard” (Lortie, 1975, p. 10).
Nevertheless there are many studies that conclude individuals enter teaching for altruistic reasons (Alexander, 2008; Lortie, 1975; Richardson & Watt, 2006), which speaks to the TfA mission to recruit those who recognise “the opportunity teaching provides to have a direct impact on the life trajectories of young Australians” (TfA, 2011f). Inherent in such statements is the notion that education for the national civic mission has become increasingly based on active service learning programmes (Black, Stokes, Turnbull, & Levy, 2009; J. Burns, Collin, Blanchard, De-Frietas, & Lloyd, 2008) where outstanding young citizens display altruistic desires and then commit to make a difference. The Teach for All programs like school-based service learning programs “have been marketed in large part through claims that they can respond to the civic mission” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, p. 242).

In their study of service learning and community service programs, Westheimer and Kahne (2004a, 2004b) found most programs tended towards emphasising the development of good character traits such as honesty and altruism. They acknowledged that a focus on altruism (while not to be dissuaded - honest and altruistic citizens make good community members), can distract attention from the “causes of social problems; and...[resulting in] volunteerism and kindness are put forward as ways of avoiding politics and policy” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, p. 243). Teaching as service is no different as O’Brien and Schillaci (2002) found when studying “both prospective and practicing teachers [who] conceive of teaching as world changing work, with the potential to fulfil a deeply felt need to make a difference” (p. 26). Labaree (2010) warns that Teach for America operates in a manner that reinforces an old and dangerous vision of teaching as a form of slumming, a missionary effort by the white middle class to elevate minorities and the lower classes through the medium of education (p. 52).

Lisa Delpit (2006) also agrees that missionary models are premised on the notion that the solution for the disadvantaged is to be taught how to speak, behave and think in ways that the dominant class find acceptable. She believes that teachers are often not able to engage in pedagogy that is culturally relevant for their students, or see the strengths that the students and their families bring to the classroom (Delpit, 2006). In this missionary model of teaching, change is seen as necessary in one direction only.
where teachers are the change-makers and students are the changed. Lortie (1975) believed that “one can infer that teaching as service is more likely to appeal to people who approve of prevailing practice than those who are critical of it” (p.29).

**TfA as a corporate education reform**

Chapter Two provided a brief historical overview of Commonwealth policy responses to disadvantage leading up to TfA’s establishment. In this section of this chapter the focus shifts to literature related to the increased corporatisation of school education, where reform is based on ‘the market’ and where choice and competition are promoted as reforms that will improve educational outcomes above all else (Apple, 2006, 2009; Beckett, 2013; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Davies, 2005; Zeichner, 2010).

Teach for America has created a “master narrative” that advocates for education reform which will only be successful when we rid ourselves of lengthy teacher training requirements, such as that offered by schools of education, and train teachers in fast-tracked programs modelled on concepts of business (Veltri, 2010). This “master narrative” is supported by policy makers and the media and is part of the neoliberal turn that has increasingly guided education reform over the past two decades as nations are convinced that their schools are underperforming (Apple, 2009). Skourdoumbis (2012) points to a similar narrative emanating for Teach for Australia, one that borrows heavily from the corporate field and is aligned with the basic “typology of entrepreneurialism” (Woods, Woods, & Gunter 2007, p. 238 cited in Skourdoumbis, 2012, p. 309) which aims to instil schooling with the practices of the private sector.

The Australian Commonwealth Government has partnered with the TfA Organisation, to recruit outstanding young active citizens in a relationship that exposes a corporate commitment to reducing costs over increasing teacher quality (Thomas, 2013). When partnerships between public institutions such as government schools, and private organisations, such as TfA, proliferate they restructure “the contemporary state and social/cultural relationships through which the qualities of the citizen are produced”
(Franklin, Popkewitz, & Bloch, 2003, p. 3), and highlight new and powerful alliances of conservative modernisation (Apple, 1995).

Further, this model of teacher recruitment is predicated on a course of action in which the “teacher-hero” (Gale & Densmore, 2000) gains an elevated level of importance (Larsen, 2010) and “new freedoms and possibilities of devolution and school-based management” (Ball, 1994, p. 72) underpin measures to improve schools. As Michael Apple (2006) points out, for “too many of the pundits, politicians, corporate leaders, and others, education is a business and should be treated no differently than any other business” (p.1). This can be seen in the growth of managerial power, where in the case of schools, principals are redefined as entrepreneurs heading organisations that are competing against others (Connell, 2013).

Jean Anyon (2005) argues that it is not possible to structure teaching and learning based on corporate models (that require efficiency targets and profit in order to be sustained) and at the same time expect teachers to remedy social inequalities. To hold this paradoxical belief illustrates the neoliberal trend toward the reimagining of the teacher as a leader and more specifically as an “entrepreneurial and inspirational change agent” (Clarke & Newman, 1997, p. 35). The issue of student under achievement is framed as an “individual deficiency [in students, [with an]...avoidance of reproductive transmissions of inequality”(Skourdoumbis, 2012, p. 309). Teachers entering schools along the TfA pathway are told they are will “make change” to educationally disadvantaged students (TfA, 2013c). Yet as Anyon (2005) argued it is dangerous to expect teachers alone to change the landscape of educational inequalities.

Although both Teach for America and Teach for Australia are funded to varying degrees by different government bodies, they also rely on corporate alliances to secure significant philanthropic funding. A study completed at the University of Georgia (Suggs & DeMarriasm, 2011) found that Teach for America received more philanthropic funding (mostly from large corporate interests such as the Walton
Family Foundation of the ubiquitous Wal-Mart fame) than any other organisation that works in teaching and learning. In Australia, the philanthropic contributions are not as vast, however the TfA Organisation acknowledges support from the Boston Consulting Group, a large law firm named Corrs, Chambers and Westgarth, a number of philanthropic foundations and a trust, and a media communications company called Message Media (TfA, 2011g, 2013a, 2014a). In November 2014, TfA announced that because the organisation had secured deductible gift registry (DGR) status (i.e. philanthropic tax-free status), the Shell Australia Company (of global oil and gas fame) and TfA had entered into a partnership to “help vulnerable youths unlock their future career potential” (TfA, 2014b) and expand TfA’s reach into a fourth educational jurisdiction – Western Australia. Western Australia is a resource rich state with over 40% of Australia’s mines that has benefitted from a mining boom (Pini, McDonald, & Mayes, 2012).

Pierre Bourdieu’s framework on schooling culture and inequality
Bourdieu was concerned not so much with describing individuals but with the spaces between people, the context in which action and interaction takes place and the group understandings of the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu, 1977a) and so his ideas are particularly useful for this study. These ideas provide a language to describe the “structuring structures” and the “structured structures” that have shaped the Associates’ lives prior to entering TfA, the situated nature of the study within different social structures, and the social interactions of the study’s participants. This study is then of a particular group of social worlds, both advantaged and disadvantaged. Bourdieu’s work is outlined here as his writing on school culture and inequality is drawn upon in Chapters Five and Six.

Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ - field, cultural and social capital, and habitus
Pierre Bourdieu’s (1973, 1977a, 1986) theory of cultural and social reproduction, and its component concepts or “thinking tools” of habitus, cultural capital and field provide a “formidable conceptual arsenal” (Weininger, 2002, p. 124) of use when viewing a program such as TfA. The thinking tools offered by Bourdieu, according to
Calhoun, Li and Postone (1993) are useful for considering social structures, social interactions and social practices.

Bourdieu treats social life as a mutually consisting interaction of structures, dispositions and actions whereby social structures and embodied (therefore situated) knowledge of those structures produce enduring orientations to action which in turn, are constitutive of social structures. Hence, these orientations are at once ‘structuring structures’ and ‘structured structures’; they shape and are shaped by social practice.

(Calhoun et al., 1993, p. 4)

Bourdieu’s work is used in this study as it provides a language to describe the different influences of structures both structured and structuring (such as institutional education) on the dispositions and actions of the participants in this study and the students they encounter. The thinking tools allow an illustration of the participants’ experiences and understandings of the TfA program. My intention here is to delineate the field of this research and to provide the theoretical starting points of the analysis developed in the findings chapters that follow.

Bourdieu’s concept of field is defined “as a space of positions and position-takings” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 232). The field is a bounded social space within which positions of social actors are, relational, hierarchical and can produce “particular ways of thinking, being and doing” (Thomson, 2005, p. 742). The term field “is meant to recall a battlefield or a playing field” (Weininger, 2002, p. 137), and labels the spaces where relationships between individuals form by entering into conflict or competition with one another “each from a more or less advantageous position” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 18). As McLeod and Yates (2006) explain:

Fields are structured contexts of institutions’ rules and other relations that form a differentiating hierarchy that shapes these processes and practices and determines what counts as valuable capital. Bourdieu describes interactions within the field as a matter of learning the “rules of the game” (p. 90)

The game requires actors to hold assets, which are needed to play the game. These assets, referred to as capital, are not merely economic in nature and refer to a range of resources, the value of which is negotiated within the particular fields of play. Bourdieu defined capital as:

resources which are or may become effective, like aces in the game of cards, in the competition for the appropriation of scarce goods of which the social universe is the
site. According to my empirical investigations these fundamental powers are economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital, which are the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the total volume of their assets. 

(Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17)

Cultural capital refers to culturally-specific competencies such as “forms of knowledge; taste, aesthetic and cultural preferences; language, narrative and voice” (Thomson, 2005, p. 742) that constitutes a resource or power in which the holder gains “access to a higher status in society” (Sriprakash & Proctor, 2013, p. 85). The habits, competencies and dispositions of a dominant social group within a social field are deemed to be the cultural norm, becoming a form of capital that allows the obtaining and building of cultural heritage. The differences between social groups can be understood in terms of both the volume and type of capital held by individuals within the group and the group itself. To Bourdieu fluctuations in capitals “distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the actually usable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 114). Capital should therefore be viewed as a flexible commodity, the value of which is always being renegotiated as Bourdieu articulated using a market place metaphor.

So a capital can exist and function as such, and bring in profits, only on a certain market: There are individual producers...who offer their products, and then the judgements of all of the actors come into play and a market price emerges. 

(Bourdieu, 1993, p. 81)

In a social context the actors are not only constantly renegotiating the value of types of capital but are in the process of exchanging one type of capital for another. According to Bourdieu’s theory “the conversion rate between one sort of capital and another is fought over at all times and is therefore subject to endless fluctuations” (Bourdieu, Wacquant, & Farage, 1994, p. 246). Advocates and critics of the TfA program might agree capital is exchanged and its value fluctuates depending on the market which is dominated by particular social groups of which the Associates are
apart. However a question that arises is whether such capital is transmittable by the Associates to the students they encounter.

In the social field where the game (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 11) of school education is played there exists a dominant “hierarchy of capitals and particular positions of power” (Skourdoumbis, 2012, p. 312). In Australian schools, the rules, particularly the unwritten implicit rules, embody a middle class, white, conservative and increasingly corporate-focused set of values. If a student is motivated to work hard, does not disturb the peace, and knows how to take tests well in order to achieve good measurable outcomes then they will succeed in school. The people in this study and the students they encounter are in possession of diverse types of assets that hold considerable levels of social power. The TfA Associates for example, at least in the conception of the program, hold significant academic assets or cultural capital as evidenced by their academic achievements and thus they enter schools at the top of the social hierarchy.

Bourdieu (1973) offers that one of the functions of the education system, is to ensure the transmission of a society’s social norms and or cultural heritage that is passed from “generation to generation” (p.73) because it is the “property of the whole society” (p.73). In this function schools act not only to transmit the relevant cultural traditions but to socialise the players into particular and dominant cultural traditions. However, as Thomson (2005) reminds us “there is no level playing ground in a field; players who begin with particular forms of capital are advantaged at the outset because the field depends on as well as produces more of, that capital” (p. 742).

A second function of education, according to Bourdieu (1984) is to reproduce the structure and the distribution of cultural capital among classes. Bourdieu (1977a) posited that economic obstacles alone do not sufficiently explain the disparities in educational attainment between children of different classes and theorised that cultural and social reproduction is based on intergenerational transmission of cultural capital through families and schools. He found that because cultural habits and dispositions are unequally distributed, they are “exclusive advantages” (Bourdieu, 1977a) which lead to a third function of education “legitimation” (Bourdieu, 1973, p.
This is done by selectively narrowing the cultural heritage dispatched in the school system thereby diverting attention “from the social hierarchies and reproduction functions that are necessary to perpetuate the social order” (Skourdoumbis, 2012, p. 313).

It is not possible to study cultural and social capital in isolation from another crucial component of Bourdieu’s theoretical model of practice - habitus. Bourdieu argued that cultural habits and dispositions inherited from one’s family produced in an individual their habitus which he describes as:

[S]ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their own outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

(Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52).

In short, a person’s social class, education, upbringing and past choices make up the structure of habitus. Habitus develops from these socialisation processes, so is implicitly linked to social position and results in a particular view of the world and one’s place in it. Habitus manifests through social practices such as what and how one eats, political opinions and how they are expressed, and differences in taste (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Habitus will determine in part how an agent will behave in the field. Yet habitus is not simply a set of shared values developed in the context of particular fields. As Diane Reay (2004) explains:

One of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied, it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions...it is expressed through durable ways of [in Bourdieu’s terms] “standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking”.

(Reay, 2004, p. 432)

The habitus is the product of a certain social world and in turn produces the social world in which it is enacted or engaged and can be considered “essentially the product of the internalisation of the structures of that world” (Bourdieu, 1989, p.19). Habitus as Bourdieu further explains is “adjusted to position, [and so] agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). So through
habitus ‘common sense’ responses occur, responses that seem natural, and demonstrate a ‘feel for the game’.

When habitus is embodied, Bourdieu (1984) describes it as the bodily hexis. The visible and enduring markers of origin present barriers to the flexible movement of actors within and between fields.

Educationally equivalent individuals (e.g. the students of the grandes ecoles) may differ radically as regards bodily Hexis, pronunciation, dress or familiarity with legitimate culture, not to mention the whole set of specific competencies and capacities which function as admission tickets to the bourgeois world, such as dancing, the rare sports, or the parlour games (especially bridge). These skills, through the encounters they provide and the social capital they help to accumulate, no doubt explain subsequent differences in career

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 91).

Aligning with Mills’ notion of the “unity and exclusivity of the upper echelons” (Mills, 1956, p. 251) sociologists argue that schools reproduce relations of power and inequality and that the education system functions to institutionalise privilege (McLeod & Yates, 2006). This is done by creating school structures, policies and procedures that allow students who bring with them certain forms of cultural capital to achieve greater outcomes or levels of attainment than others. Bourdieu (1986) warned that the school system is likely to transform inherited cultural capital into academic capital and this can appear to be the result of individual achievement. We cannot, therefore, assume that those who can display high academic achievement are those who worked the hardest for those outcomes. Conversely, the effects of social and cultural capital can override any academic achievement in the form of “‘a helping hand,’ ‘string-pulling’ and ‘the old boy network’...[in this way] educational qualifications never function perfectly as currency” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 29). This study will look at both of Bourdieu’s claims of reproduction in schools.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have examined the literature and debates relevant to four of the ways the Teach for All model of teacher recruitment has been framed and that are a particular interest of this thesis. The first section of this chapter has shown a prevalent (but contested) rhetoric proclaiming that the leading cause of a widening
achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is teacher quality and the remedy to this is recruiting, as well as training higher quality teachers. In setting up TfA both the TfA organisation and the Commonwealth government draws upon research which has concluded that this type of fast track pathway produces more effective teachers. Other research studies dispute such claims of effectiveness and are critical of the claims being made about the research evidence for this.

The next section of the chapter looked at the notion of teaching as a service to the nation. It showed that some researchers have critiqued this model of service as missionary in intent, making assumptions that the ‘right’ way to educate is by white middle class standards. Next the literature that points to a corporate and market oriented vision of how education should operate was discussed. Teach for Australia is positioned as an organisation and pathway that can remedy the failings of a system that produces vast differences in student achievement, and it has appealed to and been supported by corporate interests. The approach to change via leadership relies on individual change-makers with little recognition of the reproductive and transmission of inequality inherent in and the specific functions of schooling. Finally Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social capital and habitus were discussed to illustrate the starting point this thesis in understanding schools and how they operate. In the next chapter the methodological framework and research methods used in this study to examine the experiences of the Associate participants related to those areas are introduced.
Chapter Four - Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodological decision making and the qualitative interpretative paradigm used in this study. I explain the design of the study which includes a description of the research methods, the participants, the school settings they encounter, and the data analysis processes. I also address the limitations of the research methods and design, and discuss the trustworthiness of the research.

This is a qualitative inquiry that draws on a range of theories and concepts from the sociology of education. The research sought to address the following questions:

What are the assumptions about teachers, active citizenship and effectively addressing disadvantage in schools evident in the TfA organisation’s mission statements and promotional material?

How are Associates’ perceptions of their capacity to fulfil Teach for Australia’s mission of changing lives in classrooms and leading systemic change, affirmed challenged or modified during their classroom experiences?

The current study has its foundations in the Weberian tradition of social research that asserts that to understand the world of others and make meaning of the world the researcher must “get inside the heads of those being studied” (Travers, 2001, pp. 7-8). It seeks not only an understanding of the participants’ experiences and perceptions but also what happened when they encountered both the promotional material and media related to the program and the social fields that are different from any they have navigated before. Pierre Bourdieu’s theories are instrumental to the framing of this study, in particular his “thinking tools” of “fields, habitus and capital” (Bourdieu, 1977b, 1984, 1986, 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) which were introduced in Chapter 3. While Bourdieu’s specific “thinking tools” are just one set of a number used in my thesis, his stance on research methodology has been useful for this project. Bourdieu believed that “one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 271). This study is not making grand claims about “the most profound logic of the social world” but is attempting to show the “specificity of an
empirical reality” and relate to the logic of the social world that Bourdieu and others have described. Bourdieu argues,

> [W]hen sociology remains at a highly abstract and formal level, it contributes nothing. When it gets down to the nitty gritty of real life, however, it is an instrument that people can apply to themselves for quasi-clinical purposes.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 199).

But Bourdieu does not limit the role of sociology to a therapeutic one such as the term quasi-clinical would suggest. He goes on to claim that sociology plays a liberatory role, albeit bounded by some constraints.

The true freedom that sociology offers is to give us a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimising the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us. I am not suggesting that sociology solves all the problems of the world, far from it, but that it allows us to discern the sites where we do indeed enjoy a degree of freedom and those where we do not. So that we do not waste our energy struggling over terrains that offer us no leeway.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 199)

The freedom Bourdieu refers to is that an understanding of the world around us, an awareness of the social rules that govern our existence, enables a liberty that allows choices. Bourdieu suggested that we are all in need of liberation and that our situation is evolving under forces that we are too close to be aware of. The participants of this study would, perhaps, believe they need not be freed while at the same time feeling strongly the students they encountered did need emancipation from the limits imposed by disadvantage.

Bourdieu’s work has been criticised as having an overly reproductionist bias in the analysis of human behaviour particularly when
tied as it is to the notion of class based habitus, Bourdieu is unable to account satisfactorily for the individuals who break free from the trajectories assigned them by their background and training.

(Shilling, 2004, p. 474).

Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s ideas provide a useful starting point to take to the analysis of the findings in this study. From Bourdieu’s work one might expect those recruited to TfA to show different expectations and understandings (habitus and dispositions) to the schools they enter and the students within them, and to experience the habitus
and dispositions of those schools and students as uncomfortable and even jarring. If this is so, what is of interest is how the interaction of two different kinds of habitus is experienced by these teachers, and whether they are able to provide bridges or ways of operating differently for those they teach in order for those students to break free of their disadvantaged backgrounds.

Study design
As a D.Ed. thesis this research project is necessarily more limited in time and scope than a PhD. However the focus on a small number of individuals and their experiences does allow an investigation of the existing literature and rhetoric surrounding the TfA program and a reflection on the arguments made by different theorists about educational inequality and ways to address such issues. Creswell (2009) refers to the need for methodological congruence, such that the purposes, questions and methods of research are all connected and interrelated in order to form a cohesive whole. To investigate my research questions I used qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews, email correspondence and document analysis to examine the way the teacher Associates make sense of the circumstances they found themselves in. In this section I outline the main sources of data collection and how these data were analysed for the study.

The Participants
The specific aims and research questions of this project required me to explore the lives, experiences, and realities of these beginning teachers in particular educational settings. I sought to recruit participants who were new to the TfA program and were new to the schools in which they were placed, because I aimed to understand ways in which they perceived the program and their role relative to the ways the program was being promoted at the beginning of their experiences and over the two years of their contract. I was interested in how their beliefs in relation to disadvantage and their impact in disadvantaged school contexts was affirmed, challenged and modified over that period.

Participant numbers in this study were small and informed by a methodological belief that the “validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry
have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observations/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (Patton, 2002, p. 245).

During the last week of the initial intensive course in January 2011, I addressed the second cohort of Associates as a collective group and explained the general aims of the research and the commitment required. Those willing to participate were asked to volunteer and provided me with an email address and phone number. The selection of Associates was random in the sense that at the beginning they were not chosen for any particular characteristics but because they volunteered to be involved in the study. Initially over twenty Associates from Cohort Two showed interest, but technical issues relating to ethics permissions and school sector ruled out over half as potential participants. The final six were chosen to allow a gender balance, and an equal mix of those I had previously taught and those I had not.

The six participants included three females: Eliza, Jamie and Lanie, and three males Anders, Ben and Frank. I had taught Eliza, Lanie and Anders and led their tutorial workshops in the initial intensive, while Jamie, Ben and Frank had another tutorial leader and knew me only through lecture attendance. They each worked in a separate Victorian Government secondary school with the exception of Anders and Ben who worked in the same school and shared a staffroom. Frank was the only participant who was not placed in a school in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The six participants were not particularly diverse in their ages (the oldest 26, the youngest 23 in 2011), or their educational and family backgrounds.

All the participants attended either an independent or elite select-entry government school. Only Anders had attended a co-educational school for his secondary schooling, and he was the only one to enter the TfA pathway from full time work. The remaining five participants had applied for the program during their last year of undergraduate studies at either the University of Melbourne (4 participants) or the University of Queensland (1 participant). There was some difference in the learning areas the participants taught, however no one taught mathematics. Table 2 provides
further details of the participants’ educational background, descriptions of their placement school and the subjects they taught.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School the participant attended</th>
<th>Placements school</th>
<th>Subject/s taught</th>
<th>Participant Associate description of placement school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Elite independent all-girls secondary school in Melbourne</td>
<td>Tyldane Secondary College</td>
<td>Language other than English (LOTE) and English as a second language (ESL)</td>
<td>“It’s got 60 nationalities, 54 languages spoken by the student body. So, it's very varied... We’re the biggest business in Dandenong North... over 50 per cent of the staff have been there for 20 years”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders</td>
<td>A coeducational Catholic System secondary school in a regional Victorian town</td>
<td>Windmill Secondary College</td>
<td>Health, Psychology and general science.</td>
<td>“So it’s a really large school which has been good in some ways and then hard in others because it's hard to get to know everybody but then there's also a lot going on at the school because it is so big...there is quite a wide range of ethnic groups represented in this school. I think 40 to 45 different nationalities within the school. Definitely within class, you come across a lot of those. I guess being in the outer-metro region, a lot of the families - a lot of the parents of the students that I teach seem to have jobs that I guess you would say aren't necessarily professional jobs, or they don't have university backgrounds...I think there is a large number of migrants in the area as well, which is reflected in the student population and I guess with some of their backgrounds, coming from overseas, they are not necessarily skilled”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>A selective all-boys Government secondary school in Melbourne</td>
<td>Windmill Secondary College</td>
<td>Philosophy and Psychology</td>
<td>“I wouldn’t say that I necessarily see low-economic disadvantage. It's because a lot of students have iPhones and are happy to flaunt them and use them in each class when they're not meant to”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>A selective all-girls Government secondary school in Melbourne</td>
<td>Fairmount High School</td>
<td>LOTE and Humanities</td>
<td>“There are eight Year 7 classes when they start and a few less in Year 12, when they finish. Year 12 students.....finish either with VCE or VCAL....There’s not a lot of ethnic variation here. It’s a fairly sort of homogenous population”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>An elite independent all-girls Catholic secondary school in Melbourne</td>
<td>Roycreek College</td>
<td>English and Humanities</td>
<td>“So the first thing that a lot of people notice is we have a huge boy/girl ratio. So the nearby girls’ school... actually kind of takes in a lot of girls from the local area and that's a public school. So all the co-educational schools in the area have a greater male to female ratio because the girls are, kind of, getting pulled into that school. At this school in some year levels it’s as high as 80 per cent male, 20 per cent female. Secondly, it’s a really Muslim and Arabic based school. So there's a huge percentage of Lebanese and Turkish students.... Mostly it’s just a really kind of poor area, so really socio-economically low, I suppose”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>An elite independent all-boys secondary school in another state.</td>
<td>Wallansea Secondary College</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>“So it’s a school of about 238 students in a town of about 2200 people. It’s located about 350 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and the school has, like I said, declining student enrolment. It’s been declining pretty much for a very long time. Apparently back 30/40/50 years it was more around - it was double or triple the number of students. It’s probably going to stabilise at around 230 kids the next two years for some time. So it’s getting a bit smaller. The condition of the buildings - it’s a pretty old school. It’s been around and has never been really rebuilt or renovated in a fairly long time.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Disadvantaged Schools” in the study

This was not intended to be a study of any particular school’s “disadvantage”, so the schools were of interest only in that these were the social fields that the participants entered along the TfA pathway. The schools nevertheless had been labelled as disadvantaged in qualifying to participate in the TfA program so it was relevant to check the quantifying data attached to such a label. In Australia, schools are judged to be disadvantaged using the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSED) as the basis of identification in all schooling sectors across Australia (DEEWR, 2010c). This index takes census attributes that are believed to reflect disadvantage such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and proportion of the workforce in relatively unskilled occupations (DHS, 2003).

With the instigation of the My School website by then Education Minister Julia Gillard in 2010, schools are also now being classified as disadvantaged based on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). The ICSEA is a numerical representation of the level of educational disadvantage developed specifically for the My School website. The ICSEA values indicate statistically similar schools, it is claimed, by measuring “key factors that correlate with educational outcomes, as indicated by the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), unlike more general measures of socio-economic status” (ACARA, 2010). These measures are not general measures of SES but can be seen as 14 specific measures of SES based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population data outlining household income, employment and educational qualifications. These data categories attempt to straddle economic human capital and cultural capital indicators to plot schools’ relative social advantage. There were five schools indirectly involved with this study and the ICSEA and demographic data for 2011 was obtained, as that was the year the participants entered these schools, and is collated in Table 3. The data were gathered from the My School (2012) website that is maintained by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and in order to protect both the identity of the schools and the participants of this study pseudonyms are used.
### Table 3: School information for 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and structure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>2011 “My school” student data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tydane Secondary College</strong></td>
<td>South Eastern suburb of Melbourne</td>
<td>Of the students 48% were girls and 52% boys, 1% of the student population (11.9 students) identifies as Indigenous and 61% coming from a language background other than English. The school ICSEA value is 976.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A coeducational government school catering for students in Years 7 - 12. There are 1190 total student enrolments, and 110 teaching staff were employed in 2011.</td>
<td>approximately 30km from Melbourne’s CBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Windmill Secondary College</strong></td>
<td>Outer Northern suburb of Melbourne</td>
<td>Of the students 52% were female and 48% male. There were no students identifying as Indigenous in the school, and 41% coming from a language background other than English. The school has an ICSEA value of 985.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windmill is a dual campus coeducational school. The school is divided into a Middle Years campus for Years 7 to 9, and a Senior campus for years 10 - 12 in two locations approximately 1 km apart. In 2011, there were 1696 total student enrolments and 130 teaching staff (122.6 Full-time equivalent [FTE]) employed at the school.</td>
<td>approximately 20km from Melbourne’s CBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairmount High School</strong></td>
<td>Outer Eastern Suburb of Melbourne</td>
<td>There were 817 students enrolled with 53% being girls and 47% boys. Of the students 1% of students identified as Indigenous and 10% coming from language backgrounds other than English. The school ICSEA value is 990.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A coeducational government school, catering for students in Years 7 - 12. There were 72 teachers employed in 2011, making up the equivalent of 60.3 full time teaching staff.</td>
<td>approximately 35km from Melbourne’s CBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roycreek College</strong></td>
<td>A Northern suburb of Melbourne</td>
<td>Of the students 32% are girls and 68% boys, 4 students identify as Indigenous and 63% come from a language background other than English. The school ICSEA value is 934.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A coeducational government school with 438 students in Years 7 – 12 and 50 teachers (44.8 FTE) employed in 2011.</td>
<td>approximately 14km from Melbourne’s CBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wallansea Secondary College</strong></td>
<td>Rural northern Victoria</td>
<td>Of the students 52% are girls and 48% boys, 2% of students identify as Indigenous and 5 % come from a language background other than English. The school ICSEA value is 977.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A coeducational government school with 238 students in Years 7 – 12 and 27 teachers (26.2 FTE) employed in 2011.</td>
<td>approximately 350km from Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of note is the ICSEA value of the schools that the participants entered in relation to the nation-wide school ICSEA average of 1000. Schools with an ICSEA greater than 1000 are expected to have students who perform better than the national mean. As is explained on the My School website:

The average value of all schools’ ICSEA values is set at 1000. This represents the 'middle ground' of educational advantage levels among Australian school students. The number 1000 is the median value of the set of all school ICSEA values. The
median is used because the ICSEA values of all schools are unevenly spread, reflecting the great diversity of student populations across Australia.


Bonner and Shepard (2014) define schools’ with an ICSEA value of between 950 and 1150 as being in the middle range of schools (a high range score being between 1150-1250 and the lowest range down to 750). By this measure only Roycreek Secondary College with an ICSEA value of 934 in 2011 would be considered outside of the middle range and therefore disadvantaged. I later sought further information to confirm how the remainder of the schools were considered disadvantaged enough to qualify for the TfA program.

I subsequently found that the ICSEA value is not only used to show the educational advantage or disadvantage of the school as a whole but is further broken down to show the distribution of the relative advantage or disadvantage of the students in schools in quartiles ("My School," 2012). The distribution of students in placement schools appears in Table 4

A further breakdown of the ICSEA data confirms that Roycreek SC had 63% of students, the greatest number of the five schools, who were from family backgrounds that fall in the lowest quarter of the ICSEA measure distribution. Each of the schools, apart from Wallansea SC, educated above the average number of students in the bottom quartile of the ICSEA distribution and when the bottom quarter and lower middle quarter are combined over half (ranging from 58% - 76%) of the students at these schools could be considered disadvantaged. Viewed in this manner the index produces a measure that assumes anything below the average, in the bottom two quartiles of the distribution, indicates disadvantage. It is also of note that each of the schools has a much lower proportion of students in the top ICSEA quartile than the Australian average.
Wallansea SC was the smallest and only rural school in this study and noticeably different to the other schools in terms of the ICSEA distribution data. Wallansea SC did not have higher than average students in the most disadvantaged quartile, though when combined with the lower middle quarter 55% of students attending Wallansea SC fell in the bottom half the distribution. An explanation of Wallansea’s qualification to place TfA Associates may rest on the hard-to-staff descriptions given at the program’s inception. There have traditionally been teaching shortages in rural areas of Australia and specifically attracting new teachers to these settings has been problematic (Hudson & Hudson, 2008). Further, problems related to the retention of teachers in rural settings has intensified (Plunkett & Dyson, 2011). The case of Wallansea SC’s employment of Associates would support research findings that rural schools cannot attract or retain teachers easily. The school has employed two Associates from each of the first five cohorts and each of these Associates moved from the school and the rural community upon the completion of their TfA contract.

**Data Collection Methods**

Data for this study were collected from:

- semi-structured audiotaped interviews;
- telephone and email posts and exchanges; and
- publicly available policy and curriculum documents, promotional material, brochures, websites, newspaper articles and press releases.
Interviews
The participants were interviewed in three phases. The first phase occurred between March and June of 2011, the second between May and July of 2012 and the third in March 2013. The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two hours in duration and were held in a variety of places of the participants’ choosing. The choice in interview location was given because I sought to alleviate any time or travel barriers the participants may have encountered. The interviews with Jamie were held at her school in a classroom, when she had a non-teaching period. Lanie’s first interview was in her school staffroom during a non-teaching period and over the morning break, while subsequent interviews took place in a cafe at the university. Eliza was also keen to interview at the university because she visited the campus to study once a week so each of the three interviews conducted with her took place there. Ben and Anders met me in a restaurant close to their outer suburban school on each occasion and Frank’s interviews were held on the phone due to his rural locale. In the third phase of interviews only Lanie and Eliza met me in person for this interview. The other participants took part in a phone interview in which they updated me on their post-contract teaching commitments and plans for the future.

In each phase semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim to “produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents’ perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 97). As Burns (2000) suggests semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gather the participants “perceptions of themselves, of their environment and of their experiences” (p. 425). The first phase interviews were structured to invite open ended conversation about the core research questions. The interviews commenced with a brief introduction of the research project followed by an invitation to Associates to describe the schools they were teaching in. Following that questions specific to their school were posed, such as:

- What does disadvantage look like in your school?
- How does it look in the community in which your school is located?
- What do you think are some of the main challenges that you face in trying to produce meaningful and relevant learning experiences that capture the interests of the students you are teaching?
Next, the participants were asked more specifically about their views of the TfA program and its agenda and questions included:

- How do you understand the role of the TfA program in the Australian education context?
- How do you see as your role within TfA as assisting to ameliorate educational disadvantage?

The participants were then invited to discuss their motivations and intentions for entering the program if they had not already spoken of them. The full list of interview questions for the first interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

A factor considered when undertaking the first phase of interviews was the relationship I had built previously with the participant Associates in my teaching capacity. The difference in the level of familiarity between the three Associates who I had taught and the three I had not, resulted in quite different interviews in both positive and negative ways. Lanie, Eliza and Anders (the three with whom I had a prior relationship) spoke in more detail of their experiences, for more time and were the first to agree to an interview time. Anders and Eliza spoke about their students particularly in relation to their learning and development, which were topics we had discussed at the initial intensive. In these first conversations Eliza and Anders were keen to talk about how what they had learned in the classes I had taught played out (or didn’t play out). Lanie on the other hand, criticised the initial intensive and was emphatic that it had not prepared her for her school, and the students she would encounter. There were two factors to consider in that interview. First, the interview had occurred in the staff room at Lanie’s school, which limited the way she spoke about the school itself and the students she encountered. Second, Lanie spoke about her concerns candidly as she felt her feedback was being given to someone who could effect change in the way the intensive was taught in the future. In contrast, the first interviews with Jamie, Ben and Frank (whom I had not taught) each lasted under an hour and while they were amiable, their answers to the questions did not veer too far from the script and they rarely linked their experiences in the initial intensive with their experiences in school.
The second phase of interviews took place between May and July, 2012 mid-way through the second year of teaching. As contact and correspondence had been maintained since the first phase of interviews, all the participants were more candid in this phase. These later interviews followed a similar structure to the first interviews, in that they were semi-structured and conversational. Common questions in the second interviews were:

- Are you teaching the same classes and or students this year?
- What is your understanding of the impact you have on your students? And,
- What are your plans for next year and in to the future?

The data gathered from and after the first phase of interviews enabled me to frame more focussed and personalised questions related to the themes that had emerged. For example, early in the TfA experience Frank had spoken about getting involved in a school breakfast club so in phase two, much of the discussion was related to his continuing and expanding involvement in the club.

After the second phase of interviews with the participant Associates, I sought more information about Teach for Australia organisation and its inception than had been publically available and thus interviewed the founder of the TfA organisation on one occasion. The interview, held in August 2012, lasted over two hours and was conducted at a café near Teach For Australia’s headquarters in central Melbourne and began with the question: “I want to get a sense of TfA, I know it’s your baby, so how did it start and where it’s come from, so could you tell me how you ended up here?”

In this interview the founder’s perspective of the history of the organisation was relayed, which was an insider’s version and one that did not appear in any official documentation or marketing material.

The third phase of interviews took place after the two year contract as TfA Associates had expired for the participants involved. The interviews were conducted with the main purpose of seeking information on what the Associates had been doing since the previous year and focussed on the decisions they had made, and indeed, were still making in relation to their future.
**Email correspondence**

Another source of data came from participant and researcher correspondence in the form of emails. The regular and informal email correspondence allowed for insights and perceptions of the participants to be captured and analysed in an ongoing manner. In keeping with the value Merriam (1998) places on descriptive reporting in qualitative research the participants’ own words were used to convey the importance of what is being described.

Early in the research email played a purely administrative function, such as for organising interviews, transcription checking and asking clarifying questions. Participants were encouraged at the interviews and via email to get in touch with me about their experiences at any time with the anticipation that emails would provide first-hand accounts of situations and issues experienced by participants as they arose or an immediate insider account of different situations. This data would allow me to immediately note the emergent issues the Associates experienced and the extent to which they felt supported. However, while each participant responded promptly to emails I sent them it was not until late in the two year contract that any of the participants initiated contact with anecdotes or reports about the issues they were experiencing. Nevertheless, they readily responded to my own earlier email contacts with them, which occurred at the beginning of each school term and as questions arose in between those times. The issues they wrote about included, but were not be limited to, students, teaching practices, parents, policies, concerns, learning, pedagogy, culture, social class and the impact the TfA program was having on them. The content of these emails further informed the interview topics in later interviews.

Another benefit of email contact was the frequency with which it occurred and the minimal impact on the participants’ time. Toward the end 2012, in the final few months of the Associates contracts, they were feeling “extremely time poor” (Lanie interview 3), with university assignments and the Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT) registration process to complete, school examinations and reporting to undertake, as well as making decisions about their lives upon termination of the TfA contract. At
that time only Lanie and Eliza agreed to meet for a third face-to-face interview, so for the others email and phone interviews were critical for this phase.

**Textual data sources**
The collection and analysis of relevant documents was the third form of data gathering. Documents are “social facts” which are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004) that can be used “for systematic evaluation as part of a study” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that textual analysis is important and that qualitative researchers too often ignore the material artefacts and objects within social settings, instead relying on interviews and observations. They argue that to neglect the material realities of the settings being studied and the way participants interact with them is all too often a failing of qualitative research projects (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The documents from which data were sourced included policy and curriculum documents, brochures, websites, newspaper articles and press releases. Of particular interest at the beginning of this research were documents that introduced the TfA program to the wider public such as newspaper articles (for example Ferrari, 2008; Perkins, 2009; Tomazin, 2008), as well as statements and transcripts of addresses made by the Education Minister Julia Gillard at conferences, forums and symposiums (Gillard, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) in relation to the initiative. Because these documents indicated that the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) was actively involved in the creation of the TfA initiative it was then necessary to source government documents relating to it (for example DEECD, 2008; DEEWR, 2010a, 2010b, 2011d).

Documents produced by the TfA organisation to both promote and recruit were also important data sources for this research. In searching for information on TfA’s aims, recruitment, and marketing it became evident that the TfA website was the dominant source of publicly available material. This meant that while much of the material was easily accessible, it was difficult to gather information that was specifically targeted to

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7On the 18th of September 2013, after a new Liberal-National coalition Government was formed the DEEWR was disbanded and divided into two portfolios: The Department of Education and The Department of Workplace Relations.
the focus cohort of this study as the website was continually updated. All information on the aspects of recruitment, aims and the impact of Associates, had been updated and was relevant to subsequent cohorts of recruits. It was possible, however, to gain access to the initial application form completed by this cohort, which provided evidence of the recruitment criteria at the start of the process for Cohort 2.

Data Analysis
In each instance of data analysis I was seeking to recognise patterns emerging from the data. The research began with an analysis of a range of documents which was an “unobtrusive and nonreactive” (Bowen, 2009, p. 38) process that allowed an initial mapping of the research terrain (Borko, 2004). Documents included Victorian and Commonwealth education policies, Teach for Australia’s marketing materials and websites, media and press releases, newspaper articles and opinion pieces, as and well as school specific documents. The analysis of these documents was useful for me as they provided important insights into how the Associates came to view their role in schools, the importance of their “mission” to address disadvantage and the impact they had in particular schools, as well as how they interpreted (outsiders’) perceptions of the TfA program and like models. The documents were constantly revisited throughout the duration of this study, especially the promotional material released by the TfA organisation and the media releases such as newspaper articles and editorials, to ensure the most up-do-date documents were being analysed.

Following the first phase of interviews the audio recordings were transcribed by me, the transcripts then printed out and colour-coded. The first round of coding focussed on references to the themes flagged by literature of the kind I have discussed in earlier chapters such as: disadvantage, social justice, citizenship, cultural capital and habitus, elite groups, power, neoliberalism, difference, preparation and (teaching) impact. As I began to analyse the phase one transcripts the focus of my study began to shift as new themes emerged. For example I had originally sought to understand more how the Associates felt prepared to teach in the classroom and school settings they encountered, but conversations about their classroom experience only played a very small part in the conversations we had. An example of an emergent theme I had
not considered before the first phase of interviews that was relevant to this study was the Associates understanding of leadership in schools and the expectation of leadership as part of their role in TfA.

Qualitative research requires a continual re-examination of the data collected (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stake, 1995). After the initial coding and feedback, I returned to each of the interview transcripts to engage in further rounds of coding throughout the length of the project. It was also important to revisit earlier transcripts and recordings so changes in the participants’ perceptions of their experiences could be detected and the structure and content of further interviews be determined. An example of this was in relation to uncovering the participants’ service learning, or volunteer commitments prior to entering the program. Only one participant had mentioned this aspect in the first interview and it was something I judged as important in understanding their willingness to contribute to their communities. I asked the other five participants about their service via email in which they responded briefly with names of the programs, and then we spoke of this in more detail at the subsequent interviews. Email exchanges with the participants served the dual purpose of continuing conversational data gathering by providing a more immediate way for the participants to provide further data regarding their experiences and also confirming my interpretations of what they meant when they described certain people, places or situations.

**Trustworthiness**

Traditionally validity is viewed as the extent the research measures or gives the researcher the information they are after. Validity has been defined by Neuman (2003) as

> the match between a construct, or the way a researcher conceptualises the idea in a conceptual fashion and a measure. It refers to how well an idea about reality ‘fits’ with actual reality (p. 179).

Maxwell (2002), however, cautions qualitative researchers against using positivist notions of validity. Citing Wolcott (1990) Maxwell states that “understanding is a more fundamental concept for qualitative research than validity” (Maxwell, 2002, p.
39). Guba and Lincoln (1989) also argue for the need to replace positivist notions of validity in qualitative research with the notions of “authenticity” and “trustworthiness”. The notion of validity has not been rejected in this research, but built on using Guba and Lincoln’s notions of authenticity and truthfulness as its foundations and demonstrated in a number of ways. One is by paying close attention to the contexts in which statements are made, and by maintaining a reflexive stance on the research and the claims I am making about meaning. Secondly, I attempt to demonstrate my truthfulness to the material by including extended passages of the participants’ interview responses alongside interpretations. However, as Carspecken (1996) warns us, it is important not to translate truth claims into validity claims, understanding that some of the content of any truth claim is going to be culturally bound. Our aim is to produce truth claims that have met their validity requirements and that are therefore well supported. We never claim to have the final ‘truth’ of any issue (p. 57)

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance for this project was obtained from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) ref 2011_001219 and the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) ref HREC 1034170 before recruitment of participants began. At the first meeting with each participant they were given a Plain Language Statement (PLS) outlining the nature of the research, their involvement in the research and their rights (see Appendix 2). They were also given an informed consent form (see Appendix 3) which they signed along with the researcher. The confidentiality of each participant was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for themselves and the schools they entered. The exception to this was the founder of the TfA organisation. It was deemed impossible to mask her identity because of the unique position she holds within the organisation. Permission was sought, and granted, from her that enabled the use of her real name in this work. This, in turn required an amendment to the HREC approval.

Although I had an involvement in the initial teacher education aspect of the program for this particular cohort, the thesis itself in keeping with appropriate ethics protocols, included only Associates with whom I was no longer directly or indirectly involved in
an academic teaching or assessment capacity. As discussed earlier, the prior teacher-student relationship I had with the participants was a consideration when the interviews were conducted.

Summary
In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical frameworks and approach used in this research. I have argued that this is a qualitative study, using an interpretivist approach to explore both the claims and positioning of the TfA program and the understandings, values and experiences of those recruited into the program. This study is one that utilises qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, as well as analysis of email correspondence and a variety of textual documents.
Chapter Five - Citizenship, altruism, entitlement and leadership

Introduction
David Labaree (2010) identified a great marketing advantage that Teach for America held over all other education courses as offering “elite college students a win-win option: by becoming corps members, they can do good and do well at the same time” (Labaree, 2010, p. 48). In this chapter I consider the evidence from my project in relation to Labaree’s claims.

The chapter first considers evidence in relation to the way the Teach for Australia (TfA) program speaks to certain forms of citizenship and altruism by offering an opportunity to “do good”. The definition of altruism - the “willingness to do things that bring advantages to others, even if it results in disadvantage to yourself” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013) is explored as it is experienced, and expected, in the Teach for Australia pathway. Altruism is a central tenet of the TfA program and the programs on which it is modelled, as is shown when some of the documentary material promoting the program is examined. The Associate participants’ accounts of their personal altruism evident in their participation in previous service programs and their desire to be involved in the TfA program are explored. To conclude the first section links are made between the TfA vision of a good citizen and the neoliberal vision of a good citizen by providing examples that demonstrate the particular form of “corporate citizenship” required in today’s educational realm.

The second part of this chapter returns to Teach for Australia’s marketing material in order to understand how the opportunity to “do well at the same time [as doing good]” (Labaree, 2010, p. 48) is portrayed. The Associates’ own motives for choosing the TfA pathway as an entrée into teaching are examined as are their understandings of teachers and teaching, their views on school leadership, and their aspirations within education. In short, this section looks at why the participants of this study wished to become TfA Associates and how both the TfA Organisation and the recruits
view the opportunity as one in which they are being altruistic but also able to benefit personally.

“Doing good” - altruism in teaching
The story of the altruistic teacher, the teacher with the desire to “make a difference” has consistently been drawn upon as a force to keep people in the profession and in the case of this research to attract potential teachers. The promise of being able to “do good”, or make a difference is used to sweeten the often sour parts of a low-paying, low-status occupation and it is a narrative that the Teach for All programs are particularly adept at telling (Labaree, 2010). When Teach for America was established reform efforts in American schools were focused on “the standards movement and the choice movement, both of which initially focused their attention on goals other than social justice” (Labaree, 2010, p. 49). Modelling itself on the Peace Corps, which had been offering idealistic college students the opportunity to commit to service since the 1960s, Teach for America was able to “tap into the social altruism of a generation that had been frequently dismissed as materialistic and self-centred…[and offered them an opportunity that was a] win-win option: by becoming corps members, they can do good and do well at the same time”(Labaree, 2010, pp. 48-49).

As noted in Chapter Two Melodie Potts-Rosevear, an American citizen, had worked in the US for a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) project on “school reconfiguration and achievement gap reduction”. Following that she moved to Australia to work for BCG in setting up the Cape York Institute where she worked closely with an eminent indigenous scholar and activist Noel Pearson. From these two separate but related experiences Potts-Rosevear was able to maintain and promote the understanding that Teach for Australia was created specifically to “do good” in education in Australia.

How does TfA promote “doing good”?
One factor that sets TfA apart from other teaching pathways in appealing to altruistic potential recruits is in its combination of two different narratives. One narrative emphasises the altruistic nature of the teacher and the other stresses the importance of a dedicated group of change-makers.
The organisation uses the already existing narrative of the teacher as someone who can “make a difference” by engaging in a special mission in society (Lortie, 1975). Teach for Australia’s mission involves having “life changing impact on their students [as part of] an ambitious social movement working to confront educational disadvantage in Australia” (Figure 2 - TfA, 2011c, 2014c).

**Figure 2:** TfA Mission statement (TfA, 2014c).
The narrative of being part of a movement with a special mission is combined with a narrative describing the growing problems in education. TfA outlines the urgent “problem” they seek to address on a webpage entitled “THE PROBLEM” (Figure 3). The “problem” is framed as a national issue where Australia is compared to other OECD countries as having a large gap between high and low academic achievers thus being more unequal.

Figure 3: “The Problem” (TfA, 2011c).
After the problem is established, TfA’s mission and vision statements (Figure 2) offer a solution. The mission offers to “transform outstanding individuals into outstanding teachers and inspirational leaders who will help change the lives of their students” (TfA, 2014c). The TfA text goes on to suggest that the impact made by these “inspirational leaders” will “have a life changing impact” (TfA, 2014c). TfA marketing materials suggest the positive impact here can only be made as part of the “ambitious social movement” (TfA, 2011c), a movement that requires those involved to be committed to serving other young Australians. The materials use demonstrations of such commitment, which highlight the altruistic decision Associates have made to become part of the movement. This can be seen on the “FOR SCHOOLS – Why TFA?” webpage that emphasises:

So why would a young professional or non-teaching graduate choose Teach For Australia?
If there is one thing all of our Associates have, it's career options; be it in business, law, engineering, government or social enterprise. Yet, each of our Associates has instead made a decision to pursue a different path, recognising the opportunity teaching provides to have a direct impact on the life trajectories of young Australians. (TfA, 2011f)

This kind of statement makes both the “willingness to help others” and the possible “disadvantage to” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013) of the individuals who become Associates clear. To the founder Potts-Rosevear, the altruistic decision to participate in education rather than head down a corporate (therefore more elite) path was best highlighted by the experience of her house-mate friend. When “he turned down an offer to go to an accounting firm and went and taught grades three and four” (Potts-Rosevear, 2012), it revealed to her that by taking the more altruistic option when presented with two career paths, his making a choice for the social good, was something to be celebrated at both a community and individual level.

Choosing to do good by teaching for Australia
Within the narrative of the program initiator and the website and advertising of the TfA program, the TfA Organisation puts forward the idea that the choice made by Associates is one based on altruistic intentions because the Associates forsake the career they could have had. That they are willing to forego other career opportunities
for a low paying, low status career in a disadvantaged school is presented as proof that Associates are truly altruistic.

In my interviews with the participants they too articulated that this was a path they had chosen to pursue above other career options because of the call to social justice they believed it offered - but usually only when prompted. I introduced the study as “looking at alternative pathways into teaching and particularly those programs such as TFA that are designed to specifically address disadvantage”. In the first interviews I wanted to get a sense of the Associates’ understandings of TFA’s role in education, what drew them to the program and whether a strong sense of altruism played a part in their desire to be involved.

Of the six participants, it was Frank who most emphasised altruistic intentions when applying for the TFA program in our first conversation. He stressed his commitment to social justice as an important reason, an idea that he came back to in subsequent correspondence. Frank explained his involvement in TFA in the following way:

I’d done a few internships in some of the fields I wanted to work in and they’d been - I didn't mind them but I hadn't really gotten excited about what I was doing. Then someone mentioned TFA to me - a mate who I think was working for TFA [as a] staff member, not an Associate, down in Melbourne. I looked it up and I thought oh, this is just what I want to do. It’s something that will be a bit challenging- where I can get a challenge out of it. I’d been really into trying to put myself in challenging situations I guess. So I wanted that. I really liked the idea that it was more than just going into - if it’s just a program where it's just like get a teaching degree for free, you know get into teaching, I don’t know if I’d have applied in terms of that wouldn't have really sold it. But the idea that there was going to be a higher call - a purpose - like signing up to spending your time trying to make a difference - giving your utmost to help a situation you are in as a teacher for those two years…. then whether you continue on or not having, I guess, a lifetime involvement in this area and trying to [improve things]. For me it was more about improving the equity of the system.

(Frank interview 1)

Frank’s comment, while stating the main catalyst for his application was because of “a higher call- a purpose...more about improving the equity of the system”, highlights the choice he had before applying. His choice to apply for TFA was influenced by his experience working in the field of his undergraduate study and the fact that he did not get “excited about” these experiences enough to warrant pursuing those career paths.
Ben, Jamie and Lanie did not give initial altruistic responses when asked why they had applied for the program. It is possible they assumed I took this aspect of their application as a given. However what these three Associates did articulate was that their choice to enter the program was just that, a choice to follow this pathway that was made when they could have chosen any other career path. In our first interview Lanie’s responses explained how she had applied for TfA after learning about Teach for America while on a study trip to the USA and thought Teach for Australia offered a way to enter teaching.

I had done work experience overseas [where I] taught in a school in France, in a primary school...I tried other notable jobs. I worked in adult education and at the Attorney General’s office and in a private law firm before that....But I think [TfA] is a good program because I probably would not have chosen teaching if I hadn’t done it this way. I think a lot of people in the program would not have done it either.

(Lanie interview 1)

The mention of prior job opportunities was made as if to emphasise the altruistic component of Lanie’s decision which was similarly expressed by the other participants. Jamie who had not worked in other jobs before entering TfA said her choice to enter was because she had been successful at high school. Yet she repeatedly stressed that she had chosen TfA when she could have chosen any other career path. Jamie did not specifically talk about other job opportunities she might have followed but did exclaim that she “could have chosen anything and the key to being able to choose what you want is to do well at high school” (interview 1). She spoke about not wanting to follow her parents into medicine or business, and although she was unsure about what she wanted to do with her life, being able to seize the opportunity presented by TfA was too good to pass.

In the case of Anders, he had already started pursuing another career option working in a large metropolitan health service as an allied health professional. He had enjoyed working in the occupation for which he had studied, but not enough that he felt that it was the only career he ever wanted. To Anders the incentive to apply for TfA and become a teacher stemmed from what he called the “social aspect” of teaching work.

Throughout high school, I lived on a country farm and caught the bus into school and was involved in quite a variety of different groups within the school, including a
social-justice group and a leadership group. I think that’s had an impact on where I’ve ended up today. When I finished high school, I had a year off and spent some time travelling overseas and spent some time working. Then came to Melbourne and lived at college for a couple of years where I studied [Applied Science] at University. While I was at [university].....I was exposed to people within the community that were also from low socio-economic and disadvantaged areas through the research that I did. When I finished my degree, I started working at [metropolitan] Health and started my career. Throughout my first year working, I enjoyed the work but I was always drawn to the social aspect when working with people. I enjoyed getting to know people and I came across the Teach for Australia programme through a friend - that I knew in high school - and we had been involved in some of that social justice stuff together. They mentioned it to me and they knew that I - at the end of high school had an interest in perhaps doing teaching but ended up doing [another course]. Through that I decided to make an application and then got into the programme.

(Anders interview 1)

Anders claimed to have had a passing interest in teaching when he was at the end of high school, but had not chosen to pursue it. At that time, even though his mother and sister were teachers, he did not see that becoming a teacher would help him contribute to society as much as his first career choice as a health professional. Anders recalled that he had wanted to work with people and after working with people from “low-socioeconomic and disadvantaged areas” while doing some research at university, it became apparent that TfA was a way he could have a “social” impact.

Eliza, was the only participant who did not tell me about the choice she had made to enter TfA or why she had applied in her first interview. However Eliza was most frequently in contact via email and by telephone in the first year of this study about her experience. On the telephone in August 2011, when asked again why she wanted to go into TfA and not a traditional pathway into teaching Eliza responded that “having a chance to work for social equality was a no-brainer” (Eliza phone conversation August 2011).
Doing good: prior service commitments

In 1991 Eileen Sedunary noted a shift in education discourse as an expression of the nation dependent on “a citizenry whose productive capacities, necessarily grounded in formal education, became a key mode of identity with and commitment to nation” (Sedunary, 1991, p. 2). Since this time Australian governments have advocated “corporate benevolence, individual volunteerism and personal responsibility as principle means for solving serious social issues” (McMurria, 2008, p. 305), which require a particular form active citizen that strives to “do good” for the good of the nation. The TfA organisation employs a nationalistic rhetoric, to promote its own corporate benevolence and using phrases such as “intelligent young Australians” and our “country's brightest individuals” (Figure 5: found at TfA, 2011e) to present recruited Associates as personally responsible citizens who are willing to serve the nation to solve the serious social issue of educational disadvantage. This discourse is designed to appeal not only to the Associates and other potential recruits but also to the Federal and State Governments and the schools that TfA enters.
The TfA program relies on being able to recruit and supply active citizens in order to address the “solvable problem of educational disadvantage” (TfA, 2011c), and the participants in this study indicated that a demonstration of their willingness to participate in volunteer and service programs was treated with gravitas by TfA recruiters.

I remember one of the interviews that I had on one of the selection days. It was quite an earnest chat with the interviewer who wanted to tap into your emotional connection I suppose, to the cause. How passionate you are about education, working with people who are disadvantaged and equality and equity. That’s something that I strive for, so I think that was definitely something that they were looking for.

(Anders interview 1)

Anders explained that during the selection process he and the other Associates had to demonstrate their commitment to altruistic activities which attested to them being active and good citizens. The participants needed to have been involved in at least one service learning program when they attended school, or in their undergraduate degrees at university. They proudly recounted the contribution they made to the various programs, highlighting their personal responsibility and willingness to participate, and explained how these experiences had assisted them in their application for the TfA program.
Anders was the only participant to have attended a coeducational and regional Catholic high school. He spoke a number of times in interviews, by phone and by email about the contribution he made to his local community through programs facilitated by his high school. In fact he was the only one who offered information on his previous volunteer work or service learning unprompted when he referred to his own school experience. He explained:

At high school I was part of the 'Seeds of Justice' group. This involved activities such as bringing guest speakers to the school (for example to discuss women's rights or poverty), letter writing for organisations such as Amnesty International and organising fund raisers for various charities.

(Anders interview 1)

Subsequently Anders recalled volunteer tutoring of high school students and first-year university students as something he had enjoyed and “done right up until [he] started full time work in the health service” (email September 2011) the previous year. Jamie also attended a Catholic school, an independent girls’ school and was the only other participant to refer to service learning she undertook at high school. She explained:

At school I was involved in helping tutor students at the Friday Night School, which was run in Richmond to help refugee and migrant children with limited English skills with their homework. I also participated in a program whereby students accompanied Eucharistic Ministers to Epworth Hospital on Sunday mornings to give communion to those patients who had requested to receive it. I continued in this role after I left school for about three years, eventually taking girls from [my old school] with me as I gave out communion.

(Jamie email 2013)

Involvement in the school programs that Jamie and Anders described is part of the ethos of Catholic education in Australia. Among the core values and contemporary learnings of Catholic Schools is a “commitment to service” (CEO, 2014). It is perhaps because of this more formalised expectation of participation in service programs at school that Jamie and Anders recalled their school service so readily.

The other participants spoke about the work they had done in a volunteer capacity, their interpretation of service, while they were at university. These programs were not only more recent demonstrations of their willingness to participate in programs.

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8 Independent schools in Australia are also known as ‘private’ schools which charge fees for tuition.
that “do good”, but to their mind, more aligned with TfA’s stated purpose of leading change within education and addressing disadvantage. Lanie demonstrated this alignment when she explained to me the volunteer work in which she had been involved.

In 2009, I was selected as a Leadership for Change (LCP) Ambassador with Openaid International. This involved six months of volunteer work, education and training with the Melbourne team and one month in Thailand. But most important for TfA was in January 2010, I volunteered to be a subject coordinator and tutor in the University… Student Union’s VCE Summer School. I was part of a team dedicated to providing students from a range of disadvantaged schools and backgrounds with an inspiring and practical introduction to VCE, both academically and personally.

(Lanie email 2012)

Ben recounted volunteering in the same program as Lanie when he was at university.

I was part of …[the] Uni’s VCE Summer School back when I was at uni - it’s a two week program aimed at giving disadvantaged students a head start to their school year (and included some Windmill Secondary College students). It was a really great experience teaching-wise, as I was the head of two subjects which required that I prepared a course for the other tutors to follow. It also strongly confirmed my desire to be a teacher.

(Ben email 2012)

Lanie and Ben’s comments demonstrate efforts to align their previous service learning experiences with TfA’s stated goal. The comments also display their willingness to participate in education prior to entering TfA. Their involvement with the VCE Summer School shows that they have had some teaching experience, but most importantly that experience involved “disadvantaged students”. Frank recalled the volunteer work he had done while at university and like Lanie and Ben emphasised the alignment of his experiences with TfA’s mission statement and claims of “changing lives… in disadvantaged communities” (TfA, 2011c).

I did a bit of refugee tutoring in Brisbane and I did a lot of gay marriage advocacy work in terms of working for a campaign group up in Brisbane. Then I started to get more - I think a bit more socially aware as I’d gone through my university education. Then I was lucky to get a job tutoring at the university.

(Frank interview 1)

Frank’s comment portrays his willingness to engage with a disadvantaged group – refugees, and by tutoring them with education as well. Lanie, Ben and Frank believed it was evidence of this combination of “doing good” that proved their active citizenry.
Eliza’s response when asked about her service experience and volunteer work was different to the other participants. She had become involved with TfA since its inception. In her second year of an undergraduate degree, and with more than 18 months before being eligible to apply for the program, she volunteered with the TfA organisation. Volunteering for TfA was viewed by Eliza as community service but also a “type of apprenticeship in understanding how to impact educational outcomes for disadvantaged kids” (interview 2). The role of volunteer involved her being a campus ambassador for the organisation which meant staffing promotional booths at different university campuses and career fairs, as well as completing office duties at the TfA Head Office in Melbourne. Volunteering for TfA enabled Eliza to present TfA as her community when the application asked for evidence of community contribution. This form of volunteering also meant that Eliza had had a great deal of exposure to the organisation and its inner workings thus her responses to many questions were most closely aligned with the claims TfA makes.

**Citizens that do good: TfA as service**

Being “part of [the] change [and committing] to fixing the urgent problems” (TfA, 2011c) caused by disadvantage was often spoken about by the Associates. In the first phase of interviews I wanted to get a sense of how the Associates understood the role that the TfA organisation has to play in Australian education and if they saw it as a form of service. The responses they gave were similar, if not identical, to the publicly available statements made by the TfA organisation. Anders for example, used the term disadvantaged often and linked this to the space that the TfA program filled in the educational landscape. He explained TfA’s role in the following way:

> I guess the idea of getting graduates into teaching that are passionate and highly educated and skilled is to - in one way inspire students from these disadvantaged regions that they too can achieve anything that they want to. I guess because the programme isn’t necessarily a contract that you are going to teach forever. It’s that - at least two years. They understand that people will still move on to different careers but they hope that that link will be maintained between TFA. That whatever institution you end up in, you will still have in the back of your mind the idea that there’s people out there that are disadvantaged and that you can always do something to assist them. Whether that be through the organization you are in, becoming a partner or you going on to a school and giving a talk or whatever.
I think, broader, they see themselves as creating an awareness about disadvantage, whether or not that be through teachers or people that move into other sectors. That through that kind of infiltration of people through schools and other sectors, that it rubs off on the other staff and the other people that you are working with. Hopefully they can in some way make a difference to that widening gap between those that are highly educated and those that aren’t.

(Anders interview 1)

Helping people who were disadvantaged was to Anders, something of value and to his mind there was a role to be played to get people who were “passionate and highly educated and skilled” into the trenches to see how disadvantaged schools operate.

Although Ben was unsure of why his school had been labelled as disadvantaged his response when asked about TfA’s role in education was similar to that given by Anders. He believed that TfA’s role was to “really push the quality of teaching up and therefore push student achievement up” (Ben interview 1). Jamie too felt that the main way TfA could “do good” was to inject talent into these schools that are “difficult”. She explained:

I think a huge part of it is just trying to - and this sounds so vain - but just trying to reinvigorate some of the schools, where it’s a difficult school…. Some of the staff do end up getting really tired, and that sort of idea of the older teacher who's just in it for the money or lost passion, and sort of decide why they're there.

(Jamie interview 1)

To Jamie reinvigorating schools was an important part of TfA’s role and was one that relied on those with passion to be there - active citizens, and fuelled by altruism.

**Status of teaching**

Another way TfA promote the opportunity to “do good” arises from the belief that teaching as a profession suffers from a low status in the career hierarchy of Australian society where teaching is perceived “as a career that is high in demand ...and low in social status” (Richardson & Watt, 2006, p. 46). TfA claims to help raise the profile of teachers as part of their impact with the following statement found on a webpage titled “OUR IMPACT” (Figure 6):
In this statement, raising the profile of the teaching profession is linked to the calibre of the recruits. It is a statement that implies the profession suffers a low profile because “the country’s finest” do not choose teaching and because current teachers are not of the same calibre. This discourse again works to set Associates apart from the profession.

All participants of this study used the term “raise the profile of teaching” in one of their interviews and felt their presence in schools was another opportunity to “do good” in this way. The Associates agreed that they were part of a concerted effort to make the teaching profession more appealing to the general public in a number of ways. One of the ways they initially did this was by contrasting themselves with first, other teaching students and new graduates. It was important for them to show that high achievers could become teachers too, even though the public perceived that anyone could enter teaching by following traditional pathways. As Jamie expressed,

The other thing that concerns me is just the entry rates. Like, the VCE\(^9\) or ATAR\(^{10}\) scores that you need to become a teacher are still frighteningly low. Which I think just

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\(^9\) VCE is the Victorian Certificate of Education is the Final senior secondary examination certificate in the state of Victoria

\(^{10}\) The ATAR score is the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank and is the score used for selection into universities given to students completing Year 12 studies and the relevant state-based examinations.
means you are getting people who didn’t necessarily push themselves in high school, didn’t necessarily have teaching be their first preference. Like just something you put lower down a list if you didn’t get the score you wanted like, “I got a 55 oh well I’ll just do teaching”. So it kind of worries me that instead of getting people who are really high achieving and know what it takes to do really well you are getting people who didn’t necessarily succeed that much in school then going back into the system and having the same attitude.

(Jamie interview 2)

An interesting, if not ironic point made by Jamie relates to the belief that other people who enter the profession may not “necessarily have teaching as their first preference”. Jamie, had not preferenced teaching above another course of study either, yet this remained unacknowledged. Every person who applies for the TfA program has not chosen teaching as their first preference for tertiary study, in fact if a person had enrolled in education or teaching subjects in their undergraduate course they are precluded from applying for this pathway. The program is promoted as one that attracts those who do not choose teaching as a career path (TfA, 2013a) to the profession.

Jamie’s comment about the low entry marks for “normal” teaching pathways demonstrates general opinions about the low status of teaching as a career. The notion that people who have not “necessarily succeed[ed]” at school might go “back into the system” because their ATAR scores limit other choices and negatively influence students is a very real concern for Jamie. Yet it also reflects her opinion that entry of an elite group with proven academic achievement, rather than those who had perhaps always wanted to become teachers, would begin to change the profession and the status of teaching.

Another way the Associates saw they could raise the status of teaching was to contrast themselves to the current teacher body. Often mentioned was the age and length of service of the teachers at their schools which was done to focus the differences between themselves (as part of an elite group) and the other teaching staff. Older members of staff were mentioned by the Associates to indicate that things in these schools needed to be “shaken up” and that the age (and implied youthful energy) of the Associates was a remedy to the situation. Upon entering
Tyldane Secondary College Eliza judged the staff to be “entrenched” and portrayed their experience and length of service as having a negative impact on their teaching. In her first interview, when asked what she thought the role of TfA was, Eliza paused momentarily before saying:

Well, I think, [in] my school, for example, over 50 per cent of the staff have been there for 20 years. So, there is quite a strong culture, but, at the same time, is it strong, or is it entrenched? ....I think it's about challenging the way we think about teaching. For example, inside my school there are very definite rules about how you should teach and what you should do and all the staff members are quite - want to uphold these and aren’t necessarily always interested in having a discussion, or a dialogue about how you discuss them. It might be in terms of curriculum, or the content that you give your kids in class, that kind of thing. Internally, at school, sometimes there’s an approach of toeing the line; not doing the bare minimum, but not questioning. Does that make sense? So, I think, TFA's role within a school is, maybe, a question mark. Why? Why are we doing it this way? Why do we think about it this way? I think the people they recruit - the people they’re recruiting are, certainly, being encouraged to ask questions and generate debate. On the outside, though, I think Teach for Australia - so, maybe, outside of the school - is about raising the profile of teaching, generally. My friends, who aren't doing teaching, don't understand. They just don't get it.

Initially, I was quite guarded with my age. In fact, I lied about it, but eventually I just stopped and told them I was 23. They're just amazed that I'm teaching. So, there's no real respect for teaching, even amongst kids. Why are you teaching, Miss? Or, very early on, Miss, what are you doing at this school? Why are you here?

(Eliza interview 1)

There is a contradiction in Eliza’s response that is of interest. On the one hand, she personally felt that the teachers she encountered were stale and ineffective (i.e. they could not do good) because of their age and experience. On the other hand, she sensed that the students would only respect those teachers with age and experience. Eliza felt closer in age to her students than she did to her colleagues, yet she believed this would expose her lack of teaching experience and cause her problems when she started at the school. She saw herself as different, not only in terms of her age, to the other staff and wanted her students to see that especially when they asked her why she was there. Eliza perceived the questioning by the young people she taught to confirm “there’s no real respect for teaching”, rather than that they were trying to understand why she had chosen to teach at that particular school.
Jamie also joked in our first interview about hiding her true age from students for the early part of her teaching placement.

So I realised pretty early on that if I said oh, look I've had six weeks of training, let's go, it wouldn't end well. So I kind of lied to them at the beginning, and said that I'd been teaching for three years, and I was 30 and they bought it, because what do they know? (Laughs) But they've realised, towards the end of the year, and I've told them this is my first year teaching. They've actually been quite positive about it.

(Jamie interview 1)

Associates were cognisant of student expectations about age and experience which suggests the TfA discourse about raising the status of teaching by placing “high-achieving individuals” (TfA, 2011f) in classrooms is problematic. Jamie and Eliza’s experiences at the beginning of their tenure, when it comes to doing good for their students do not align with what the program’s advertising conveys. Their comments suggest tentativeness about TfA’s claim that academic achievement is more important than teaching experience and they initially found that being “intelligent young Australians” (TfA, 2011e) does not gain the respect in classrooms that other more experienced teachers garner. Eliza and Jamie’s examples indicate a degree of insecurity and of the Associates wanting to give the impression, to their students at the very least, that experience (both in age and in teaching) is important.

For Jamie this “kind of lie” was not just about her age and inexperience but was entwined deeply with issues surrounding a gender imbalance at her school.

At this school in some year levels it’s as high as 80 per cent male, 20 per cent female. So next year's Year 7 intake, they're really worried because it's 80 to 20 and that's quite kind of difficult to manage, in terms of, do you put a couple of girls in each class or do you have a lot of boy only classes? It really does change the way you teach because you end up having to kind of pander to these really macho guys and you sort of feel sorry for the girls who get left out…. there is a really kind of - it sounds sort of judgemental, but a quite misogynistic nature to a lot of their conversations, a lot of their beliefs. .....So a lot of their mothers and sisters will be wives and mothers and that's it. I had a father tell me that his Year 10 daughter didn't really need to do much because she was just a girl. So it didn't really matter that she was failing English because she was just a girl, which is quite scary. So yeah, it's quite difficult I think, as a female teacher, trying to overcome this idea that boys rule the world, men rule the world. You don’t actually have to listen to women unless your father tells you [that] you have to.

(Jamie interview 1)
Jamie felt she was in the gender and cultural minorities of her school and this was enough for her to warrant a level of deception about her age and experience. In an environment where “boys rule the world” she sensed that as a young woman she would not have much impact. In Jamie’s school teaching experience that females held a low status was quite different from her own school and life experience.

Ben’s response when asked about how TfA might raise the profile of teaching differed from the others in some ways yet it demonstrated his belief that he could help to do this. He explained;

I think that the way that they do it well is by recruiting people that are more academically minded I guess; more goal-driven and achievement-oriented. Then that gives all these TFA associates that sort of ability and skill set and end values and that passes on to the kids. I think to me, that’s where TFA comes in; through mainly the recruitment selection.

(Ben interview 1)

Ben returned to this in a subsequent interview when he explained that as part of TfA he had a responsibility to “push the academic side of things” (interview 2). TfA’s founder had expressed the belief that Associates were “transformational” or “highly effective” teachers, because they demonstrated such skills as achievement, resilience and “superior organisational and motivational ability” (TfA, 2011e) for example which can be seen in Figure 7. Ben interpreted the possession of these traits meant that by being “more goal-driven and achievement oriented” (Ben interview 1) he would be an academic role model. This responsibility weighed heavily on him, and he was the only participant who spoke often about curriculum, assessments, collecting student data and the academic expectations he had for his classes. The importance Ben placed on this aspect of teaching he attributed to the TfA program.

I think there’s a lot of emphasis on pushing us to actually address [assessment]; especially student performance and also teaching performance. So being good teachers and being good role models for the students. To me, I think that’s where TFA’s been really directly addressing the disadvantage in that sense.

(Ben interview 1)

Ben’s assumptions here were different from those of his colleagues. He perceived the low status of the teachers in his school was attributable to “laid-backness” and his role was not only to model but also to uphold the orientations of academic high achievers. Again it is the point of difference between this group of teachers as “more
academically minded” citizens than other teachers which is emphasised and whose entry is expected to raise the status of the teaching profession.

Figure 7: Brochure to Principals excerpt (TfA, 2011e).

So although serving the nation or doing good by entering disadvantaged settings to teach was spoken about by the participants of this study it was done by presenting a caveat which allowed the Associates to avoid some of the more undesirable perceptions of the teaching profession and, returning to Labaree’s claim, still receive the opportunity to “do well at the same time” (Labaree, 2010, p. 48). The following section looks at how the promotion of participant Associates as high achievers allowed them to view being part of TfA as an opportunity to “do well” and foster their careers.

Doing well: recognition of academic achievement

When Teach for Australia states that they recruit “high-calibre, non-teaching graduates into the teaching profession” (TfA, 2012a), it provides recognition of academic achievement for those who are successfully recruited. The claim of the high-calibre nature of recruits is found not only in multiple pages on the TfA website (for example TfA, 2013f which was the organisation’s homepage in 2013) but is also found in promotional material sent to school Principals (Figure 7 is an excerpt of this
brochure found at TfA, 2011e) and potential graduate recruits (TfA, 2011a), newspaper articles (Drape, 2009 Figure 8) editorials and opinion pieces (for example see "Teach for Australia has great merit," 2010; "Teacher experiment passes the test," 2011 Figure 10), alumni reports and testimonials (Walters, 2012) and press releases (TfA, 2012a).

Statements about the high achievement levels of successful recruits play an important role in appealing to potential Associates and are designed to allow them to identify themselves, and their recruited peers, as forming a high-calibre and elite group. Connell (2011) maintains that while “[t]eaching is inherently intellectual labour and teachers are a group of intellectual workers” (p.105), there is little prestige in the teaching profession. Teachers are not considered to necessarily be high academic achievers, nor do they make up a group that is considered academically elite. This is in contrast to other professions such as Medicine, Law or Business for example which are recognised as groups made up of people with great academic accomplishments. In a pamphlet aimed at future recruits titled Ambition Meet Conscience: Why Outstanding Graduates Should Teach for Australia it is stated that:

[I]n 2010, fewer than 10% of applicants were successful in becoming an Associate. Partly because our selection process is very rigorous and partly because the stakes are too high to admit anyone other than the highest-quality candidates.

(TfA, 2011a)

This statement fosters the idea that the members of this group are ambitious and of “the highest-quality” and because only 10% were successful in joining the group, exclusivity is maintained. TfA provided validation of their accomplishments while at the same time permitting them entry into a profession that doesn’t always provide this recognition through more traditional recruitment pathways. The kind of “folklore” (Connell, 2013), which recognises a lack of prestige in the teaching profession, is used effectively to make sure the Associates are viewed as being the “best [and] brightest” (Drape, 2009 see Figure 8) new teachers to those outside the TfA Organisation.
With teaching suffering a low status (Dinham, 2013) it is of concern to this particular group of new teachers that they are viewed by their colleagues, parents and students in the schools they enter and also, importantly to the wider public and the social circles they already populate, as no ordinary teachers. So what is the evidence that members of this group are actually the best and the brightest university graduates? Publicly available recruitment information on the TfA website mentions the need for Associates to be “high achieving” and “successful university graduates from all
academic disciplines” (TfA, 2012b), without being specific about what that success looks like. Later materials make more specific claims such as the “average Year 12 TER\(^{11}\) amongst our Associates of 95.0, and impressive academic achievements which include Masters and PhDs” (TfA, 2013c) and present this information on the website titled “Our impact”. The data informing such a claim is gathered from the application form (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Section of online application form for TfA cohort 2, June 2010

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</thead>
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<td>Subject Code</td>
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<tr>
<th>Step 3 - Secondary Education Complete</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 What Secondary School did you attend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 What year did you complete Secondary School?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 What was the name of the Secondary School qualification you received? (e.g. TER, UAI, OP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 What overall score or grade did you achieve for your Secondary School qualification?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 What was the highest score or grade achievable for your Secondary School qualification in the year that you completed it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4 - About You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Please describe why you would like to participate in this program, why you would be suitable, and what you hope to accomplish as a Teach For Australia Associate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Please describe a situation where you encountered serious obstacles to success in your academic, professional or extracurricular activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 Please describe your two most substantive leadership experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 Please list any major achievements, awards, scholarships or positions of responsibility that you have received during the last 5 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 What do you like to do when you are not studying or working? Please include any sporting, university, social and/or community activities in which you regularly participate.</td>
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<td>4.6 Your career options</td>
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<td>4.7 What are your top two options for next year excluding Teach For Australia?</td>
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\(^{11}\) The TER - Tertiary Entrance Rank was the score used in some Australian States and Territories for selection into universities until 2010. It was a score out of 100, given to students completing Year 12 studies and the relevant state-based examinations. It has since been replaced by the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).
It is not possible for anyone outside the TfA organisation, or for the Associates to gather any information more than general statements about the high levels of achievement. Further there is no indication of the minimum academic scores required to be successfully recruited. The Associates were well versed in their own achievements and those of their peers, in an academic sense, and understood that the criterion requiring high academic levels within their application was most critical in securing a place in the pathway which allowed them to identify as part of an elite group.

When Associates described the opportunity provided by TfA to enter teaching in the first round of interviews it was indicated that people such as themselves, with proven academic achievement would not (ordinarily) choose to enter a profession such as teaching. Eliza and Lanie for example stated:

I think it’s a good program because I probably would not have done teaching if I hadn’t done it this way. I think a lot of people in the program would not have done it either.

(Lanie interview 1).

I think TFA’s role is about attracting people who would not necessarily consider going into education on the traditional path, to do teaching for a bit

(Eliza interview 1)

One way of interpreting these statements would be in terms of Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of the taste of necessity versus the taste of luxury. By emphasising the choice here as something that they do not have to do, and also as something that was expensive in the sense of providing less income than other choices they might make, teaching is depicted as a choice of luxury, although it is never considered luxurious. The TfA pathway essentially supports Associates to make a choice to teach for two years. It is repeatedly stated in promotional material that those recruited have “career options” (TfA, 2011f), which implies Associates are clearly making a choice to enter an un glamorous and low-status profession. There is

no better opportunity to observe the functioning of this sense of the place one occupies than in condescension strategies, which presuppose both in the author of the strategy and in the victims a practical knowledge of the gap between the place really occupied and the place fictitiously indicated by the behaviour adopted

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 31)
From this perspective being availed of such a choice would further solidify the classed status of the study’s participants. When the middle class enters the working-class world void of the working-class habitus, they do not challenge their own classed position, but rather reify it (this will be further explored in Chapter Six).

Teaching as a stopover
Even with the validation of high academic achievement provided by TfA, upon making the choice to enter school teaching in this manner it did not ensure that the Associates planned to teach for very long. This was because the opportunity costs would start to mount as time went by. Lanie explained it would be unlikely she would stay teaching for long because it doesn’t pay enough money. I mean, it’s one thing that I am tossing up between staying in teaching and doing something else, is because I come home and my housemate is a dentist and he comes home and he is on free time. He earns four times what I do. I come home and I will work and it just really, really annoys me. It really, really annoys me!

(Lanie interview 1).

Anders expressed similar beliefs when he stated, “I guess because the program isn’t necessarily a contract that you are going to teach forever. It’s that - at least two years. They understand that people will still move on to different careers” (interview 1).

Upon entering the program the Associates were of the belief that the term of the contract, a two year commitment, was all that was required of them, and that held appeal as they would then be freed to move into a different career. This belief was fuelled by newspaper reports where the Education Minister of the time, Julia Gillard was reported as stating Associates would gain “a guaranteed corporate career after they leave the classroom” (Gillard quoted in Drape, 2009) and by the TfA Organisation in its comments that at the end of the two year program they “will pursue leadership roles in business, law, government, in establishing social enterprises and in influencing educational policy”(TfA, 2011f). These kind of public statements when combined with their academic achievements allowed the Associates the luxury of a career choice in deciding to enter the teaching profession but not at the risk of losing...
the opportunity to enter any other, be it more prestigious, higher paying, or more influential careers.

**Doing well: the fast-track to teaching**

As well as the limited (two-year) commitment required, another aspect of the appeal of the TfA pathway to participants was the fast-track nature of the program. Newspaper editorials and TfA documents promote the speed with which “academically gifted” graduates are “parachuted” into classrooms ("Teacher experiment passes the test," 2011 - Figure 10) as a key element of the TfA program. In this sense “doing well” is not just about career progression but is about having the opportunity to avoid the sacrifice of a longer period of unpaid teacher training.

Documents that promote the fast-track aspect of the TfA program assume that because the Associates are proven to do well in an academic setting such as university, they will do well teaching regardless of the time spent learning about what teaching school students entails. The fast-track nature of the TfA pathway is framed in a way that is good for the individuals involved because they are academically gifted but also good for the country. This is evident when the TfA Organisation promotes the rapid entry to classrooms on a webpage titled “GRADUATE PROGRAM OVERVIEW”, which states:

> Your two year journey begins with a six week in-residence intensive program, the first of a number of intensives that you will undertake as part of the program, in conjunction with our partner university. From here, it is straight into the classroom, where you will start making impact straight away.

(TFA, 2013e)

Associates are informed that they can get “straight into the classroom” after a six week intensive –the implication being that there is no need to spend longer learning about schools, students and pedagogy- and that they are selected because they can do well. The statements of speedy entry to the profession and learning on the job (Figure 10), coupled with statements claiming that they will start “making impact straight away” reinforce certain perceptions. One is the perception that the “urgent” problems in Australian education can only be addressed by the academic elite, who must enter schools quickly.
Many claim they had “thought about” becoming a teacher at some time prior to applying for a Teach for All program (Veltri, 2010) as did all the participants of this study. However while they may have thought about it, they identified that they would not have become a teacher without the opportunity presented by TfA in particular because they would not have wanted to spend more time studying full-time. Eliza explained “I don’t think I would have considered going back and doing traditional uni study; I’d had enough” (interview 1). In a similar vein Lanie agreed she did not want to continue being a full time student and told me emphatically “I would not have sat through two years - one year or two years of this [university study]” (interview 1). In an email in her second year of teaching Lanie said her decision to apply for TfA was based on getting into the profession quickly more so than on the avoidance of more
study by stating “I wanted to get into a school quickly, I wouldn’t have become a teacher [otherwise]” (email April 2012).

In an email in December 2011, Eliza too explained that part of the reason she wished to finish studying full time was to get into the workforce and start earning a full-time wage. Before her teaching position she had only ever held volunteer and part-time paid positions while she was a full time student. In one of the more candid moments of the first meeting when Ben was asked how he came to apply for Teach for Australia, he answered:

Ben: I read it in a newspaper actually. In The Age Education section one day when I was back in uni, early uni days - and I thought I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. So I thought that would be a really good, easy, quick way to get into - get into Australian teaching.

SW: Do you now think it was easy?

Ben: No - yes it's definitely not easy [laughs]. But in terms of - easy as in starting a job quickly. So that was the case.

(Ben interview 1)

Both Ben and Lanie spoke of having the desire to become teachers before the opportunity with TfA was presented to them, yet neither had applied or enrolled in a teacher education course. In fact as the study progressed they repeatedly stated that they would not have become teachers without the opportunity presented by TfA. They believed that their capacity to “do well” in education was most important for their rapid entry into the teaching profession as opposed to a more lengthy period of preparation and study in teaching methods.

Teach for Australia leadership
An additional way that TfA offers recruits the opportunity to “do well” is by claiming that the pathway creates “leaders of change” (TfA, 2011c). TfA requires the Associates to complete a “Leadership Development Program” and to enter schools that will support Associates in “their mastery of core leadership practices” (TfA, 2011b). The Leadership Development Program is described on the webpage titled “LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT” and aimed at potential recruits (Figure 11).
TfA suggests that completion of the “award winning Leadership Development Framework” (TfA, 2011b), coupled with a strong academic background will produce effective leaders. The TfA Organisation’s founder emphasised the critical place of leadership development in the program:

And at the end of the day we had additional objectives beyond just training teachers. You know, the Teach for Australia theory of change, is really around creating system leaders. And a transformational teacher, a highly effective teacher will in our theory, give you a lot more insight and perspective into - to then take with you into - it might stay with you in the classroom, or might go into school leadership or might go into something else. But then how do we create a pipeline, not just of teachers but also of aspirant leaders? Which again, was not necessarily the focus of many schools or any government.

(Potts-Rosevear, 2012)
Being trained in leadership as opposed to being trained as classroom teachers was attractive to the participants of this study and comments about leadership featured in every conversation held with participants both in interviews and by telephone, and was often a feature of email correspondence as well. The opportunity to be supported in their “in their mastery of core leadership practices” (TfA, 2011b) to become leaders held great appeal. Lanie recounted the allure of leadership opportunities when she learned about Teach for America.

I was really lucky to stay - to share my hotel room with a Teach for America teacher, who was kind of like me but more outspoken. She went to Teach for America a couple of years later. Definitely not straight out of college. She had a couple of different jobs and then decided, what the hell, I’m going to do teaching - joined the program. She said, Teach for America definitely recruits for leadership.

(Lanie Interview 3).

Teach for Australia mirrors this aspect of Teach for America’s model where the program is promoted as not just a pathway into teaching, but as a way to be fast-tracked into a leadership role within both the corporate sector and education more broadly. A tacit implication of the emphasis on this form of selection and training as a foundation for leadership might be that existing school staff members are not able or willing to become effective leaders. Eliza explicitly reflected what this might impute about the inadequacies of those who entered teaching in a more traditional way:

I think most schools are fairly dysfunctional on one level or another. Just because it is a big organisation, there are lots of stakeholders and the reality is you have people moving into leadership that aren’t actually trained in management and leadership. So I don’t think classroom practice prepares you to be a principal.

(Eliza, interview 2)

The participants each told of at least one person in a leadership role at their school with whom they either disagreed, or earnestly believed was doing a poor job undertaking their leadership duties. These conversations fell into two categories. The first kind were discussions about the leaders who most directly affected the Associates day-to-day, the second involved comments about the school-wide leadership and most often expressed judgments about the Principal in particular.
An example of the first kind of leadership critique was given by Ben, who spoke each time we met about his mentor teacher who was considered his immediate supervisor. He perceived from observing his mentor’s work that she had a very different work ethic to him.

I think it’s a lack of willingness to - from other teachers to want to work as hard as we do......I often feel like I’m pushing the academic curriculum side of things and I’m not really sure if that should be my job. So my mentor is the other [subject] teacher who teaches with me in Year 11. I often feel like I’m the one who’s pushing for the [assessment tasks] to be written, planning to be done, course planning to be done. Unfortunately when [name] creates classroom materials, they’re not up to a standard which I am happy to accept for my class.

(Ben interview 1)

In further correspondence Ben continued to disagree with his mentor teacher’s teaching methods but became less critical of her as a leader. In fact in an email towards the end of his second year teaching he said that he had started to shadow his mentor in preparation for taking over some of her leadership responsibilities the following year.

Eliza on the other hand was unwilling to compromise her critical views of the leadership at her school, in particular the head of her learning area, who was also her mentor.

Like I know my mentor met [TfA representative] at a function and said we need [a LOTE12 ] teacher. But I really feel as if I’ve been like a lamb to the slaughter....But the fact of the matter is that they let that woman stress me out and bully me unresolved for like nine [months] - she was going through my desk last year. She's not a good teacher. If she was a good teacher - I mean the behaviour is still unacceptable but I'd be sort of thinking well I can appreciate where you’re coming from. She's doing a terrible [job] - she's not delivering the curriculum. There's evidence by the fact that she writes different exams for her classes at Year 9. So on the one hand they say they want a new LOTE teacher but they’re really not prepared to tell this woman to be nice and start...well be supportive and start doing a good job in your classroom or leave

(Eliza interview 2)

In the first interview Eliza had been critical of the school leadership in a more general way, but had not spoken of her mentor teacher at all. She had spoken at length about teachers at the school who were not doing the job of teaching well and explained it as

12 LOTE – Is the key learning area Languages Other Than English.
poor leadership and “entrenchment”. The revelation that she had been “bullied” by her mentor teacher, explained a great deal about Eliza’s unhappiness at being in the school she was placed. The fact that she felt bullied and unsupported suggested to Eliza that the Principal was to blame because of poor leadership. Lanie was also critical of the school principal as a leader because she saw him as having little influence on the staff of the school. She described the poor leadership of “the middle management group and the English and Humanities staff room that do their own thing and will not be messed with by anyone. Not even the principal can tell them” (interview 1).

Jamie, Frank and Anders felt positive about the job that the Principals of their schools were doing but primarily related their comments to the support principals were giving to TfA and the Associates in their schools. Anders and Ben believed that the Principal of Windmill Secondary College had given the TfA organisation and the TfA Associates considerable support since the beginning of the program. This Principal had employed “five from our cohort, there's two from cohort three and there is three that remained from cohort one but the Principal has also employed two other cohort one associates from other schools” (Anders interview 2). Anders was aware of regular meetings held between the Principal and TfA’s office staff commenting that “I know that the principal's been in [to the TfA office] and that TFA has been talking to them” (Anders interview 2). This led me to ask:

SW: So the principal of your school is obviously really supportive of the program. Do you think that would be key for all schools?

Anders: I think that in the first cohort, because they were supernumerary that some schools just took them because they were cheap and then that's why quite a few of the positions I think weren't there at the end. Whereas I think our principal takes us with this ongoing thought that we will stay and be there. So I definitely think that the principal being on board with the program and supporting obviously with the implementation of people's timetables and giving them that time allowance to meet with their mentors et cetera is something that's key and I guess they generally make the employment decisions, it's part of it.

(Anders interview 2)
To Anders support from the school leadership gave him not only hope, but also the opportunity to pursue leadership positions within the school. Both Anders and Ben had been offered leadership positions before the end of their second year teaching to start in the year following their initial contract which was unique amongst the participants I interviewed, yet not among Associates in their particular school. Anders elaborated on the effect TfA associates had on the school and why they were moving into leadership positions so quickly:

> Just the fact that when you’re at particular events within the school, all those things happening within the school, the fact that we have the numbers means that generally there’s people that are either part of the leadership of an activity or are supporting an activity. So it just gives a lot of things legs, I think, or support that perhaps at other times there might be one or two people that are trying to do everything and it’s just hard to get it happening, whereas I think we’re constantly there to back each other up and to help each other out. Just the amount of leadership positions that we’re taking or responsibility positions we’re taking within the school, we’re having I think a wider influence than just in our sole classrooms because we are taking those positions. So Sam13 is the PLO leader and I’ve got two responsibility positions and Ben has one and Jane* has two, and there’s lots of people that are doing lots of things. Also getting in touch with a lot of different staff members and being in a lot of different offices means that those subtle influences are having a bigger impact. (Anders interview 2)

Frank referred to the fact the school Principal was supportive of TfA because of the number of Associates he had placed since the start of the program. When asked about the leadership of his school he replied:

> I guess it’s kind of interesting. We’ve had, probably as a proportion, one of the higher amounts of TFA placements, proportionally, because at any - both last year and this year there’s been four of twenty-four teachers being TFA so it’s a fair few, the principal likes us. (Frank interview 1)

The Principal of Frank’s school continued to employ Associates for the following years, though in those cases it was to replace exiting TfA Associates. As the smallest school in this study, and the only non-metropolitan school, staff turnover was comparatively low for non-TfA teachers. It was the school that had the lowest number of Associates stay past their contracted two years. Every Associate in the first and second cohorts who was placed at Wallansea SC left the school upon completion of their TfA contract thus there was no movement into leadership roles. When Frank

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13 Sam and Jane* are pseudonyms for non-participant Associates at Windmill Secondary College from the same cohort as the participants in this study.
spoke of leadership he did so with no desire to become a leader in the school, but like Eliza, Frank was keen to get out of the school as soon as he could and take the leadership skills he had developed within TfA’s leadership framework to a new career because he was “quite keen on getting more involved in policy research and debate” (email August 2012).

Teach for Australia leadership: entitlement and transferability
An aspect of the TfA leadership discourse that was particularly important to this cohort of new teachers, is that teaching in these settings as an Associate had become conceived as instrumental to getting ahead in life outside of teaching. Rachel Levy (2011) wrote about this aspect of Teach for America;

TFA preserves the status of selectivity of industry and law jobs, but with the patina of altruism. TFA members gain access to a network of privileged and well-connected people with the added bonus of being perceived as “making a difference”. The program provides training in leadership skills, a notch on the resume, a social and professional network, and middle-income employment, almost all on the taxpayers’ dime and at the expense of the education of the most powerless of our society.

In each case and especially early in their new roles, the Associates saw their time teaching as merely a stepping stone to getting ahead outside of the classroom.

I thought “what can I do that might actually contribute? And also what can I do that would give me a career path?” Because at that stage I had no idea what I was going to do. So I actually initially applied for TfA and saw it as a bit of a stepping stone to a different career.

(Jamie interview 2)

As well as the professed hopes to move onto different careers, the participant Associates saw limitations to their capacity to influence key decisions while working as classroom teachers. These recruits expected that they would be given leadership roles (either in their schools or outside them) that would then give them greater influence and the power to effect change in education. As Frank articulated:

[I]t as an immediate two year thing in the classroom and also more broadly doing things outside the classroom; that's where I'll ultimately - for me I guess I kind of saw it as - before if you do decide not to keep on teaching and you want to step outside the classroom and you want to try and make a difference about education having had that classroom experience, you can be really informative and powerful and being able to still, I guess, be an agent for change outside the classroom as well...... Yeah well I feel as a classroom teacher sometimes inside the classroom there's a bit I can do, but
I feel often that’s not where I can make any meaningful impact on those kind of beliefs or ideas.  

(Frank interview 1)

Eliza expressed that an expected outcome she held for herself, after completing the two years of leadership training offered by TfA, was to move into a position that wielded more influence. In an interview towards the end of her contracted two years of classroom teaching she mentioned she would like to work for the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) the following year. I asked what kind of role she would have with BCG and her response was:

Consulting! It interests me, but to be honest with you... I just want to try this and see how I go. Plus I think I would learn really good skills in, like, change management. I think I would be more powerful when I get some experience with a consulting firm, but it would be trying to convince them I was there for the long haul. I don’t see it, unless I really like it. But I think if I wanted to implement systemic change or system change it would have to be through a consultant or from a consultant perspective. I think that the way they think about solving problems and change is really powerful. And to be honest with you what really attracts me to it is belonging to an elite team of individuals where I am constantly put outside my comfort zone because everyone is more intelligent than me.

SW: Interesting, would you really feel that?

Eliza: In consulting? Yeah absolutely, from what friends have told me. In [Boston] consulting you have whole teams of Rhodes Scholars, um intelligent driven teamwork. And that doesn’t happen at school, especially at my school. (Interview 3)

Eliza’s comments here display her desire to remain connected to an elite group, and her belief that it was only “intelligent driven teamwork” that could solve problems. This conversation is most illustrative of the ruling elite theory which suggests that political, ethical and economic decisions are made by a small group of society’s elite. Robert Dahl (1966) contends that all societies, even democracies, will “inevitably have leaders- that is to say, men of more authority and very likely more power and influence than ordinary citizens” (p.297). The TfA program enables Associates to utilise their position as part of the academic elite to infiltrate the education system, not necessarily to participate in school classrooms interacting with school students and their communities in the longer term, but to lead it. It also indicates a certain level of entitlement for the Associates; they as the elite are expected to lead
regardless of their knowledge, experience and maturity within contexts where they have little or no connection, or experience.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter considered the findings from this project in relation to how TFA and the Associates’ experiences align with David Labaree’s claim about Teach for America as a win-win. By embarking on Teach for Australia as a pathway, Associates are able to show their willingness to help others even if it disadvantages them by not immediately entering more lucrative high-status jobs. The program provides an opportunity to be of service as part of a movement on a mission. However it is always at the same time to be understood as a choice made by them. Associates believed that by showing that themselves as ‘high-calibre’ graduates with myriad career choices who had chosen teaching, they would contribute to raising the profile of teaching as a profession, which can be viewed as another way to “do good”. The language used by Teach for Australia implies that Associates are active and contributing citizens, and effectively weds the utilization of the altruistic elite with the benefits of addressing educational “problems”. Participant responses, particularly in the early stages of their teaching contracts, indicated a certain degree of alignment between their altruistic desires and the opportunity TfA promotes as the possibility to provide a service to a community.

The main factors in TfA that spoke to the possibility to do well personally as an attraction for the Associates were three fold. First, the program selection process provided recognition as part of an academic elite and validation of their own achievements. This recognition offsets the negative perception of teaching as a career option to these Associates and also to their families and friends. Second, the fast-track nature of this pathway which removes the need for an extended period of further study and provides a quick entry into paid work was appealing. The fast-track was also accompanied by a get-out clause that this was only a two year commitment to being a classroom teacher and other jobs were awaiting. Third, was the promotion of the program as supplying and training leaders to schools. This promises Associates not just recognition that they have been recruited competitively as part of an elite,
but that they are seen as and will be trained further to be leaders of the future. These three factors form a large part of the TfA marketing material and have the effect of encouraging a (perhaps already present) sense of entitlement to leadership of the Associates. Interview comments by Associates indicated that early on in the program they were already looking ahead to the end of their contracted two years, when they would be able to seek leadership positions in which they would then have greater influence to make “real change”. 
Chapter Six - Systemic Change: Impacting disadvantage

Introduction

While much attention in educational research on disadvantage is focused rightly on the struggles of marginalised students, their families, and their communities, there is a need to consider those teachers who are inserted into disadvantaged settings. The Associates come to disadvantaged schools as outsiders; albeit outsiders who are likely to have access to a disproportionate amount of political, social and economic power (Swalwell, 2013). The previous chapter looked at promotional material and participant responses that focused on the notion of altruistic citizens entering schools to both do good and do well. This chapter considers another promise of the program: that they will have an impact on the disadvantaged schools they enter. In particular it draws on Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and to a lesser extent cultural capital and social fields (1977a, 1984, 1989, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) as devices to examine the structures and practices relevant to the Associate experience. Using Bourdieu’s concepts one would expect that the Associates represent some difference in habitus and dispositions compared with the schools they enter and the students they teach. In this chapter I examine whether and how the Associates themselves saw such differences; and whether, as the program advertised, they would provide a means of bridging or changing the habitus for the students they teach.

This chapter maps the Associates’ expectations of what they brought to disadvantaged schools from the initial stages of their TfA experience and how these expectations were transformed during the experience. The assumptions made by the Associates that they can successfully bridge and traverse the differences they encounter is exposed and examples of their attempts are analysed. The chapter presents findings relevant to my second thesis question: How are Associates’ perceptions of their capacity to fulfil Teach for Australia’s mission of changing lives in classrooms and leading systemic change, affirmed challenged or modified during their classroom experiences?
The Associates’ cultural capital and habitus

One concept used in Bourdieu’s theoretical analysis (1977a) is that of cultural capital, which he claimed to be like economic capital where value is determined by the marketplace. With regard to cultural capital, Bourdieu claims one is born into it in terms of the attitudes, values and practices of your parents, family and social circle. The participants in this research were acutely aware of the cultural capital they had accumulated from their families and the social circles in which they moved, as well as the importance to this enculturation process of education and attending a “good” school. Bourdieu (1990) further argued that cultural habits and dispositions inherited from one’s family produced in an individual their habitus which are:

[S]ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their own outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them

(Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52).

Habitus is the broad structuring environment which creates in individuals ways of being, dispositions and possessions that function like capital. Habitus develops from these socialisation processes, so is implicitly linked to social position and results in a particular view of the world and one’s place in it. Habitus manifests through social practices such as what and how one eats, political opinions and how they are expressed, and differences in taste (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

When asked about their own school experiences the Associates candidly described the cultural capital they held and how this form of capital moulded their own habitus in relation to education:

I went to [independent school], which is a very nice Catholic girls’ school from Prep to Year 12, which was a pretty excellent experience, but a pretty unique experience. Coming here made me realise just how different the worlds are between private and public education, at the top and the bottom end.

(Jamie interview 1)

I went to [selective girls] High School, which completely changed my own future pathways. In Year 7, and for half of Year 8, I was at [local inner city government] Secondary College. In the second half of Year 8, my parents sent me and my sister to
live with our grandmother [in Austria] and learn German. [Selective girls] High really pushed students to develop a strong independent work ethic, and to be self-motivated. This has been really important, I believe, in shaping my own ideas of what schools could and should look like.

(Lanie email, 2012)

I went to [Selective boys] High School...I think it's definitely opened my eyes a lot more to how a lack of academia there could possibly be because [Windmill SC] it is yes, very, very different from [selective boys] High. Like I said, students, parents and teachers don't have any idea about how much competition there really is in VCE and how much work they really should be doing and how much time and effort they should be putting into their studies rather than other pursuits.

(Ben interview 1)

I went to, probably, I don’t know, one of the most expensive schools in [state capital city], an inner city independent private school that my parents were probably paying $15000 and upwards a year for me to attend.

(Frank interview 1)

But, we all come from affluent, reasonably happy families and we all went to private schools. So, perhaps what I should say is that the needs of disadvantaged students are different.

(Eliza interview 1)

I think because of the fact that I did go to a Catholic school, people in some ways chose to be there because their parents paid fees, and that kind of thing. I think the students were more academic [sic] oriented and most of them wanted to be there. Whereas I think at the school that I'm at, how some of them don’t really want to be there and I think that provides challenges in the way that you probably have to deliver your content.

(Anders interview 1)

Each Associate described their own school experience by contrasting it with the experiences of the students they were teaching. Generally they understood that their own families valued a good education as important and so had chosen to either pay school fees or provide opportunities to apply for selective school places. In some cases Associates described feeling guilty of the good fortune bestowed upon them by attending a “good” school. As Frank noted, “I did feel that the kind of experience I had to education, it was not really fair that that was given to me on the basis of my parents’ income as opposed to anything else” (interview 1). Here Frank demonstrates a degree of guilt about holding what he perceives to count as valuable capital, capital
that he surmised was lacking in the families of the students he encountered. Frank’s comment may also indicate that he recognised how capital and habitus work to perpetuate inequality and that he held a desire to work against inequality by conveying to his students the advantages that his outlook has afforded him.

Comments made by the Associates about their schooling and the opportunities provided by their parents elicit a reminder of Lareau’s (2003) notion of concerted cultivation. The parents of the Associates had, in each case been able to concertedly cultivate the cultural capital and habitus of their children, whether by paying substantial school fees so they could attend elite private schools, paying for overseas travel, or paying for out-of-school language, music and arts classes. This cultivation was also extended post-school, where they were given more opportunities to build cultural capital. Lanie, Jamie and Anders recalled such opportunities;

So before I started teaching, I had graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours, from Melbourne. I studied French, German and History. I wrote my honours thesis in history. Before that I had done work experience overseas.

(Lanie interview 1)

I went to Melbourne Uni to do an arts degree, didn’t know what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go except that I didn’t want to be a doctor. Both my parents are doctors, that didn’t interest me. So I did history, literature and French. Then did an honours year in history, then thought what’s next? A lot of people had told me previously, oh you should be a teacher or are you going to be a teacher after your arts degree? …..I’d sort of always considered it in the back of my mind.

(Jamie interview 1)

When I finished high school, I had a year off and spent some time travelling overseas and spent some time working. Then came to Melbourne and lived at college for a couple of years where I studied. While I was at college, in my second year, I took on a role as a kind of a mentor to first year students. I was involved in some teaching in that sense. After those two years I moved from college into a suburb in Melbourne.

(Anders interview 1)

The Associates identified the advantages given to them by their family, and implied in their interviews that their families were from the middle class as they spoke of the

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14 Australians don’t tend to identify, generally, as from the so-called upper-class. Each participant would come from upper-middle SES families with the possible exception of Ben, who stated he was from a working class family and “went to school in the western suburbs initially”.

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opportunities they had. In Anders comment, for example, he shows that he was allowed a certain degree of freedom upon finishing school where he could pursue international travel before entering tertiary education. That he then “lived at college for a couple of years” also displays evidence of the cultural (and economic) capital held by his family. Leaving the town one grows up in, moving to a large city and staying in a residential college while not in paid employment, is generally not an opportunity available to those of the working class.

The participants also articulated how the educational opportunities afforded to them contributed to shape their habitus. They held that their own experience at school had encouraged in them aspirational dispositions in which the expectation of study (i.e. practice) and thus academic achievement was high. While they acknowledged implicitly their own cultural capital and habitus they were also aware that the students they were being sent to teach were, perhaps, lacking in the same type of cultural capital. They viewed the students, their families, and communities as different to them in the “system of dispositions to a certain practice”, (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 77) that make up the habitus.

It is the differences in habitus, and to a lesser extent cultural capital, that provide the opening for TfA as an organisation to enter Australian education. Bourdieu argued that

> habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences...the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversifies, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences... and so on, from restructuring to restructuring


By insisting that Associates hold a certain type of habitus before entering the field in which students are perceived as being disadvantaged, advocates of the program and TfA assume that the Associates’ understand the “rules of the game”, the school game, and their dispositions towards study will offer important models to students whose habitus and cultural capital differ from theirs.
Associate perceptions of the cultural capital and habitus of “disadvantaged” students

Initially Eliza, Frank and Anders interpreted the challenges presented in teaching disadvantaged students as stemming directly from the parents and families of the students. They supposed that if disadvantage was defined as a lack of cultural capital that enabled an effective in-school habitus to develop, this was inherited directly from their parents. To Anders, the difference in families’ priorities and parental involvement in the school presented one of the greatest challenges entering Windmill College, and one that he believed most strongly influenced the habitus of the students he taught. In the following excerpt Anders described how disadvantage presented within his school.

I'd probably start first with the students' families. I've had several encounters this year with parents of particular students that I have found to be disconcerting. In parents - I guess their value in education and ensuring that their students are at school and doing the best that they can. I've been in contact with parents because the student hasn't turned up for a particular lesson. One of their parents mentioned to me that it was important that they - that student went and got their Eminem tickets because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for that student to go and see Eminem. So they let them skip a double class to buy the tickets. I'll say, okay. Obviously I don't disagree with that. But that - the parent dropped them off and knew that that's where they were and they were missing the class. So that's one challenge, getting families on board.

I have spoken to other families where the parents have said, yeah, I know they're not doing the work. I've given up trying. This is my third child, I've had enough. I'm giving up. I think families are definitely one of the challenges because obviously there's only so many hours that students are at school per day and the rest of the time, if there is no encouragement or role modelling at home then it is a real challenge to just instil that at school. I think at times what's also going in a student's personal life is definitely a challenge whether or not that be with their friends or their partners or their families.

(Anders interview 1)

Anders found the fact that school attendance was not more important to some families incomprehensible. In his experience, attending school was held as a high priority, higher than anything comparable to buying tickets to a music concert. In another instance Anders described an occasion when a student attended a family birthday party mid-week on the night before an assessment task with a degree of
disappointment. He believed that this demonstrated the family held different priorities to his own but also believed that they did not have high expectations of this student obtaining good grades at school. Anders presented this as evidence of the family not providing the appropriate conditions for the student to study for an assessment task. It “challenged” Anders because the family did not prioritise the study that would assist the student to achieve a good grade and he identified a certain degree of opposition. Anders also identified health and family instability as challenges.

Oh their health. I've had several meetings with families in regards to students having health conditions and that [is] impacting on the amount of sleep or the amount of work that they are able to do. So that's definitely a challenge. I guess also, broken families. I've had a few students from foster homes and - or sometimes they go to one parent's and then another's and their books are at another parent's house, they left it there. That can also definitely be a challenge.

(Anders interview 1)

These vignettes highlight the challenge Anders felt when expected to bridge the differences in socialised subjectivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The differences in life experience between Anders and the students he encountered, he interpreted to as a vast space between the two social fields.

Anders, taught the subjects Psychology and Health and so, was perhaps more keenly aware of issues relating to the health of his students throughout the duration of his TfA experience than other participants. However, Frank was also “shocked” at the embodied nature of disadvantage in the school he entered at first. He described the students’ diets as evidence of disadvantage in Wallansea High School:

In terms of what you see in the classroom is I notice what kids actually have to eat and just their level of nutrition. I've been pretty shocked with that. There's often times- just going on yard duty and you'll come up to a kid, what have you got for lunch today? They've got a bag of chips and you'll talk to them and you've found out they were given a big bag of chips and a big bottle of soft drink but that was all they had for the entire day to eat. Then just chatting with kids and finding out a lot of them don't have breakfast before they come to school and they've been eating pretty much absolute crap with no nutritional value. That is one kind of thing I noticed. The kids who were from more well off families didn't have that kind of diet.

(Frank interview 1)
Frank drew a clear distinction between the families who could afford to provide nutritional food and those who couldn’t. In a small regional town with a declining population the access to cheap and fresh food was possibly more difficult for the families in Frank’s school than the schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Frank felt that this particular diet of ‘chips and a big bottle of soft drink’ demonstrated more about the socio-economic disadvantage of his students than the aspirations and choices of the students and their parents. Yet he also thought that direct and active parental involvement, as different from just being born to a certain family, was an important factor. To him disadvantaged schools were disadvantaged, in part, because of the lack of concerted cultivation by the parent body as a whole.

So I have noticed a lot of things [that are] different. One thing is the level of parental involvement was a lot higher at [the school Frank attended as a student]. You know so there were parents that ran the tuckshop, parents who did a lot of sporting things and that kind of stuff. That’s not really a feature here [Wallansea High School]. In terms of getting parents to turn up to things it is pretty difficult. Like, we ran a VCE information evening to give them an idea of what their kids would be going into next year and just two parents showed up. So the level of community...well at least parental engagement is really really low.

(Frank interview 1)

Frank offered this anecdote as evidence linking the involvement of the parents of Wallansea High School, or lack of it, to their aspirations for their children. Lareau (2011), writing in the USA, found that “working class and poor parents tended to expect educators and other professionals to take a leadership role” (p.163), which demonstrates a situational deference created by a lack of cultural resources. Frank judged the lack of attendance by the majority of parents to mean that they did not care. Lareau (2011) found that parents of working class children often held feelings of inadequacy when dealing with schools at certain stages of schooling. Some parents did not attend school to the level Frank described (the VCE is completed in the final senior years of high school) and may have felt lacking in the social or cultural capital required to assist their children through this unfamiliar terrain. On the one hand, Frank saw disadvantage as stemming from inequality in socio-economic resources, but on the other hand by dismissing the parents as uncaring Frank did not
acknowledge the role of sociocultural structures in producing enduring orientations to
certain actions.

In a similar vein, Eliza did not acknowledge the substantial contribution of
sociocultural structures in reproducing the habitus she observed in her students. She
implied a lack of parental responsibility, or lack of action on the part of parents (and
teachers) when asked what disadvantage looked like in her school. Her vivid response
describing the health of her students is linked clearly to the choices made by their
parents.

Poor dental health. I've really noticed that. There are some kids who - their mouths
are just a mess. It's not just in terms of orthodontics, it's actual teeth being healthy.
Children not having breakfast, kids not having regular bedtime, so you'll have kids
misbehaving and if you probe a little deeper you realise they went to bed at three in
the morning. You've got them at 9:00am and all they want to be doing is sleeping. A
lot of energy drinks and Coca-Cola being consumed, as opposed to water. Dirty kids;
uniform or bodies.... Maybe the needs of all students have changed since 50 years
ago because, as a society, we're parenting very differently. Look, I really like
Confucius' statement that says, the teacher is the third parent. That really resonates
with me. I think that makes a lot of people feel really uncomfortable. I don't think, as
a society, we really [get that].

(Eliza interview 1)

Exposure to what Eliza perceived as a lack of parental responsibility for their
children's health and cleanliness had a profound impact on her. Before entering
Tyldane Secondary College, Eliza had never seen such widespread and embodied
indicators of disadvantage in one place. She did, however, observe that disadvantage
presented differently across student groups. While most students at Tyldane were
considered disadvantaged in an economic sense, Eliza believed there were vast
differences in the cultural capital and habitus her students bought to the field of
school, so the between-group values, aspirations and expectations, also differed
widely.

Well, we've got various different types of disadvantage at school. So, Anglo-Saxon
disadvantage looks very different from refugee disadvantage. The values of both
those communities are very different as well. Teaching ESL, I have no behaviour
management issues in my ESL classroom. My kids come from strong families. They've
got strong values. They're all quite religious and there is a real value in education
[being] something special and to be treasured. They're just amazing students. They're
still teenagers; they still might get chatty sometimes, but in terms of respect, it's there. It's given, even before you've necessarily earned it.

Where [as] the Anglo disadvantage looks different in that families tend to be a lot more dysfunctional, in terms of blended families...or kids living with brothers, or other family members. There's often a lot of drugs and alcohol involved. What else? On the whole, the Anglo kids often tend to be the ones with more behaviour management issues, as well, for the classroom teacher. They aren't really disadvantaged, to be honest with you. The funny thing about it is that on the one level you can say that it's a disadvantaged community in that the houses look different as you drive through the area and the police presence is stronger and the cars people drive. These are all physical things. On the other hand, the kids all have the latest mobile phone, talk about computer games that they're playing. Them not having breakfast doesn't necessarily indicate that they don't have food in the house. It just indicates that there might not be an adult around to help them with breakfast, or there might be an adult who's around who's not interested in helping them with breakfast.

(Eliza interview 1)

Eliza did not, at first, consider that the indicators of disadvantage she noticed were possibly a result of the culturally embedded structuring structures which in turn informed the aspirations of her students and their families. Early in her experience she considered that the indicators of disadvantage were apparent because of choices made by parents that might not be ‘interested in helping’ their children. Because the same students who might not have had breakfast were those who talked about the latest computer games and had new mobile phones, Eliza assumed that the parents of these students prioritised such things above basic nutritional food. This demonstrates the complex and, at times, contradictory assumptions that Eliza made about the sources of disadvantage of the students she encountered.

Jamie observed that disadvantage manifests in different ways among the ethnic background groups within the school. However, she attributed this to the systemic and structural nature of disadvantage rather than any kind of conscious or agentic decision made by those affected.

It's interesting. For the Islander kids, a lot of them come through New Zealand and they're normally the brightest, the most exciting and they're really fun to have in class. They're verbally intelligent and they're really quick. They're great - they're mostly - and this is hugely generalising but the ones that I've taught have been really confident, charismatic, [and] friendly. There's a huge issue in that they can't go to uni in Australia, because they're technically not Australian citizens. So they can't get
HECS15. So there's this terrible situation that happens around Year 11 and 12 for most of them, where they totally begin to disengage. So their disadvantage is mostly that they don't have access to the same kind of education at tertiary level as everyone else. But they're generally, yeah, really intelligent, positive - a lot of them are quite religious. That manifests in an excellent way, in that they're really polite, they're respectful to their elders. They're great at public speaking because they get up at church on Sundays. They get up at church read from the Bible to everyone in there and get you to do singing and kind of - they're just really good at presenting themselves.

(Jamie interview 1)

The space and the difference in habitus between these particular students and Jamie did not appear, to her, as very large. She felt that she understood and related to this group of students and described them as confident and articulate, and able to present themselves well. Jamie also felt an affinity with this group on religious grounds and shared the personal influence of the church with the students. In this case, she surmised that the structures in place preventing these students entry into university were entirely to blame for their diminishing engagement with school. With the next groups Jamie described, she attributed disadvantage to be due to the language and work structures of the students' families.

Then for the Lebanese, Turkish, Muslim group, I think their biggest disadvantage is language skills. They go home; they speak Arabic at home or Turkish at home. They have parents who may not speak - may speak a little bit of English, but not that much. Therefore they've got families; who the parents are - if they're employed, they're employed in really kind of menial labour intense jobs. They really struggle with English and they really get frustrated that they can't do activities. Of course, if you're a brash young man, the way you deal with that is by saying, I don't want to do it and creating a diversion. But yeah, I've noticed their biggest issue is the language barrier.

Then the Anglo kids, there's sort of a division there. So you've got the Anglo kids who are really hard working and that have clearly come from families who've just struggled a bit but aren't on the total edge of poverty. So they don't have fantastic English skills and fantastic interpersonal skills, but they're doing pretty well and they're actually generally at the top of most classes. Just by the nature of the fact that they learned English from birth, they're kind of doing pretty well, compared to everyone else. Mostly they seem to understand the system of do well at school, get into uni, get a good education. Then there's the other half, which are the really
struggling kids who are - and there seems to be a direct correlation between having DHS involved and having behavioural and learning problems. So kids who come from really broken families, from really difficult situations, have never learned how to interact with other people, have never learned that you’re polite to an adult, because they haven’t seen it modelled by anyone in their family. So [they are] disadvantaged in that way. The biggest disadvantage is that they don’t know the social skills, so they can’t then do anything else because they haven’t learned how to talk to someone that you’re next to so that they’ll be willing to give you a pen. [Or] how to ask a teacher politely so that they’ll want to answer your questions. So the biggest disadvantage for that group is not having learned the skills of negotiating and engaging with adults, particularly.

(Jamie interview 1)

If a school’s ICSEA position is taken as the main measure of disadvantage, Jamie entered the most disadvantaged school amongst the participants of this study. Roycreek Secondary College in 2011 had 63% of students in the bottom quartile according to ICSEA\textsuperscript{16} scores and just 1% of students in the top quartile (My School, 2012). This represented the largest percentage of students in the bottom quartile and smallest in the top quartile of any of the schools employing participants in this study. Perhaps it was the sheer scale of socio-educational disadvantage that Jamie witnessed that allowed her to see the issues involved as systemic failings, rather than arising from poor decisions made by individuals. The school that Jamie attended as a student, in the same year (2011), had no students in the bottom quartile and 75% of students in the top quartile (96% in the top half). This is evidence of a great contrast of educational experiences that contribute to the differences between her cultural capital and habitus and the students she encountered.

During his first year in the program Ben, like Eliza, was unable to accept that his students were disadvantaged in “financial matters” because he saw students with the latest technology and consumer goods. He believed a deficit of aspiration or academic ambition in families and therefore his students was the sole indicator of disadvantage in his school. When asked why his school may have been labelled disadvantaged Ben replied:

\textsuperscript{16}ICSEA— This is the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage which was create by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to provide a scale that numerically represents the magnitude of level of educational disadvantage. For more about this scale see Chapter 4 Methodology.
Yeah that’s a good question. I think - I wouldn’t say that I necessarily see low-economic disadvantage. It’s because a lot of students have iPhones and are happy to flaunt them and use them in each class when they’re not meant to [laughs]. But I think where the disadvantage really comes is through the culture of the school; through the students, the parents and the teachers as well. To me, none of them have enough of an emphasis on wanting to do well academically and VCE. So to me, that’s more where the disadvantage is; not so much where financial matters are.

(Ben interview 1)

Ben’s claim “that none of them have enough emphasis on wanting to do well” displayed the vast aspirational difference between himself and his students. To him, wanting to do well in school was narrowly defined as doing well academically and getting a high Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)\textsuperscript{17} score. Ben had trouble reconciling what he perceived as a lack of understanding of how a school should be with his understanding of action within the school field. In his experience you could only succeed in school and thereafter if you studied hard. The “rules of the game” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), the school game, stipulate that if you work hard and if you place a priority on achieving high marks in examinations then you will succeed in life. When asked about the challenges he faced at school in teaching students Ben explained:

I think to me, there’s probably not enough of an emphasis, as I would like on academic pursuits. Everyone’s very much just go with the flow and let’s not be organised. Let’s just do whatever happens and see how it goes. So to me, that’s the kind of culture that I feel - you could try to extrapolate it to the community; but I’m not really too sure. But here’s like teachers, students and parents all have that very laid back-ness.

(Ben Interview 1)

Ben did not view school as a place to be ‘laid back’ and felt that the teachers as much as the students and their families valued this laid-back disposition. He believed that that this holding this kind of disposition was a factor associated with academic achievement not being high. Ben asserted that he could not have an impact on disadvantage in any other way than “to really push the quality of teaching up and therefore push student achievement up” (interview 1). Ben believed that his habitus,

\textsuperscript{17} The VCE is the leaving certificate awarded upon the successful completion of Year 12 in the State of Victoria. This credential in combination with the ATAR score attained in end of subject examinations determines the post school (tertiary) pathway of students
being “more academically minded I guess; more goal-driven and achievement-oriented” would provide the “sort of ability and skill set and end values that passes on to the kids” (interview 1). This facet of Ben’s understanding of his role aligns with Bourdieu’s notion that the habitus, although formed within early childhood experiences, is continually restructured by experiences beyond the childhood and so the habitus can transcend the social conditions in which it was produced (Reay, 2004).

When asked about disadvantage at Fairmount High School Lanie described differences in her expectations for behaviour and the expectations that she perceived as being in the homes of her students. Lanie was teaching junior level classes so did not feel like she needed to push study habits and academic success too hard, but expected good behaviour in her classes. On the one hand this is a similar sentiment to Ben’s comments in that Lanie believed her role was to pass on her values in relation to school behaviour to the students thus shaping their habitus. On the other hand Lanie gave less gravitas to the academic skills required to play within the “rules of the game” and assumed that these skills would develop naturally provided the social conditions were correct, that is good behaviour. At first she seemed surprised by the difference in attitudes of some of her students’ parents to that of her own. She recounted an experience she had in her first couple of weeks of teaching.

So I have had a really interesting incident a couple of weeks ago. [It was] about homophobic language in the classroom which is something I will not tolerate at all. There was a student who started telling a story and called everyone in his family a fag. I called him out on it, sent him to time out. Saw him later, had detention, discussed the issue, why it was inappropriate. I wanted it to be quite public that I would not tolerate this kind of language in the classroom. So that as a - what's the word? As an example to the other students, that I would not handle it.

I called his mum. I said, “Look, your son's been saying this and this and this about your family, labelling everyone a fag”. She said, “Oh yeah, but it’s my husband’s family. They are just like that. We’ve had a lot of problems with them”. I said, “Well look I’m not going to tolerate this kind of language in the classroom and I thought it best to stop it because he was talking about your family”. She said, “But it’s just my husband’s family. He wasn’t talking about anyone in the classroom was he?” I said, “No but that kind of language we can’t have it anyway.”

So I found in that case, the expectations of what was appropriate were really varied between home and school, and I can’t always count on the parent backing me up in
Lanie’s anecdote presents an example of differing sociocultural processes making it possible to see Bourdieu’s (1977b) theory of cultural production. More specifically it is evidence of “cultural production as a conceptual framework for understanding how social inequality becomes constant (constancy of structure) and manifestly present – as meaningful cultural practice – in school” (Dillabough, 2004, p. 492). In this student, Lanie described a behaviour formed within and endorsed by the family that contributed to his habitus and which contradicted that of the school. McLeod and Yates (2006) point out that, in relation to schooling it is the degree of correspondence or contradiction between the field and the habitus that reproduces class-based inequalities.

The reproduction of class-based inequalities typically arises when the habitus of the elite and professional middle classes corresponds with that of the school – producing ongoing advantage and success – and conversely when the habitus of the working class contradicts that of the school, which is more likely to lead to alienation from school; structural differences thus become mistaken for individual deficiencies or strengths.

(McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 92)

Lanie not only believed that she had a personal responsibility to enable positive interactions within the social field of school but also that the school had “its own dynamic habitus shaping strategies” (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 91). Over her two years as an Associate, Lanie became less surprised by these differences and encounters, but she maintained the importance of holding what she considered “higher” expectations for behaviour in her classes than her students might “be used to at home” (interview 2).

School support to cross between worlds
The Associates bring with them an understanding of schooling that has been built mainly through their past school experiences, but has more recently been influenced by the discourse of “problems in schools” that is present in the TfA promotional material and related media articles, which were discussed in the previous chapter. As
has been established, the life and school experiences of the Associates are vastly
different to the students they teach in so far as the cultural capital and habitus
brought into each environment. So how then did the Associates reconcile the
dissonance in their understandings of “how school should be” (Lanie interview 3) and
the reality of the school they entered? One of their techniques was to observe the
leadership of the school and determine the support that was offered to the
Associates’ in their efforts to transverse between the two worlds.

In Chapter Five evidence was provided that showed the Associates who were least
critical of their school principal were those who felt the principal was in favour and
supportive of the TfA program. Anders was one of the participants who recognised
that the Principal of Windmill SC offered a good deal of support to the Associates to
ensure a smooth crossing into a world they could be enticed to stay. He sensed that
the number of Associates being entrusted with positions of influence meant they
collectively created a field where they knew the rules and where they were able to be
“constantly there to back each other up” (email October 2012) While Anders and Ben
throughout their two years as Associates were non-committal about their plans to
stay at Windmill Secondary College, both had developed a good relationship with the
Principal and felt that she trusted them enough to award them leadership positions.
Being in a school that supported them as Associates and rewarded them with
leadership positions meant they were happy to stay and so they both signed on-going
contracts to stay teaching at the school after their two years as TfA Associates. Ben
emphasised that being entrusted with “leadership responsibilities was so important in
[his] decision to stay” (interview 2).

In Jamie’s first year as an Associate she spoke about the Principal of Roycreek
Secondary College in terms of how he went about creating a new culture that allowed
for the shaping of a dominant type of habitus that emphasised achievement in
literacy and numeracy, at the school.

I think the biggest impact on the school at the moment is the principal is really kind of
gung-ho about trying to improve literacy and numeracy. He’s really gung-ho about
trying to turn this into a good school. So he really wants this to be a school of first
choice, so that people in Roycreek don’t say “oh well, I live nearby and there’s
nowhere else; I'll send them to Roycreek College”. But people actually choose Roycreek before any other school.

(Jamie interview 1)

She agreed that for her students to build the habitus they needed to succeed in school that increasing literacy and numeracy was crucial. Increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of the student body was not just important for the students themselves, but was of importance to the marketing of the school to the wider community. Jamie spoke about leadership in this case in terms of the processes the leader endorsed to raise the profile of the school. Here she displayed a tacit understanding that the school does not just contradict or correspond with the habitus students bring to the field, but that the school itself plays a role in habitus-shaping (McLeod & Yates, 2006). Jamie believed that the school offered support by having clear pedagogical structures and foci which formed the foundations on which to build a bridge between advantaged and disadvantaged worlds. It was not until after she had completed her TfA contract that Jamie spoke about the support she received on a more personal level:

So I think it had a huge impact. From day one Peter [Roycreek Principal] was incredibly supportive. He kind of talked us up as these bright new young teachers and introduced us to the staff in a really positive way. I felt really comfortable and confident from day one going and asking him questions. He didn’t set it up that he was the expert and that we just need to watch and learn. He was happy to workshop ideas and help me get my Year 9s under control. So I felt he was supportive of the program and of us as teachers in two very different ways but they were both really crucial. Yeah, I just had fantastic conversations with him.

I remember when one of the other teachers that didn’t know both Jim and I were TfA, (I think he knew that Jim was but didn’t know I was too), but when he found out he said “It’s just as Peter says, you guys work really hard, this that and the other.” So just knowing that the principal had been speaking positively about us as TfA teachers, to others, made me feel really supported. So it [the leadership] has had a huge impact. And I know that some of the Associates in other schools, that for whatever reason, it hasn’t been as supportive. Maybe the principal hasn’t made as strong an effort or felt the need to, [but] I feel that they have had a worse experience. Even if all their classes have been wonderful, if you don’t feel like the Principal supports you are not going to enjoy it.

(Jamie interview 2)

Here Jamie confirms not only the support she felt personally from the school Principal but also presents, as evidence, that the Principal held the belief that the Associates
with prized forms of cultural capital and habitus would have the capacity to make change in the field and were therefore to be supported.

Eliza might have been one of the associates that Jamie referred to who felt unsupported. As one of only two Associates placed at Tyldane Secondary College (in any cohort), she admitted that she did not enjoy the experience because she had little support from either her peers or the leadership team in the school. Eliza was consistently critical of the leadership at her school at both the school level and the key learning area (KLA) within which she was placed. One of the first things she told me about her school related to this aspect of her experience. I had asked her to tell me a little bit about her school and she explained:

Eliza:  The school is undergoing a lot of change at the moment because we had a review done earlier this year and it was pretty damning. So, management and some of the leading teachers are under a lot of pressure at the moment to effect changes. The staff opinion survey also came back really low, as well.

SW:  Could you talk about that damning report just a little bit more?
Eliza:  Well, it was vindicating for me, because I felt like someone externally had identified a lot of the things that I had already noticed. So, for me, it didn't really say anything that I hadn't thought about before. A lot of other staff members responded quite cynically to it and haven't really taken on board what it said though. The big challenge for any organisation, I think, is leadership.

(Eliza interview 1)

In our second meeting, I asked Eliza if her school was going to employ any more TfA Associates. She responded, “I've actually made a recommendation that they don't and my teaching and leadership advisors have also made a recommendation... But I don't think my school is ready for Teach for Australia change” (interview 2). Eliza throughout her time at Tyldane held the belief that the leadership in a school should “set the agenda” (interview 1) on the type of habitus it would cultivate in students in order to build cultural capital or make explicit the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu, 1977a).

Like it's just - I have to leave. I feel bad because there are some real - despite the lack of leadership there are some really good people doing some really good things but they're not loud enough. They're not dominant enough in the culture.

(Eliza interview 2)
This comment from Eliza appears at odds with the stated aim of TfA that Associates will have “a life changing impact on their students” (TfA, 2011c). Eliza perceived that her impact to bring about change in the school was unsuccessful and that efforts to invoke change should only continue if there was a good opportunity for success. To her mind, Eliza could not find the support needed to cross between the field of education as she understood it and the field of school that was a disadvantaged setting. Teach for Australia has not subsequently placed Associates at Tyldane Secondary College.

Lanie was in the first pair of Associates who went to Fairmount High School, and there were two small intakes of Associates subsequently. Even though this willingness to employ TfA Associates demonstrated a certain degree of alignment with the program on behalf of the Principal, Lanie still felt frustrations with the leadership at her school. She felt that within her learning area the team leader provided little support and actively dissuaded the teachers from collaborating on lesson planning and assessment writing. When asked to elaborate on this, Lanie believed her department head held a stance of “public opposition….Like don’t tell us what to do. We won’t be told. We want to work on our own” (Lanie interview 2). By the time we spoke for a third time Lanie was no longer a TfA Associate, having completed her two years. She had been employed as a full time teacher on a permanent contract at the school.

As part of her contract negotiation Lanie had been promised a leadership role setting up an alternative learning pathway for students in Year 9 who were not reaching expected learning outcomes. This role and the associated program did not eventuate because of a budget shortfall at her school. Lanie’s situation most illustrates the tension found between a program that is built on promises of transformative impact and the premise that these “outstanding individuals…who will help change the lives of their students” (TfA, 2011c) and the reality of constraints on and in schools.
Transforming expectations of impact in disadvantaged settings

Going into the TfA program each of the Associates was aware that they would meet students with different socio-economic status to themselves. In their understanding this disparity meant they were personally the beneficiaries of “good schooling” and good parenting. In contrast, the students they were going to teach were receiving “bad schooling”, and that was something they were hoping to change. These Associates understood a type of schooling where their own cultural capital meant the “rules of the game” were tacit and had been successfully navigated by them and their parents before them. This was demonstrated when they referred to their personal expectations often framed as those that their own parents had held. Lanie’s response exemplifies this when she stated “My parents thought it important that my sister and I got a good well-rounded liberal arts education, and expected that we do well at school” (interview 1). While noting differences in cultural capital within their responses about disadvantage they demonstrate little understanding of the different habitus they would encounter amongst their students.

The shaping of habitus and building of cultural capital is not as straightforward as an organisation such as TfA might assume. The Associates must not only have an understanding and exchange of the cultural capital of the community, but also as partners (with the family and community) be able to negotiate the educational enterprise of the students (Zeichner, 2006). Without Associates understanding the habitus of their students’ the negotiation of the educational enterprise falters. The final part of the chapter looks at how the Associates were able to negotiate this enterprise, which involved different transformations for each of the participants in the study.

As Dumais (2002) explained “[t]o acquire cultural capital, a student must have the ability to receive and internalise it” (p.44) and each Associate gradually began to understand this. Their perceptions of the impact they could have on students receiving and internalising cultural capital and thus shaping new habitus changed over time. Anders reflected that this was something he had learned over the course of the two years.
I guess since last year my idea of the disadvantage and the challenges is that I think they're greater than I initially thought they would be, or maybe my ability to have an impact on them I think is less than maybe I initially thought going in. I think just having that extra bit of experience and coming up against different things, I realise that I can work my hardest, do a lot for them but there is only so much I can do when it comes down to their choices and the other factors that influence their lives. With the students that are - obviously I'm teaching mainly Year 10 and 11 and 12 - part-time, working [and] contributing to family income is something that I've come up against more and more this year, especially with Year 12 students. Sitting down and having conversations with students about well, how much are you actually working and how much time are you dedicating to study. When I try to influence perhaps how much they're working they're “Oh no, I can't because I have to contribute money to the family.” I can't really say – I don't know what to say to that – “no, don't work and be hungry or don't pay bills or whatever?” So that's one thing that's an issue.

(Anders interview 1)

Anders often joked that the idealism he felt at the beginning was misplaced, but vowed to continue working within the constraints of the “other factors that influence their lives”. He wished to continue teaching to make “some sort of difference to these kids” and when asked about his future responded:

Look, I wouldn't change the decision to join TFA for a moment. I think that if I knew going into it that the program probably wasn't set down in stone as much as has become apparent, then I would have had a few more reservations about joining because along the way there's been lots of bits and bobs added and taken away, et cetera, obviously as it's growing and learning. In a sense, the people that I've met, the opportunities that I've been provided, the learning that I've had and the amount that I've grown personally, I can't imagine what else I could have done that could have given me so many rich experiences. So yeah, there's no way that I would go back and just continue being [a health professional] having done this now. So yeah, at the moment I'm happy where I'm at.

(Anders interview 2)

Jamie expressed similar sentiments to Anders about the idealism with which she entered Roycreek Secondary College and how it had been tempered over the course of the TFA experience and beyond. Her final interview was conducted after she had completed the TFA program, and then had been granted leave from Roycreek College in which she spent six months teaching in a remote school with a student body made up of 96% indigenous students. The combination of these experiences provided further context and evidence to the true extent of disadvantage in Australia. Jamie

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18 The figure of 96% indigenous students is from the 2012 school year and was sourced from www.myschool.edu.au
then returned to Roycreek and felt she was “a much calmer teacher back in Melbourne...[because of] the things that I saw, after the insanity of teaching up there” (Jamie interview 2). The kind of disadvantage experienced by the students at Roycreek seemed to pale in comparison to that experienced by the indigenous students she taught in remote Western Australia and so reinvigorated the idea that she could have an impact on these comparatively mild issues. She gave the following example:

So the low level literacy stuff I was quite well-prepared for after being here. So there it was much worse. Like here we have kids with low literacy because they’re reading and writing below their age level but there it was kids who couldn’t read and write in Year 8. They couldn’t spell words like ‘did’, ‘me’, ‘the’, really simple common words. Either because they missed school or [had] foetal alcohol syndrome, or just because they had a lot going on at home and couldn’t concentrate. So I feel like I was better prepared to deal with the low literacy but it was much worse than I could have ever anticipated....It definitely made me a better teacher. I learned a lot more about teaching in general and behaviour management specifically but I wouldn’t do it again. Not soon anyway.

Now that I am back I’ve been given the chance to work on a literacy intervention program that we are going to implement next year. So I am only teaching a half load and the rest of my time is for planning and research to implement a low literacy program. So what we are going to do is get about 20 kids between Years 7 and 8, [and] we will pilot next term and start next year. So 20 kids, two teachers and for 10 of their lessons, half of their learning time we’ll just be working on literacy strategies until they can independently engage with content in the classroom.

(Jamie interview 2)

Upon returning to Roycreek Jamie had been “given the chance” to build a bridge for the students to cross between fields in the form of a “literacy intervention program” at the school and she appreciated the time release given to research. However, she maintained that this was a short term goal because although she saw herself “involved in education for the rest of [her] life” it was not in the classroom. She explained; “so one of my ambitions is to become a school leader and the other is to see what I can do about making it a more equal playing field. And that is not something I can do on my own” (Interview 2).

In the first interviews Frank was the most forthright about his hopes to “make a difference”. He claimed that it was the opportunity to “do something valuable for
society” (interview 1) that made TfA such an appealing option for him. He earnestly viewed TfA as a vehicle to maintain his interest in activism and was quick start to “doing good” in his community. For example, because the nutritional aspect of student disadvantage shocked Frank in the beginning of his experience he quickly became involved in volunteering with a breakfast club to directly help address this form disadvantage.

So the local basically - the local Anglican Church runs a breakfast program on Friday mornings. So that's about having opportunity for students to come in and eat and perhaps have a decent enough breakfast there. Basically it provides cereals, juice, sometimes baked beans and sometimes toast and some spreads; that kind of stuff - and sometimes some fruit as well. That said the take up rate isn't much – it’s not really, really high. There are some kids who don’t have breakfast yet [who] still don’t come to that. We've been trying to get kids to come but it's odd that it's not taken up as much as it could be.

(Frank interview 1)

Frank’s transformation was in some ways more predictable than the other participants of this study because the community he entered was so different from what he had experienced. Like the others, he described his own upbringing growing up in a large city and education as privileged, but where his situation differed was that he entered a small rural community with a (relatively) small school rather than a large suburban school on the fringes of the Melbourne metropolitan areas.

But yeah, just for myself personally I'm probably not going to stay at this school specifically. That's more of just to do with - just socially, living in a town that's been probably something - I'm happy here now but I think just looking forward and stretching on I don't think I'd be happy living here in the really long run kind of situation. So that's probably the main thing that's on my mind right now, other than I'm not entirely sure whether I'll stay in a teaching job but move somewhere. I can move maybe somewhere like Bendigo or Ballarat, or somewhere a bit bigger. Or potentially looking at going into doing a post grad going back to Melbourne Uni and doing the research Masters ... I have an interest in the education policies and other things and maybe eventually trying to pursue that as a kind of option as opposed to staying in the class.

(Frank interview 2).

Frank’s decision to leave Wallansea High School had more to do with the community it was situated in rather than the support offered by the school. He often joked about missing the café culture of the big city, and while made in jest these comments held a
kernel of truth. Living in a community with few people of a similar age meant that
Frank judged the space that lay between the social field he knew and the fields of his
students to loom large and not one he felt he could continue to traverse.

Lanie was not perturbed by the differences she encountered and very much wished to
continue to traverse between the fields. In an email nearing the half-way point of her
first year as a permanent staff member Lanie expressed her disappointment and
unwillingness to "wait for someone to retire" so she could be in a position to make an
impact. She wrote:

[M]y decisions about school have roller-coastered again! My alternative learning
pathway was about to exist, lost its budget, has been revived and now I've decided to
abandon ship as quickly as possible. I had a call from [another] school about a job
and just applied. It's to start next term and I would just be really excited to leave. I'm
really sick of the disorganized state of my school and after completing the subjects in
the Special Ed stream, it seems more important than ever to work in an environment
with people whose motivations are aligned.

(Lanie email June 2013)

Lanie was successful in securing a position at a government school in another part of
Melbourne that was set up to teach “adolescents who have been disengaged from
education...established as a result of an identified need [in the region] to provide an
alternative to a mainstream school” (school website information). The opportunity
presented to Lanie in entering the new school was as she later told me “too good to
be true...working with even more disadvantaged teenagers is what I have always
wanted to do” (Lanie email August 2013). Before she had finished her two year stint
as an Associate she had suggested that social work or youth work was something she
was interested in. The new role seemed, to her, to blend her interest in social work
with her teaching experience and so was keenly anticipated. As the alternative model
of the school as a whole aligned with the work she had done in creating the
“alternative learning pathway”, Lanie felt that she was able to enter a school that
would unequivocally provide support to her in teaching disadvantaged students.

What became evident to each participant throughout the course of their first two
years was that disadvantage could not be narrowed to a definition of socio-economic
status or class. When they first entered the unfamiliar schools some, like Ben and
Eliza, felt that because the students in these schools had material possessions such as
mobile phones, computer games and new hats/clothes/trainers, that they should not be considered as disadvantaged in an economic or material sense. In their minds, this meant, the true disadvantage of the students lay in their lack of sufficient cultural awareness of how to “do well” at school. Ben and Eliza were both certain going in to their respective placements that their job was to “pass on” their cultural capital and particular habitus consisting of “ability and skill set and end values” (Ben interview 1) to their students.

Despite the promises they would be guaranteed a corporate career and expressing a desire to move out of teaching both Ben and Eliza remained teaching after their TfA contract expired (at least for the one year I was able to follow up this). Where they differed was in their transformation as teachers. Ben remained teaching at Windmill SC and was unwavering in his belief that holding high expectations, pushing an academic agenda and modelling hard work was all that was required to make change both to the lives of the students he taught and to the culture of the school. Eliza did not hold any such beliefs and chose not to continue at Tyldane SC after her Associate years. Although she continued to teach, Eliza did not continue to teach in the public sector.

I’ve taken a full time job at the Montessori School teaching [LOTE] two days a week and running their library and extension programs for the other three days. I’m loving being in a new setting. Having moved on from my old school I realise just how toxic it was for me.

(Eliza email February 2013)

Eliza saw huge differences between herself (as a person) and her students, herself (as a teacher) and the teachers in her school, as well as the culture of the school she attended and the school she taught in, but perceived this difference as greater than anything she and her students could cross. Upon entering Tyldane SC, Eliza felt that she was entering a world in which she could not survive and what she needed was a vehicle to transport her right back out of there. Interestingly she wanted to share that vehicle with students to help them escape the “toxic” world in which they were known as disadvantaged.

The relationship that has been most tricky to manage has been one of my ESL kids. Very early on he announced to me that he wanted to go to [large independent boys
secondary] College, because he heard it was a really good school. I thought this was a really interesting statement for a student to say. He’d spent a year and a half in detention before he came to [Melbourne] with his family. He got shipped around from Christmas Island to Brisbane to Perth and now he's in Victoria, as often happens. He is very bright and, from what I can gather, from quite an affluent Iranian family.

He told me that he was feeling depressed and suicidal and very bored at school, all in one go, in one recess. Obviously, I had to refer him to the co-ordinators and welfare. But, since then, I've taken a personal interest in his case, because he reminds me a lot of how I was as a teenager, needing guidance, not always stimulated by the classroom. He reacts to similar things - to content, in a similar way I do. I don't know how that is equitable or how it happened. I don't think I sought him out. I think he sought me out. So, I got him a scholarship to go to [a large independent boys] College and participate in a Young Leaders Winter School, over the holidays. He loved that, really enjoyed it and came back much more engaged and happy. So, for me, that was evidence to suggest that he wasn't necessarily being stimulated by the school curriculum. He couldn't get into the extension programme, because he is ESL and there is some rule that says no. There are a lot of rules at my school that say no. It's really annoying. I don't know if that's the state system, or schools in general, but there is not really an approach of yes we can, it's no we can't. So, I said, fine, I'll ring [selective boys] High, long shot, see if they're interested. They are and he is going next year!

(Eliza interview 2)

This anecdote shows that although the student Eliza was referring to was a refugee she identified with him as a fellow “bright” stranger in this unfamiliar land and assumed that he inherited cultural capital and habitus from his “quite affluent” family. But she also believed that the way she could best make an impact on this student was to help him escape a “toxic” school environment and enter a more familiar world where the student’s new peers and teachers would hold a similar habitus. She also demonstrated in seeking to get out of the unfamiliar terrain of Lyndale SC and recommending that TfA not send more Associates there she felt personally unsafe

**Conclusion**

The participants in this study entered the schools in which they were placed as outsiders, aware of many differences between themselves and their students. The way the Associate participants described disadvantage at the beginning of their associate experience was mostly in relation to the student embodiment of such a
label. The physical appearance of their students highlighted, to the Associates, more than anything else the difference in cultural capital between the two groups. They also felt prepared for (and thus aware) of the institutional differences in schools they would find to a certain extent. They could identify their location in, and understanding of the “rules of the game” in familiar (elite and exclusive) school contexts and observe the vastly different contexts of the schools they knew had been labelled as disadvantaged. However their initial expectations about the ability to readily impact and change the habitus for the students they taught and the schools they entered were ones that were challenged. As with any beginning teacher transformation is quite profound in the first two years of teaching and so it was with this group.

The participants of this study had particular understandings of how they could bring about change in disadvantaged settings differently. Ben for example believed that what he brought to school was to be an academic role model and “push the academic side of things”. Anders and Jamie felt that for change to occur a school needed to a critical mass of teachers with similar habitus to their own and the support of the school leaders. Eliza, despite being the participant most closely aligned with the TfA discourse around addressing disadvantage at the beginning of her experience was the one who fled the disadvantaged school as soon as she was able, finding it too overwhelming as an environment to be able to readily envisage transformation of it.
Chapter Seven - Findings and conclusion

This thesis has been an exploration of the Teach for Australia (TfA) program’s mission to address educational disadvantage through recruiting outstanding graduates to teaching. The research had two aims: to investigate the framework of thinking that the TfA program invites through its mission statements and promotional materials in relation to addressing educational disadvantage; and, to explore the perceptions of the new teachers, referred to by TfA as Associates, and their experiences of the TfA pathway to teaching in relation to its mission and framework. The study explored the connections being drawn in contemporary Australia, between the premises that justify such an approach to teacher recruitment and the understandings and experiences of those recruited. To answer the research questions, I provided a brief history of Commonwealth attempts to address educational disadvantage in order to contextualise the rise of the TfA program. I then provided a review of literature relating to the emergent themes of this research: attracting teachers of quality to the profession; citizenship and altruism; and leadership and power in an increasingly corporatized education system. To these themes I applied different “thinking tools” as described by Pierre Bourdieu (1977b) in order to further understand the TfA Associates’ perceptions of, and entitlement to be included in such an elite program and more specifically the entitlement the participants felt toward leadership positions.

This research does not (and cannot) confirm or contradict the research on like programs about overall or long-term effects of such programs. As discussed in Chapter Three, that literature continues to be surprisingly thin on any hard tracking evidence of impact on student achievement as a result of such programs and the evidence that does emerge tends to be contentious. Similarly this small scale study is unable to contribute to evidence about the relative length of teaching career of teachers drawn in through these programs compared with other routes. Of the six participants in this study, four continued to teach in disadvantaged schools following the end of their two year commitment, one had taken a job at an independent school and one had stopped teaching altogether. The findings of this research do, however,
question the legitimacy of TfA’s belief that parachuting high academic achievers into schools as teachers for a short time will achieve the vision to provide an excellent education to “all children” (TfA, 2011c).

This final chapter revisits the research questions in light of the findings I have outlined in the previous two chapters as well as the context and theoretical literature discussed earlier in the thesis.

**What are the assumptions about teachers, active citizenship and effectively addressing disadvantage in schools evident in the TfA organisation’s mission statements and promotional material?**

**Altruism or self-interest?**

The first premise investigated in this research relates to the assumptions about the needs of an education system with such vast differences in outcomes and opportunities for students from different backgrounds. It is hard to disagree with the TfA mission statements and promotional documents that state the ideal of an “Australia where all children, regardless of background or social circumstance are given the best chance in life through an excellent education” (TfA, 2011c). The mission to “do this by transforming outstanding individuals into exceptional teachers and inspirational leaders, who will help change the lives of their students” (TfA, 2011c) also sounds like a noble pursuit. It is a rhetoric that has its roots in the Teach for All network and specifically the original program Teach for America with the stated intention of supplying teachers to high needs disadvantaged schools that struggle to employ teachers.

Chapter Five demonstrated that the kind of mission and vision statements TfA make do appeal directly to those who apply, and that TfA is viewed as an opportunity to be of service and demonstrate altruistic citizenship. The Associates in this study were born in a time of neoliberalism in which western governments such as Australia’s have encouraged an active, volunteering citizen whose reserves of altruism can be drawn into service and, importantly who is not reliant on government support. The premise that a program such as TfA has an important role in contributing to building
the nation by educating disadvantaged youth was believed by each of the Associates in this study.

The promises of enacting altruistic citizenship and the promises made by the program that appeal to the Associates’ self-interest combined to make TfA a very attractive pathway for the participants of this study. Yet in some ways these same promises were found to add to the reputational issues for teachers in these schools. The Associates completed their own secondary school years at a time when the school education system felt the effects of axed equity funding. At the same time the government boosted funding to private schools and mandated the acceptance of nationalistic values policies in order for government schools to receive Commonwealth funding. A major implication of this period in Australian education has been a denigration of teachers and government schools. The Associates had attended either private schools or selective public schools and appeared to have absorbed the rhetoric that overall government schools were, as one Prime Minister had claimed, devoid of values and teachers particularly in the government sector were lazy and neglectful.

Responses in the interviews demonstrated that Associates were aware of the perceived low-status of the teaching profession and viewed this program as an opportunity to both raise the profile of teaching and to enter schools without being judged in the same way as other teachers. They commenced by seeing the Teach for Australia program as a “movement” necessary to reinvigorate the schools in which they were placed. This perception on the part of the Associates was evident throughout the recruitment process and the residential initial intensive periods. Their expectations were framed in a missionary discourse which implied that as TfA recruits they were the people chosen because they could make an impact on educational disadvantage.

Much is made in the TfA promotional material, media releases and newspaper articles about the academic achievement and passion to make change evident in the individuals who participate in the TfA pathway and the Associates spoke about these
aspects of the pathway as well. In Jamie’s words (discussed in Chapter Five) they were chosen because as Associates they had “lots of energy, lots of ideas and lots of contacts and links…..to reinvigorate some of the schools” (Jamie interview 1). The Associates strongly identified as part of an elite group, and believed that such a group would successfully make change in the schools they entered.

To identify as belonging to this elite group, it was important for the Associates to have the opportunities they had forgone, or delayed in order to participate in TfA recognised. The myriad career options the Associates had was emphasised in the literature and policy surrounding the program, and was reiterated by them in their interviews. In Chapter Five my analysis of the policies and documents associated with TfA showed that the grounds on which the altruistic promise is made to Associates only works in so far as it is coupled with the promise of being amongst a group of elite individuals – that is, that their choice is altruistic only in so far as it can be obvious that they had other good alternatives of career.

The promotional material contributed to reinforcing the difference between the people participating in the program and other teachers in the schools in which they were placed. The documents also highlighted the benefits that Associates get that are not accessible to other teachers, such as the fast-track fee-free pathway and leadership training. In each case it was articulated by the Associates that their commitment to teaching would have been tested if they had been required to study for a teaching qualification at their own expense in terms of time and money. Initially, the literature promoted future corporate opportunities as strongly as the altruism of the period gaining a paid teaching qualification

Leadership and its downside
The program’s initiator explained that one of the main aims of TfA was to provide a ‘pipeline of aspirant leaders’. Upon entering the pathway Associates take part in the Teach for Australia Leadership Development Program [in which they develop] a skillset and a leadership mindset that is unique and in high demand….Ultimately, Teach for Australia is about growing a movement of leaders both inside and outside of the classroom

147
Leadership appealed to this group, but at the same time it contributed to the difficulties some of the Associates experience because of the expectation of leadership positions they had. The promotion of expectations of leadership in the program fosters a sense of entitlement among the Associates. This entitlement to leadership was harmful to the experience of the Associates in some cases because they become frustrated if not provided with leadership opportunities at a very early stage. It is also potentially damaging to the schools that Associates enter because it casts aspersions on the status of the schools’ existing teachers. It suggests that they are either unwilling or unsuitable to “lead”, and/or that classroom teachers are unable to make an impact on the students they teach.

How are Associates perceptions of their capacity to fulfil Teach for Australia’s mission of changing lives in classrooms and leading systemic change, affirmed challenged or modified during their classroom experiences?

Habitus and the rules of the game
In Chapter Six evidence was presented of the Associates’ personal recognition of the differences in the educational opportunities they had experienced and those of the students they taught. It has been suggested that the late 1990s to the mid-2000s was a period when privilege was revived, and without exception the Associates in this study were the beneficiaries of reinvigorated and realigned privilege in that their own education, took place in high status secondary schools. If, like Lanie and Ben, they had attended a Government secondary school it was a comprehensive school only for the first year (Lanie) or two (Ben) before moving to a select entry single-sex school, which is part of the elite school system. The Associates know the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu, 1977a) that schooling requires, yet they are adept at the rules only in relation to an elite field. They had, by their own admission, little experience before the TfA program of playing the game with different rules that were altered in the context of a less advantaged school culture. The focus of this thesis has not been an
examination of disadvantage as such; the school data in Chapter Four demonstrated that the question of why these schools are classified as disadvantaged is somewhat complex. Rather the focus instead has been on the ways in which the Associates saw the schools they were allocated to. They did certainly perceive these schools as different to their own and were surprised when they encountered the apparent absence of things they had taken for granted, such as the priority of academic purposes.

Until the experience presented by the TfA pathway, inequality in education had barely been encountered by the participants of this study and was merely theoretical. Ben and Lanie were the exception as they had both attended comprehensive government high schools for the first two years of high school (before moving to selective single-sex government schools) and had taught in a summer holiday program for disadvantaged students. Although the Associates had certain expectations of how disadvantage would present in the schools they entered each was surprised in different ways. For Eliza, Anders and Frank the health (and nutrition) of the students was one of the most surprising manifestations of disadvantage. To Jamie, Ben and Lanie disadvantage appeared embodied in the different expectations of the parents and families of their students’ at-school behaviour – the different habitus’ they encountered.

The Associates’ experiences had an impact on their expectations of “what school should be” (Lanie interview 3) and their understandings that they had succeeded in the “game of school”. They believed that they were placed in disadvantaged schools to act as role models for the students. It was Ben who most explicitly stated his belief that the Windmill SC teachers, students and their parents were far too relaxed about student academic achievement. He took seriously the charge of “being good teachers and being good role models for the students” (interview 1). Being a good role model for the students was, to the participants of this study, synonymous with being a good teacher. This positioning allowed the Associates I studied to believe, especially at the beginning of their experience, that just by being present in their school and being a role model they could be a solution to the issue of disadvantage.
In the course of the Associates’ experiences, their opinions of the TfA program shifted from a saviour or missionary discourse to a recognition that the issues of educational disadvantage were more complex than they imagined. When they entered the schools they saw multiple and complex issues that they had not considered. Anders summed up what most changed over the two years when he said,

I guess since last year my idea of the disadvantage and the challenges is that I think they’re greater than I think I initially thought they would be, or maybe my ability to have an impact on them I think is less than maybe I initially thought going in.

(Anders interview 2)

The belief in a ‘solvable problem’

In the course of the study each of the Associates expressed a change in understanding of the impact they could have on the “solvable problem” (TfA, 2013b). Some came to a realisation that they cannot “solve” the problem and then they looked for different ways to explain why they could not do so. For some it was blaming the school. Eliza for example believed her Associate experience had not been successful because her impact on student achievement was, she felt, minimal - but she attributed this to the school not being “ready for the Teach for Australia change” (interview 2). Similarly, Lanie felt her ability to make a real difference was not possible in the “disorganised state of my school” (email June 2013). These two Associates believed that the mission to address disadvantage in schools was conceivable, provided the leadership of the said schools was willing to embrace the way they wished to tackle the problem – the TfA way.

Anders, Ben, Jamie and Frank did not encounter this problem because they felt their respective school principals were supportive of them and were aligned with the TfA mission. Evidence of this support was found in the (relatively) large numbers of TfA Associates their schools had placed since the start of the program, and the willingness of the school leaders to entrust these Associates with a degree of leadership responsibility within the school, either in the second year of their Associate experience or immediately after it. However they too had widened their understanding of what needed to be understood and confronted in schools dealing
with different cohorts of students and parent communities than those in which they had flourished.

In Chapter Six the different experiences of the Associates was examined. What these experiences showed was that to have any impact certain conditions needed to be in place. These conditions included strong support structures or an environment that was greater than any one person. If these conditions were not present the Associates needed a more limited mission such as the literacy programs that Jamie and Lanie were involved in. The Associates began by thinking of educational disadvantage as a solvable problem in line with the rhetoric of the program, as if an individual teacher or leader will have an impact. However throughout the two years they began to see this did not happen automatically, and while making some impact might be possible, the individual teacher solution was not likely to ‘solve’ the educational disadvantage they encountered.
Afterword

I entered this research identifying with the people who enter Teach for Australia in a number of ways. I related to the fact that they would be entering classrooms with little or no experience teaching, yet felt that if supported these people could become effective classroom teachers. At the same time, I was intrigued at what would happen with this quite differently sourced cohort who were undertaking an entry so different to other students I taught in the MGSE’s Masters of Teaching. Something I was also interested in looking at closely was the much promoted ties to the corporate sector that implied a promise of corporate careers after classroom contracts of two years had expired.

Since the inception of the TfA program there has been a change in Federal government that occurred in September 2013.

By the end of 2014 there has been no published research on the Teach for Australia program that provides evidence of Associate effectiveness or improved outcomes for students in disadvantaged schools. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has undertaken evaluation of the TfA pathway and has released three evaluation reports that focus not on the schools’ improvements or students’ outcomes, but on the delivery of the TfA program to the Associates and their satisfaction with it. In September 2013 the TfA Organisation announced that it had secured a grant to fund an “Effective Teaching Evaluation” which is a study “delivered through surveys to be completed by students of Teach For Australia Associates in Victorian schools, [that] will enable our Associates to measure their effectiveness in driving student achievement and continuously refine their teaching practice” (TfA, 2013a). The Effective Teaching Evaluation involves the Associates surveying the students they teach “twice yearly, every year to enable Associates to track and benchmark their performance and progress” (TfA, 2013a). The survey, in a similar format to the ACER surveys, gauges students’ satisfaction with their teachers (who are Associates) and but not the outcomes of students being taught by the Associates. Even with the lack of evidence of Associate effectiveness in raising student outcomes the TfA program continues to expand.
In May 2014, the Commonwealth Government announced it would no longer directly contract the teacher education component of the initiative to Melbourne University’s Graduate School of Education (MGSE), rather it would hand the responsibility for putting it out to tender, to the Teach for Australia Organisation. Teach for Australia awarded the contract for teacher education to another Victorian university, which held the initial 2014-2015 intensive in a regional town and had the largest cohort of recruits to date.

Yet while the MGSE was not successful in securing the ongoing contract for this initiative and is in the process of ceasing its involvement with Teach for Australia, it has developed its own similar teacher education program to sit alongside the regular Master of Teaching two-year pathway. MGSE’s new program seeks to match university graduates with school teaching positions and allows them to be paid while they take a part-time teacher education course, and provides a teacher education course leading to a Masters of Teaching degree over a period of three years. This program, the MGSE claims, recognises the way high costs in both time and money may prevent people from entering teaching and aims to attract different people into the workforce.

The most noticeable difference between the new MGSE program and the TfA program is the lack of emphasis on leadership and promises of corporate career paths into the future. These two promises form the core of TfAs role in this type of fast track into teaching. TfA promotes the notion that the way to produce change in schools is to train people in the leadership principles required of “successful leaders”. What this research found was a dynamic that did not support that kind of rationale. The promise of being armed with leadership skills that would foster change in schools so different from those schools the Associates had attended resulted in disrespect for the teachers they encountered in these schools and, at times, a lack of humility.

I care about who becomes a teacher, why they enter the profession, if they stay and most importantly what they do in the classroom to help the students learn in those settings. My empathy with the participants of this study was one of the motivational
triggers for this research as I understood the reality of being under-trained in classrooms of hard-to-staff schools. While I believe that TfA Associates can and do become good teachers and so agree there is a certain amount of merit in the recruitment criteria, I could not rid myself of the feeling that the Teach for Australia solution is merely a band-aid on neoliberalism’s broken leg (if education is one limb of the neoliberal society’s body). The intention to heal the injured schools and students of disadvantaged settings is there, and it is a noble intention at that, but the TfA pathway is the wrong tool for the job.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - First interview questions

- Would you describe the school you have started to teach in?

- What does disadvantage look like in your school? How does it look in the community in which your school is located?

- One of the key ideas of this project is looking at the challenges faced by teachers to connect with the lives of the young people they teach. What do you think are some of the main challenges that you face in trying to produce meaningful and relevant learning experiences that capture the interests of the students you are teaching?

- When you consider the differences in the lives of your students compared to your own childhood, do you think that it has become harder over the years for teachers to be able to cater for the changing lives and realities of young people? Could you elaborate and give examples?

- Your school has quite a diverse student population, especially in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic intake. As a result, each class is quite diverse in nature. When you think about your own classes, what are some of the challenges that this ‘diversity of students’ poses?

- How do you understand the role of the TfA program in the Australian education context?

- How do you see as your role within TfA as assisting to ameliorate educational disadvantage?

- Do you believe you were adequately prepared to respond to the educational needs of students who are identified as disadvantaged?

- What type of learning experiences in your initial training was most beneficial? What do you feel you would have liked to know before getting in to school?

- How do you interpret, make meaning of and respond to the educational environments you encounter?
Appendix 2 - Plain Language Statement

Project: Encountering Disadvantage: An examination of the Teach for Australia Associates Preparation For and Experience in Disadvantaged Schools

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a Doctorate of Education research project by The University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education (MGSE), which will be conducted by D.Ed. researcher Sally Windsor and supervised by Dr. Barbara Kameniar and Dr. Sally Godinho.

This project aims to investigate how graduates enrolled in a new program of teacher education, that claims to address inequalities and disadvantage identified in the Australian education system, interpret, make meaning of and respond to the educational environments they encounter. This research project will be the first such study to examine this new initiative Teach for Australia (TfA), undertaken by the MGSE. It aims to probe deeply into whether associates are prepared for what is claimed to be the key aim of the initiative – the enhancement of educational outcomes for students in disadvantaged schools.

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked to take part in a one-hour focus group discussion with other beginning teachers, two interviews (each lasting no more than one hour) and an email discussion forum over the 2011 and 2012 school years. Interviews will be conducted in two phases. The first interview will ask you to reflect on your initial teacher training, as well as your opinions on the school setting you are now working in. The second interview will focus on your reflections of the first year of teaching, including the teaching practice and strategies you use to connect with the students in your classes. With your permission interviews will be audio recorded and once this has been transcribed you will be provided with a copy of your transcript to verify that information is correct and/or request deletions. D.Ed. researcher Sally Windsor will conduct all interviews at mutually beneficial times and in a location of your convenience. The final request is that you will participate in an ongoing email discussion forum with the researcher. It is hoped that this forum will allow more immediate reflection on issues that arise in your day-to-day school experience.

Your anonymity and confidentiality of responses will be protected to the fullest extent of the law. All data collected during the research process will be stored, according to The University of Melbourne regulations, in a private and secure location at the Melbourne School of Graduate Education for a period of five years and then will be destroyed. Your name and contact details will be stored in a separate, password protected computer file from any data you supply. In the resulting thesis, and in any resulting publications or presentations that include data (such as presentations at academic conferences and/or publication in academic journals), you will be referred to by a pseudonym.

Once the thesis arising from this research is complete, a brief summary of the findings will be available to participants, their school Principal and employers on application to The Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Such data summaries will be of a general nature.
and all attempts will be made to render individual participants unidentifiable. Due to the size of the sample of participants and schools, it may be possible, in exceptional circumstances, for someone to guess your identity but in no way will any other person have access to clearly identifiable comments you make in interviews or focus group discussions.

This project is strictly designed for the purpose of research and does not form any authorized part of a teacher evaluation program or performance review. As such data you provide will not prejudice your position of current or future employment. It is also important to be advised that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, withdraw any unprocessed data you supply or stop interviews in progress, you are free to do so without prejudice.

If you would like to participate in this project, please indicate that you have read or understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it either by email or mail to:

Sally Windsor  
MGSE  
Level 7, 100 Leicester St,  
Carlton, VIC 3053  
swindsor@unimelb.edu.au.

You will then be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient time to organize interviews. Should you have any further queries, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either Sally Windsor: 0411 817000, or Dr Barbara Kameniar:(03) 8344 8411. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, ph: 8344 2073. The University of Melbourne’s Human Research Ethics committee, The Victorian Department of Education, and The Catholic Education Office have already approved this project.

Kindest Regards,

Dr Barbara Kameniar (Principal supervisor)  
Sally Windsor (D.Ed candidate)
Appendix 3 - Consent form for persons participating in research projects

PROJECT TITLE: Meeting Disadvantage: Preparing Teachers for Disadvantaged Settings

Name of teacher participant: ______________________________

Name of investigator(s): Sally Windsor, Dr Barbara Kameniar and Dr Sally Godinho

1. I consent to participate in the project named above, the particulars of which - including details of interviews and focus groups and email correspondence- have been explained to me. A written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

2. I authorise the researcher or assistant to use for this purpose the interviews and focus groups and email correspondence referred to under (1) above.

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) the possible effects of the interviews and focus groups have been explained to me to my satisfaction;
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research /
   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.
   (e) I consent to interviews and focus groups being audio-taped and acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to me for verification and/or editing
   (f) I will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from the research

Signature ______________________________ Date ______________________________

( Participant)
Appendix 4 - Participant updates

Eliza
Throughout this research and the year that followed the contractual obligations of cohort 2, Eliza was most frequently in contact of any of the Associates, but by 2014 she had stopped responding to any approaches I made inquiring after her. Eliza had worked for TfA as a volunteer for a year and a half before becoming as Associate so was aware of the vision and mission of TfA, perhaps more so than any other in the cohort. However, in most respects Eliza had the hardest time as an Associate. She had been one of only two Associates that TfA placed in Tyldane SC and of the Associates I spoke to felt most disappointed with the support she had received and impact she felt she had made. There have been no other Associates teach there since. When Eliza’s TfA contract expired she moved to teach at a private Montessori school in 2013.

Frank
As anticipated during the research Frank left his teaching post at Wallansea SC at the end of his TfA contract. He explained that he missed living in the city and that ‘although I might teach again one day’ he wasn’t ready to commit any more time to teaching. He moved to Melbourne and enrolled in a Masters degree course, in a field outside of education.

Lanie
Six months after finishing her TfA contract and being employed by Fairmount HS on an ongoing contract Lanie moved to another government school in Melbourne. The school she moved to was an alternative secondary school which had been initiated to for students who had become ‘disengaged with mainstream schooling’. Lanie was still teaching at this school at the end of 2014, having secured a leadership position in the school. She was responsible for data and assessment and was planning to remain into 2015. Lanie had enrolled in a graduate certificate in psychology and had finished her Masters of Teaching with a focus on special education and interventions.

Jamie
Immediately upon the end of her TfA contract Jamie accompanied her partner to a remote town in Western Australia where she secured a job teaching English in the local secondary school. The school in Western Australia was considered more disadvantaged than Roycreek SC, which upon her return to six months later seemed comparatively mildly effected by disadvantage. The following year (2014) Jamie became a year-level leader at Roycreek SC. At the end of that year she had resigned from teaching because she was moving overseas. She explained that she unsure of what she would so when she settled in another country and did not know exactly what she was going to do in the future.

Anders

Anders was the only one of the Associates in this study that has remained at the school he was placed in as an Associate. The year after his TfA contract expired Anders was given a leadership position that involved leading student projects in the school. In 2012 Anders saw a need for a subject text book for the senior secondary years in one of the subjects he taught, so wrote and published one. Towards the end of 2014 Anders applied for a Leading Teacher position at Windmill SC successfully and was looking forward to taking on the role in 2015.