CHAPTER FIVE

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

"Well, see, because of our itinerant nature − here today and gone tomorrow −. . .[people are] less likely to trust you."

Y3P1

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

Y1C4

5.1 Overview of the chapter

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

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

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

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

The chapter therefore consists of four sections:

- a review of de Certeau's **(1984)** concept of 'strategies of marginalisation', which provides the chapter's conceptual framework

- an account of how the show people experience an absence of place as a consequence of their itinerancy

- an analysis of how the show people experience otherness arising from their definition as foreign

- an examination of the show people's past educational experiences as exemplifying the conversion of power over them into forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge about schooling.

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

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

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

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

5.2   Strategies of marginalisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secondly:

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

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

Thirdly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3   Absence of place

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

administrators, children, home tutors, parents and teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*No. They always say, "**Look,** they're show kids". (Y2C4)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.4   Constructions of otherness

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

According to de Certeau (1984):

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

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

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

An initial manifestation of the construction of the show people's otherness is perceptions by locals of show people as 'strange'. A show person recalled the local incomprehension of the show people's need to have equipment serviced quickly:

See, I'll come in with a broken TV on Monday and say, "Excuse me, I need it by Friday". They look at you, because people put them in for a month. They can't understand that way. See, I'm moving onto another town, but they don't understand that part. ...They might think it's a bit weird, but we've only got so long in here, and we've got to do the best we can in those few days. (Y4P6)

This reference to local people thinking that *"it's a bit weird"* resonated with another show person's reflection on the show people's interactions with government officials:

And sometimes when we're talking to government bodies and that, they can't understand that it's urgent for us. It's always urgent, because that is the way that our business functions. (Y4P5)

Similarly, another show person stated in a videotaped interview with me, *"Because our lives – it's a very sort of strange life to somebody like you"* (Y4P1).

These references to perceptions of the show people as *"weird"* and *"strange"* reflected their awareness that their itinerancy marks them as 'different'. The result is that they are subject to the gaze of surveillance while they are 'in town'. For each group of local people, this process of objectification rarely occurs more often than once a year. For the show people, however, it takes place every time that they enter a new community. The regularity and the repetition of enduring this kind of interested and objectifying gaze are marginalising in their cumulative effect. This conscious-ness of the marginalisation that arises from being seen as *"weird"* and

"strange" certainly underlay a ten year old girl's comment about local children: *". ..sometimes they don't understand that we're more or less like them but just travel on"* (Y1C4).

An extension of regarding the show people as *"weird"* and *"strange"* is to perceive them as objects of pity, as a consequence of being forced to live a 'second class existence'. A seven year old boy referred to this perception when he identified some of the difficulties in getting to know local children:

> *No, not easy at all. It's hard to find a friend because* [locals think that] *all of us* [are] so *stupid, don't get anything done, but we do get things done.* (Y1C5)

Similarly, a show parent stated, *"So I think we have a better lifestyle than most people when they say, 'How could you do it?', like it's so terrible"* (Y4P5). Another show parent expressed this perception as amounting to *"a stigma":* *"Like a lot of people are ignorant to our lifestyle and to the way things work, and they think that things aren't right, and that can cause a stigma"* (Y1P2).

It is important not to underestimate the deleterious effects of this construction of show people as objects of pity. This process represents an insidious devaluing of the show people's lifestyle, and a refusal to concede their right to attach their own values to the way that they live and work. It therefore marks them out as 'different' and 'deviant', and accordingly as warranting the intrusive attention and surveillance of 'the centre'. Objectified pity brings with it less, not more, understanding of the show people, and it therefore contributes directly to their experiences of marginalisation.

Another manifestation of the show people being defined as foreign, and of the construction of their otherness, but with a harder edge to it than pity, is animosity. This takes the response to the perception that the show people are 'strange' from ambivalence to hostility. This situation was encapsulated in a show parent's observation that *"kids still do tend to serve a little bit of animosity to show children when they come into the school"* (Y1P2). The connection between the show people and the feelings of hostility derive from negative stereotypes based on their 'foreignness', rather than from direct interactions between the two groups. In other words, this is a situation in which prejudice feeds marginalisation.

This link between animosity and the construction of the show people's outsidedness was confirmed by two 'outsiders' who had a close knowledge of the show people's working lives. Firstly, a home tutor recalled a set of graphic incidents that for her encapsulated many of the perceived tensions between 'showies' and 'locals':

. . .I was at school with him [the show child whom she tutored] *and all the other kids were staring at us through the window* – *about thirty children were staring at us, and so naturally they put on this big show at lunch time. We were just sitting eating lunch,. . .we were just sitting quietly eating lunch, and this teacher walked up, we were sitting on top of these port racks* [used for storing students' school bags], *didn't even speak to us, just pointed at us, "Get off the port racks." And I thought, "I'm an adult, not a child." And then someone left a paper on top of the port rack and she must have been standing half a metre away from me. Instead of saying, "Excuse me, could you get one of the girls to put it in*

the rubbish bin?", she just stood there and put this horrid look on her face and just pointed at me and pointed at the paper. So I just chose to ignore it, like I hadn't seen it. That's totally rude. Just a few things [like] going and ordering your lunch at the tuckshop, sometimes the ladies get a bit funny for the first few days. . . .So you're really well spoken with your best manners so they sort of say to each other, "Oh, she's not so bad afer all." (Y1HT1)

The speaker's references to *"about thirty children. . .staring at us through the window",* and to *"sometimes the* [tuckshop] *ladies. . .[being] a bit funny for the first few days",* underscored her direct experience of how being defined in deficit terms and as 'foreign' shades seemingly inexorably into outright animosity and hostility. The same home tutor noted further:

A lot of the time our kids have learnt to stick up for themselves. They're like that – they stick together and they might fight with the other kids, but I don't think that I've ever seen our children go and actually pick it first. (Y1HT1)

Here the clear impression is that physical fights by local children directed at show children are an overt expression of more tightly controlled – but nevertheless real and powerful – feelings of hostility held by older community members towards the show people.

Similarly, one of the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers confirmed the persistence of this animosity towards show children:

They [show children] *tend to stick to themselves when they come into school normally, because the school kids perceive them to be something dijherent.* . .(Y2T1)

The teacher identified the show children's responses to this situation:

So they get a bit of a rough time at school sometimes, and they're made to feel dijherent, and they react. Some of them react; some of them are just so used to it that they're very nonplussed about the whole thing but don't do anything anyway. (Y2T1)

Here a wealth of attitudes and actions is conveyed by the deceptively simple statement that *"they're made to feel different"*. The other noteworthy reference is to the fact that *"some of them are just so used to it"*: being labelled as 'different', and this 'difference' leading to hostility and sometimes to physical conflict, is habitual for many show children – as well as for their parents. This habituation of 'difference' and animosity is a striking illustration of the construction of the show people's otherness.

A highly evocative dimension of the show people's otherness is the stereotypical view of them as 'dirty'. This is a visible sign of a presupposition that their itinerancy reduces their access to running water and washing facilities. More fundamentally, it evokes a notion of 'impurity' and the suspicion that their unwanted presence might defile the 'purity' of the 'normal' people living in the community. This association between being 'dirty' and threatening the host community's 'purity' has strong parallels with two other historically or habitually itinerant groups who are also

subjected to negative stereotypes: Gypsies (Liégeois, 1996, 1998) – whom I discuss below – and Jews (Rose, 1990, 1992).

One of the show parents commented on this stereotypical association with 'dirt':

> . . .*we get our reputation, which we're not very pleased with, from the people who work for us. Because they're the louder ones down the street; they're usually the ones that didn't have a* [shower] *before they went, and people say, "The showies are back in town", and they just recognise the people who work for us as being us. But usually they're the ones that wanted a move around lifestyle. . .but we're here in a business and we're here to stay. So that's not our reputation.* (Y4P5)

The workers' claimed habit of not showering before they go into town marks them out in a visible way for inspection by, and disapproval of, the townspeople, thereby reinforcing a negative stereotype based on rendering the show people as objects to be surveyed and thus controlled. This situation reflects the centre's configuration as a site cleansed of the 'impurity' of disorder (see also McVeigh's [1997] assertion that the *"very existence"* of nomadic people *"threatens, undermines, 'invades' sedentary identity"*, and that consequently those same people *"receive immediate and oppressive policing by the state in the interest of all sedentary people"* [p. 22]).

One of the home tutors also commented on this tendency of local people to attach negative valences to superficial appearances. He estimated that workers constitute

*. . .probably. . .fifty per cent **or** sixty per cent of what makes up the travelling show. .., and that's the outside that you see. And I suppose you'd see the tattoos and hair and pony tails and think, "Well!".* (Y3HT1)

Another home tutor also demonstrated her awareness of the deeper significance of looking 'dirty' and 'unwashed':

*. . .in the morning I'd wake up, have a shower, put makeup on, iron my clothes **or** anything, and I'd be standing there **for** – maybe if it was a busy show from eight o'clock in the morning and I'd have half an hour **for** lunch and by the time we'd hit seven o'clock when all the people started to arrive, I'd been standing **up** off the ground, I was lucky, I didn't have to stand right in the dust, but I looked absolutely filthy. You'd **look** horrible, you would, your clothes would be just full of dust, and the thing* [the joint that she had been tending] *might have broken down and you'd have grease all over you,. . .and all these local people, when they go to the show, they dress up really well, so they come out all neatly showered in their best clothes and they'd think that you're like a dirty scumbag **or** something. But you just can't do anything about it, and by the time it hits eleven o'clock you're just – you just look dreadful. It's funny.* (Y1HT1)

Again the link between the show people's appearance and deeply seated and irrational beliefs by local people about show people is clear and direct. The show people's appearance is thus an index of their definition as 'foreign', and their construction **as** 'other', to the mainstream community through which they are passing.

The perception that show people are 'dirty' is closely associated with the feeling that they cannot be trusted, and particularly that they are thieves. According to Broome with Jackomos (1998):

The initial ambivalence towards sideshows reflected the mixed feelings many had about show people themselves. Because they travelled from place to place and were not a settled people, they were distrusted. (p. 28)

They noted that *"There was an old country saying, only half in jest, 'lock up your daughters and your chooks* [chickens], *the showies are coming"'* (p. 29). They contrasted this with the more likely cause of theft at this time: *"Certainly crimes did occur at show time because of the large number of strangers in town"* (p. 29), with most of these crimes being attributable to professional criminals who saw the show as 'good cover' for their activities.

This stereotype of the show people as likely to engage in theft was recalled by Frank Foster, member of one of Australia's oldest show families:

You've got to remember that we show people get a lot of bad publicity. In days gone by when the show came into town people used to say, 'Pull your washing in and lock your daughters up'.

I remember on one occasion in this particular town where the showgrounds was close to a lot of houses, this young boy was over at the tap washing out his shirt when he saw a young girl in the garden next door and after they exchanged greetings he asked her if she would like to go to the pictures that night, and she told him she would have to ask her mother and the conversation went something like this, 'Mum there's one of these show blokes out here and he wants to take me to the

pictures', the reply was quick and final, 'You come inside and bring the cow with you!'. (Morgan, 1995, pp. 128-129)

This 'untrustworthy criminal' dimension of the show people's constructed otherness was evident in a show parent's claim that local people *"see what they want to see",* and that *"because of our itinerant nature – here today and gone tomorrow –. . .*[people are] *less likely to trust you"* (Y3P1). She conveyed her frustration at continuing prejudice against show people, leavened by occasional support from people of good sense:

> *. . .there are some people who don't even associate with showmen down in New South Wales and the week we were there their machine got broken into. But this person said that why blame the show just because we're here – it's more likely that they've – certain boys she mentioned – they've done it because they know the showmen are in the town.* (Y3P1)

Sometimes the combination of being perceived as 'dirty' and as 'thieves' shaded into a stereotyped association between show people and Gypsies. This association linked the show people's otherness to a much older and more concentrated aversion and prejudice in which Gypsies are typecast as unwashed outcasts, with devastating consequences for their educational access among other aspects of their quality of life (Liégeois, 1998). According to Broome with Jackomos (1998):

> *While the Showies' subculture was born out of positive and shared ideals, it partly depended on the negative feeling of being classed as outsiders. Some of this stemmed from the public's view that Showies*

were the same as Gypsies, although the Showies vehemently denied any

connection. (p. 42)

Pursuing this theme, an older show person contrasted *"our industry"* immediately after World War Two, *"when we had a lot of Gypsies in it and so forth",* with the current situation, when *"it's a pretty big one today in Australia",* largely because *"Through the Showmen's Guild now we've a very organised body of people"* (Y4P3). In other words, being *"organised"* was intended to counteract public perceptions that show people are like Gypsies, and therefore shiftless, untrustworthy and not contributing to the formal economy. This recalls de Certeau's **(1984)** insight that *"The 'proper'. . .is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place"* (p. 36). That is, the show people's efforts to impose order and routine on their seemingly random and unstable movements through the spaces of their itinerancy constitute an attempt to turn marginalised 'space' into valued 'place'.

A younger show person went further in insisting on a demarcation between show people and the negative images attributed by the public to Gypsies:

And then there's a few people that were of English Gypsy orientation, where that was in their blood. So how could it not – they were bad people but that was the way they were, and you can't do anything about that. And that was also part of our business because they were showmen from original, so we had to accept them. But they did the wrong thing. We also had to say, "Well, this and this is the rules". So we have had people who haven't represented us in our best interests over the years.

*So people may have built up their negative attitudes from one **or** two
incidents **or** something.* (Y4P5)

Again the implication is clear that local people's *"negativeattitudes"* are
irrational and based on stereotypes of the show people as 'different' and
'foreign', yet also that those *"negativeattitudes"* have a considerable and
enduring regrettable impact on the show people's capacity to live their lives as
they wish. Relatedly, as McVeigh (1997) pointed out, *"the subtlety of these
distinctions",* such as between show people and people *"of English Gypsy
orientation"* identified by the person cited in the previous paragraph, *"are
often lost on sedentary people with the power to define the 'whole vagrant
population"'* (**p.** 16). It is this very *"power to define",* and by implication to
devalue and elide the show people's own efforts *"to define",* their identities
that lies at the heart of the show people's marginalisation.

I have demonstrated in this section the relevance and the accuracy of de
Certeau's (1984) insight that strategies of marginalisation involve *"a mastery
of places through sight"* (p. *36).* From that perspective, the show people are
indeed *"foreign forces"* who have been transformed *"into objects that can be
observed and measured",* and who are thus subject to *"control"* and
inclusion within the 'proper's' *"scope of vision"* (p. **36).** Specifically, I have
argued that the show people's itinerancy leads directly to their being perceived
as 'strange', objects of pity and of animosity, 'dirty', untrustworthy and
likely to engage in theft, and similar to Gypsies. These perceptions recall
McVeigh's (1997) assertion:

Travellers are subject to a whole series of stereotypes which combine to render them hugely problematic: they are criminals by 'nature', they come from outside the community, they are dirty, they are dishonest, they are immoral and amoral and, most importantly, they are 'nomadic'. Most of these contemporary constructions of nomads draw on a long history of establishment fears about the travelling dispossessed and the threat they pose to the moral and political order. (p. **S)**

In combination, then, and from the perspective outlined by McVeigh (1997), the negative perceptions identified above mark out the show people as 'different' and construct them as 'other' to 'normal' and 'proper' settled society. This process is an extremely powerful instance of the operation of strategies of marginalisation against the show people.

5.5   Forms of unproblematic knowledge

In addition to experiencing, and suffering as a result of, absence of place and constructions of otherness, the show people have endured the third attribute of strategies of marginalisation identified by de Certeau (1984): forms of unproblematic knowledge. As de Certeau noted:

It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize in these "strategies" a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. Thus military or scientific strategies have

*always been inaugurated through the constitution of their "own" areas (autonomous cities, "neutral" **or** "independent" institutions, laboratories pursuing "disinterested" research, etc.). In other words,* a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge *and not merely its efect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge.* (p. *36*)

This account of forms of unproblematic knowledge signals the direct and immediate link between the show people's marginalised status and their educational experiences. From this perspective, schooling functions, not just to facilitate enlightenment or empowerment, but also as an ally of the strategies of marginalisation that deny show people a place and construct them as other to the rest of the community. This is the real significance of de Certeau's (1984) insight that "a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge *and not merely its effect **or** its attribute",* and that *"It produces itself in and through this knowledge".* In other words, formal education is never innocent or neutral, but rather reflects broader social forces. Whether education works against or for the show people depends in large part on the particular relationship between education and the marginalisation, resistance or transformation of the show people's identities.

How might superficially straightforward conditions of schooling be complicit in the show people's marginalisation? The answer lies in the link between those conditions and the two other attributes of marginalising strategies identified by de Certeau (1984): absence of place and constructions of otherness. Firstly, the show people's itinerancy, which involves their

movement in and out of spaces that are others' places, means that they are without places of their own and hence without the stability of identity, meaning and power that are the preserve of *"the 'proper"'* and that enable and underpin *"the foundation of an autonomous place"* (p. *36).* Secondly, the show people's absence of place renders them subject to the centre's surveillance, and to their own conversion from *"foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured",* and therefore liable to *"control"* and inclusion *"within its scope of vision"* (p. *36).* The show people's absence of place thus leads inexorably to the construction of their otherness.

Thirdly, the powerful forces that deny a place to the show people and construct them as other are the same forces that underpin *"a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place"* (p. *36).* This knowledge is accompanied by a host of assumptions, which become institutionalised and therefore naturalised, about the 'right' way for education to function in a late capitalist society generally, and in Queensland specifically. Two assumptions are particularly noteworthy in the context of the show people's marginalisation. The first is that schooling is rightly located in specific 'places' called 'schools', which are the officially sanctioned institutions for the dissemination of knowledge. A crucial corollary of this assumption is that the students and teachers who labour in schools themselves live in permanently resident situations – the 'rightness' of which is reflected in the school's equivalent location in a fixed place. The show people's absence of place clearly and dramatically puts them at a fundamental disadvantage in relation to schooling, which thereby contributes to their marginalised status. A striking illustration of this situation is the curriculum of the distance education packages, which are predicated on the assumption of

students having a fixed residence *(albeit* at a distance from 'the centre') and which are constructed in unsuitable ways for the show people's mobile lifestyle. Furthermore, the distance education curriculum generally conceives of the show children **as** 'blank slates' on which the curriculum needs to be inscribed, rather than as having a myriad of lived experiences and skills into which the distance educational materials should be fitted.

The second noteworthy assumption about schooling is that the understandings of the world held by those who occupy the places of 'the centre' are used **as** the basis for deciding who and what are 'normal' and who and what, on the other hand, deviate from those social 'norms'. There are no half measures here: you are either 'for us' or 'against us'. This thinking is what underlies the construction of a group's otherness: in some fundamental way 'they' are 'different' and hence are subject to 'our' surveillance and control (or else are overlooked and ignored by 'us'). Certainly for the show people, the stereotypes that position them as 'foreign' are fuelled by their patent inability to 'fit the norm' in terms of educational provision: their otherness creates a 'problem' that educational authorities must seek to resolve.

This analysis suggests strongly that the construction and dissemination of knowledge are tied to how that knowledge is encoded, mediated and delivered. Furthermore, the 'invisibility' of these processes portrays that knowledge **as** straightforward and unproblematic. From this perspective, it is 'obvious' that schools are located in permanent places, and that groups that differ from 'the norm' are 'other' to 'normal' citizens. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to demonstrate how these forms of unproblematic

knowledge, manifested in particular institutions of schooling, are inextricably imbricated in the show people's marginalisation.

This demonstration is pursued by means of analysing the limited educational options (including location and control of schooling) available to the show people before the establishment of the specialised program provided by the Brisbane School of Distance Education (which is discussed in detail in the next chapter). The unifying theme in the show people's recollections of these previous educational options is that, regardless of their respective 'pros' and 'cons', in combination these options revealed the existence of forms of unproblematic knowledge underpinned by powerful forces of marginalisation.

Prior to the establishment of the specialised program, show people's options for their children's education were restricted to six possibilities:

- sending their children to local schools along the show circuits

- sending their children to boarding schools

- not sending their children to local or boarding schools but instead teaching them correspondence lessons on the show circuits

- coming off the show circuits and finding alternative employment for the duration of their children's education so that the children could attend local schools

- remaining on the show circuits and sending their children to live with relatives and attend local schools

- not sending their children to school at all.

As will be seen below, each option had particular difficulties associated with it and was not considered the foundation of a long term solution to the show people's distinctive educational needs and aspirations. As one parent expressed the situation in relation to show life and Traveller education:

It's good. It's a good life and that for the kids. The only thing that really suffers with the kids is the lack of education, because you pretty well know before you have children what your opportunities are. It's either boarding school or correspondence or school to school. (Y4P2)

An older show person aptly conveyed the long term consequences of such educational neglect – virtually an entire generation of illiterate show people:

We know what it's like for our children to grow up and come and ask us questions about "Pop, or Dad, what's that word?". Sometimes we couldn't answer it because we never had much education. (Y4P3)

This situation was confirmed by a relative newcomer to the show circuits:

There was a time when a lot of showmen I don't think had any means of teaching their children, and if they couldn't afford to send them to school, they didn't get the schooling at all. (Y2P5)

As with many of the quotations below, this utterance reflected neither 'inverted pride' nor 'special pleading'. It was not easy for show people to talk about their own formal illiteracy, but they considered it necessary to convince educational researchers such as myself of the extent of the educational marginalisation arising from their itinerancy. They also used it as a 'rallying

cry' among themselves to articulate their expectations for more appropriate educational provision and to devise tactics to bring such provision about.

5.5.1 Sending show children to local schools on the show circuits

With regard to the show people's option of sending their children to local schools along the show circuits, their references to that option reflected the operation of the marginalising educational 'norms' associated with that option. For example, one of the key people in lobbying for the new program had a clear recollection of the situation that existed prior to the program's introduction.

> [Before the program] *the choices that were available to the parents were basically zilch. They* [the children]*just went from school to school and there was no continuity or gauge on what the kids were doing, so they got to a certain age and lost interest very quickly.* (Y1P2)

Here the reference to the absence of a *"continuity or gauge"* demonstrated the speaker's acknowledgment that such a *"continuity or gauge"* was a pedagogical device commonly used by teachers to monitor their students' learning. The emphasis on its absence exemplified the educational corollary of the show people's absence of place: that absence meant that the option of show people's sending their children to local schools was educationally unsound.

Another show person described the difficulties of show children attending local schools when the show was in town and trying to join in the lessons of the non-itinerant children.

But sometimes it wasn't even for a week. You see, this is a short week here, sometimes it was only for three days. . . .If you arrived late on Sunday night, say one or two [o'clock] *in the morning, you wouldn't even get up to send the kids to school the next day. The kids wouldn't get up, so then it might only be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And then. . .there was a holiday for the show. And I suppose the teacher thought, "Well, what can I teach this kid in three days? I won't worry about it", so they didn't. And then they did their correspondence at the school. That was a little bit better - but this is a lot better. . . .Before that, the kids just went to boarding school. They just went to school from town to town until they were about ten and then they went to boarding school.* (Y1P1)

The speaker's reference to what *"the teacher thought"* reflected her implicit awareness of a particular form of unproblematic knowledge about schooling: the assumption that learning could take place only with the continuity and routine of permanently resident students going to school in the same place for an extended time. The other aspect of this interview statement to emphasise is the speaker's equal awareness that the show people's own continuity and routines were 'at odds' with the school's operations, and that accordingly their children suffered educationally from the lack of 'fit' between the two systems.

An older show person remembered a time when boarding school was not an option for parents:

None of us could afford boarding school. We couldn't afford it, and again when we came to town, you'd take your children to a school and nine times out of ten they were put down the back of the class. And they were given a little project to do while they were there for two or three days. They learn very little this way. (Y4P3)

Two young parents remembered their own experiences of (not) learning under those circumstances:

I was only a kid, so you'd be getting the same thing over and over again. They didn't know what to do with you. They had you for a week, so they would sit you up there and do the best they could. . . .(Y4P6)

I did the same project on New Zealand at five different schools. So there's how you could get away with it. I was familiar with the work. They'd say, "We're doing a project". "Oh, I can do a project on New Zealand". I did the same one. (Y4P5)

But that's what you had to do. (Y4P6)

Because that was what was making the teachers happy, but that wasn't teaching me anything. I got to know my project down pat. And that happened often. You'd say, "I know how to read this book", and you'd just read that book. And you'd only do the things that you were familiar with, that you had confidence with. (Y4P5)

Then you'd go to school, and all the kids would be in a school uniform, and you'd come in there, and it was pretty heart breaking. I used to cry all the way. My mother used to get upset. I bet she felt like saying, "Don't worry about it". But she did it. (Y4P6)

This interchange demonstrated starkly two key components of the show people's past educational experiences. Firstly, the institution of schooling constructed knowledge as unproblematic, a construction that fuelled its representatives' assumptions about the necessary conditions of learning. This process helped to explain the fact that the teachers *"didn't know what to do with you":* the show children deviated from the 'norm' of permanently resident students whom the teachers had been trained to instruct. Because the teachers' professional knowledge was regarded **as** unproblematic and had not been subjected to scrutiny or critique, the 'problem' was projected onto the itinerant children, and the teachers discharged their responsibility when *"they would sit you **up** there and do the best they could"*. Another example of this unproblematic knowledge was the assumption that students should wear school uniform, to identify them more closely with the single educational institution that they would attend and mark them **as** not attending another school.

The second key component of the show people's past educational experiences manifested in this exchange was a corollary of the first: the pervasive influence of forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge led directly to experiences that were marginalising and harmful for the show people. Both speakers' intense frustration was redolent in their exchange: experiences that occurred more than twenty years earlier were recalled with

vivid clarity. *"Getting the same thing over and over again"*, being permitted to do *"only...the things that you were familiar with"* and *"coming in there"* without a school uniform, so that *"it was pretty heart breaking"*, were graphic illustrations of the sustained and deleterious impact of this option on the show people's educational experiences.

Other parents also recalled the social rather than the educational drawback of this situation. One mother referred to show children *"Going in shy, having to walk into a* class *with thirty other kids and not know any* [of them]*"* (Y1P2). According to another parent:

> *...I remember what it was like. It wasn't too bad when there were other kids and that. But when you were the only one by yourself it was the worst feeling in the world. You're standing up there in front of all the* class *and you have to say your name and* *"Hello", and what you do. You just stand there and cry. It was just the worst feeling. ...I think I used to hate that. It was horrible.* (Y4P2)

The speaker explained that, largely as a result of this recurring situation, *"I just went to sixth class. That was my education"* (Y4P2).

This is another example of the conflict between unexamined assumptions about schools and teaching on the one hand and the show people's itinerancy and identities on the other. Unproblematic pedagogical knowledge suggests that introducing new students publicly to the class helps to make them feel welcome and lets other students know something about them. However, for the show people, this practice brought into unhelpful alliance their absence of place and their construction as other in an educational setting. One result of

this alliance was that the local students' stereotypical views of show people were strengthened by this process of literally subjecting the itinerant children to their uncomprehending gaze, because the show children were not in town long enough to develop meaningful relationships that would break down those stereotypes. The other result was the inducement of *"just the worst feeling"* in the show children, who *"would just stand there and cry"* at having their exotic foreignness publicly displayed in this uncompromising fashion.

Another show parent explained that learning with her daughter, rather than her own educational experiences, had equipped her with formal literacy skills: *"I never went into school; I just went from school to school. I never learnt to read and write, so I've been learning since I've been teaching. . .[my daughter]* ·· (Y2P1).

A member of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia synthesised these debilitating educational experiences this way:

> **. . .***Going to school once every couple of weeks, and being told, "Draw that picture there", and the next school, "Draw that picture". "But I drew it at the last school." "Well, draw it again, you'll get good at it." So of course by the time the end of the run came, we had a lot of brilliant artists, and in the top brackets of the teams, we had some very good artists. And that's not a ridiculous statement; it's true, because that's all they did. They painted pictures. All day they drew pictures, all day they traced, all day. They're brilliant signwriters and everything like that, and we've got some wonderful people who can paint out there. But of course, let's be realistic.* (Y4P1)

The form of unproblematic knowledge being emphasised here was the pedagogical presumption that 'practice makes perfect'. Being told to *"draw it again, you'll get good at it"* reflected an uncritical assumption that the best way to occupy the limited time of these itinerant children was to assign to them a generic activity that would not distract the rest of the class and that might give them a skill that they might eventually be able to use in their future occupations. The lack of coherent connection with the show children's learning before or after they entered that school was presumed to be beyond the teacher's capacity to address. This practice also tells us something about the show children's perceived 'right' to knowledge: all that they were being offered was mastery of a task that is rated very lowly in schools and society. (The speaker's concluding injunction, *"...let's be realistic"*, reflected the show people's awareness of the limited value of that task and laid the groundwork for their resistance of such inadequate schooling provision, as the next chapter demonstrates.)

The option of show people keeping their children with them and sending them to local schools along the show circuits was clearly not effective. Limitations included recurring discontinuity in the children's learning and a reinforcement of the show children's sense of marginalisation and alienation from 'mainstream society'. The speakers' recollections of efforts to make this option succeed were filtered through their explanations of how life on the show circuits works. The lack of 'fit' between the two systems reflected and reinforced the show people's absence of place and their construction as other to 'the centre', and it also highlighted the negative impact of the way that schooling institutions represent knowledge in unproblematic ways to which people must conform.

5.5.2   Sending show children to boarding schools

Another previous option available to show people in educating their children was to send them to boarding schools. One parent described her family's experiences and perceptions of exercising this option:

> *Oh, I don't like boarding school. . . .My dad, he went to boarding school, and he didn't like it. So he never sent me to boarding school for that reason. And. . .* [my daughter] *nearly went to boarding school, but she said no, she's too young. So I pulled out of that idea. . . .Because I didn't like the idea of sending her away. I thought it's silly to have kids and then send them away for half their life.* (Y4P2)

Another parent recalled the pressures on her family when she was growing up in relation to pursuing the boarding school option:

> *. . .my mum had been to board and so had my father, but we. . .*[have] *a very close family network; your family is your friends and your workmates. So it's difficult with your children being away from you.* (Y4P5)

A member of the Showmen's Guild expressed many Guild members' attitudes to boarding school education this way:

> *"We're going to watch. . .*[our children] *grow up once every six months if we send them away to a boarding school." And showmen are a very close knit community, and they want their families with them all the time. . . .". . .and we've got to not send our kids away to boarding school for the first twelve years of their life. We want them with us. . .".* (Y4A1)

Regardless of whether show people are more of *"a very close knit community"* than other groups, and despite the fact that a number of show people have attended prestigious Australian boarding schools, these speakers effectively conveyed their resentment that parental concerns to maximise their children's educational success would 'direct' them to pursue an option that physically separated family members. Furthermore, it was implicitly acknowledged that this option was not available to many show people owing to the high costs involved. Again the real point to emphasise is that knowledge that is assumed to be unproblematic about the nature of 'normal' school students and their families is found to exclude and devalue the show people's itinerant lifestyle and the associated restrictions on available options for educating their children.

5.5.3   Teaching show children correspondence lessons on the show circuits

Another educational option previously available to show people was not sending their children to local or boarding schools but instead teaching them correspondence lessons as they travelled along the show circuits. One show person also believed that correspondence schooling, without the children attending local schools in different towns, had several problems.

> *I don't know how the parents managed with the correspondence. I couldn't have done it. I think you've got to have a lot of patience to do correspondence with your own kids. I mean, to be a mother and a teacher, and the kids just saying, "Well, I'm not doing it". If you're a*

teacher, you can say, "Yes, you are", but if you're the mother you just don't seem to be able to do anything about it. I've seen plenty of people nearly fall apart trying to do correspondence. It must be really hard. **(Y1P1)**

Another parent recalled her own mother's efforts to educate her siblings and herself via correspondence lessons:

Well, my mother used to want to kill us, but I mean, we had to persevere; but we did do it. . . .But no, I have been on correspondence all my life. I haven't got a bright education, but I do know enough to get me by. Which unfortunately for my kids, that wouldn't be enough in this day and age. I'd like them to have a little bit more, **(Y4P4)**

Her marginalising experiences of correspondence education prompted her to make alternative arrangements for educating her own children:

. . .I have a nine and a seven year old. And they have done correspondence for a few years on the circuit with me. I am a single mum. I'm bred and born on the showgrounds. And as you can see, I've got another generation coming up in the world. It was hard. I persevered with working and that with them, but only could fit an hour or two in. **(Y4P4)**

Another parent recalled her own experiences studying via correspondence lessons:

My aunty was a correspondence teacher, my dad's sister. It was really hard. They put us on it when we were kids but we were hopeless. It was too hard. (Y2P1)

Another parent remembered her mother's efforts to provide correspondence lessons for her siblings and herself

I just remember my mum had such a hard time. . . .And she'd try and do her best, but there were six *children in our family. And she could notice that we were missing* [out on education], *so she took on correspondence* **for** *about twelve months, and she had* **four** *kids in* **four** *different grades, and two toddlers running around underneath her. And it's just horrendous. It's not a way – you know, people can say, "Well, you set aside time". My mum was feeding* **four** *men that were out working. So meal times were solid times when she was working. And then she was also selling* **for** *us. We didn't have much money; she was trying to get everything as much as we could. So it wasn't easy at all. She was prepared to work the extra hours and do as much as she could, but still she felt her children were missing* [out on education]. (Y4P5)

She recalled also her own impatience with some of the content of the correspondence lessons that she had completed:

When they send you correspondence, there's so much junk, like crafts and stuff. We're not lacking in that stuff because we're setting up and we've got vision and we've got scope in what we're doing in our work. So it's not really **of** *value, if you know what I mean. It's the bulk* **of** *your school work* [that is important]. (Y4P5)

The reference to *"so much junk, like crafts and stuff"* reinforces my earlier point that the show people's mobility positions them 'outside' the assumptions and understandings of educational providers, whose constructions of 'legitimate' knowledge are seemingly unable to encompass clients who routinely move from place to place and who, despite or because of that circumstance, have different but equally valid patterns of knowledge construction.

These recollections construct show parents – almost without exception mothers – as valiantly struggling to educate their children via correspondence lessons that they had to incorporate into a myriad of competing and stressful demands on their time and energies. Implicit in the recollections were the point that many mothers themselves lacked high levels of formal literacy, and the presumption that many show adults and children attached far less priority to formal schooling than to the exigencies of working 'on the run'. Within the spaces of their itinerancy, then, correspondence lessons had an 'alien feel' about them and did not 'fit' into the rhythms and routines of life on the show circuits. This reinforces the proposition that education does not occur in the kind of vacuum – or in the type of discrete place – that curriculum documents often assume. This also demonstrates once again the fundamental point that, rather than being 'natural' and 'universal', existing forms of schooling are designed in ways that privilege some groups over others. In this case, knowledge is encoded, mediated and delivered in forms that work to disadvantage those whose itinerancy creates an absence of place and constructs their otherness – the show people. The 'alien feel' about this educational option is therefore an accurate index of the extent of their marginalisation.

5.5.4 Show people coming:off the circuits and sending:their children to local schools

Although it was theoretically an option for show parents to withdraw from the show circuits for the duration of their children's schooling and send the children to local schools while the parents found alternative employment, very few interviewees referred to this option. One show parent explained partly why this was so:

It breaks yourfamily up if you decide to stay in a house and send your children to school. . .[But] economics push you to that sometimes. If you've got three or four children you can't afford to send all of them to boarding school. And i you haven't got any facilities to do it at home, and if you were trying to work and do correspondence, it's really difficult. (Y4P5)

Another parent concurred

Well, I knew what choices I had, and I didn't want to have to settle down to send. . .[my son) to school, as in leave our business and our home and his father. I knew that wasn't on the books. (Y1P2)

Partly her determination not to pursue this option derived from her mother's experiences of pursuing the option for the speaker's siblings and herself:

...once all of us were school age, mum had to leave [the showgrounds] *and come home to send us all to school – which was very hard on mum and dad. They stuck it out together; they're still together. But it was really hard on them, and I'm so glad that we don't have to do that.* (Y1P2)

This educational option not only had economic and social drawbacks but also constituted a profound if indirect attack on the show people's itinerancy. The logic underlying the option was that it was not possible to work as a show person and at the same time receive an equitable education for one's children. The fact that a few speakers referred to their parents having considered pursuing the option reflected their willingness to 'try anything' that could potentially maximise their children's educational outcomes. More broadly, this option demonstrates with considerable starkness the marginalising impact of umproblematic assumptions about how knowledge should be constructed and disseminated to students. In particular, it reinforces the argument pursued in this section of the chapter that the show people's itinerancy constructs them as unable to conform to the narrow conceptions of how the institution of schooling functions and how children and parents must function in relation to that institution.

5.5.5   Sending show children to live with relatives and attend local schools

Another option previously available to show people in educating their children was for them to remain on the show circuits and to send their children to live with relatives and attend local schools. An older show person explained the situation that caused her to send her children to live with her sister-in-law:

> *Well, I had them* [her children] *on correspondence for a while, and then they went away. My husbands' sfortunately got a sister who lives on. . .a property. And they went to school at her place before they were old enough to go to boarding school.* (Y4P1)

She elaborated on the reasons for taking this action:

> *. . .When. . .I first started out, it was very busy for us. We had about seven men who I had to cook for. I had to drive a truck. I had to work on the trailer. And I had three children very close together, thirteen and seventeen months apart. And it was pretty hard. I thought that it was probably better to give them that early schooling by sending them away to. . .* [her sister-in-law]. *Because I really couldn't cope with the correspondence.* (Y4P1) .

The speaker also reflected on the family disruption and emotional turmoil attendant on this decision, which were similar to the effects of sending children to boarding schools:

. . .you'd get yourself so worked up about it, but you sort of *had to be cruel to be kind. That was my way* of *looking at it. And. . .if I had my time over again now, there's no way in the world I would have sent them away. I'd keep them with me, and then persevere some way. But because we were young – and we were just* sort of *establishing our business in this life, in this business, it was* sort of *hard for us. You think you're doing all the right things at the time, but now if I had my time over again I wouldn't send my kids away. I'd employ a teacher, or. . .[go] without something to have a teacher travelling with us or something like that. To teach the kids. But I mean, you learn by your mistakes.* (Y4P1)

One of the mothers who described above how difficult she had found educating her children via correspondence lessons identified the option of sending her children to live with family members as a possible solution to the situation:

But then my mum and dad bought a property,. . .and my kids, they said to me, "Bring them down to me and I'll teach them there". So they've been there since one was six and the other was five, and they're doing all right, because it was too hard for me to work and look after my kids and give them a good education. (Y4P4)

Another parent explained the limitations of this option: *". . .if you've got family, you send them* [children] *to family, but even there you're still to me missing out on so much of their life"* (Y4P2).

Like the other options previously available to show people in educating their children, the option of sending their children to live with relatives and attend local schools had some benefits but more drawbacks. In particular, once again the implicit choice was between giving children a 'good education' by sending them away and keeping them on the show circuits but giving them an 'inferior education'.

Family separations of this kind are outside the comprehension of an education system predicated on students of fixed residence living and attending school in a single location. This is a stark reminder of the negative consequences for groups who lack a place of their own (in the de Certolian sense), and who are construed as 'exotic' and 'foreign'. The result is systemic marginalisation, through these kinds of restrictions on their educational options. This is once again a signal of the power that lies behind and below forms of knowledge – power that is invisible because it is constructed as 'natural' and 'neutral', but whose effects are felt in such ways as through family separations of this lund.

5.5.6   Not sending: show children to school at all

The final option previously available in the education of show children was for their parents not to send them to school at all. I encountered only one direct reference to this option, when one parent recalled:

No correspondence, no follow on with lessons, and it was go to this school because we had to. There was a couple of years there where we had terrible trouble with truant agents and stuff like that, which I

suppose there was [a] *need for. There were children who weren't going at all.* (Y4P5)

On the one hand, the reference to having *"had terrible trouble with truant agents"* evoked an image of further surveillance, with the show people once again being subject to the gaze of 'the centre' on account of their itinerancy, ostensibly in the name of ensuring that their children received equitable educational access. On the other hand, it is likely that these agents of the state lacked the requisite understandings of precisely why some show children and their parents would elect not to attend an institution that they found alien and disempowering. This option, therefore, encapsulates the 'second best' quality of the options previously discussed and represents what for many show people would have seemed the logical culmination of those options: if formal schooling refuses to accord us a legitimate place and constructs us **as** other, why should we be complicit in that process and thereby deprive our children of the educational opportunities to which they are entitled?

Finally in this account of the show people's previous educational experiences, an important point to emphasise is that a number of show people remembered individual teachers who did what they could to maximise the show children's educational experiences across the range of options selected by parents. For example, **an** older show person stated:

Now and again you'd get a dedicated teacher, who'd take them [show children] *in and try and do something **for** them. But then they'd only be there **for** two or three days, and* [then] *off again.* (Y4P3)

Another show person acknowledged:

And I will say sometimes you went [to school] *and the teacher was enthusiastic to try if you were willing to learn; the teacher was enthusiastic to try and give you something. But they realised it was. .*.[pointless]; *it was only a week and how much could they do? But you did have some.* (Y4P5)

She recalled a particular teacher who had taken a special interest in her education:

We did the Queensland run around Brisbane. And so mum found a school where she knew they were really interested in us. So she used to drive us from every show and we went to the same [school]. . . .*It was a Catholic school. And there was a Sister Maria, and she really took notice of me. And she spoke to my mother, and she used to keep me for an hour afer school for special remedial* [lessons]. *And also I used to go in playtimes to the principal's office for special remedial* [lessons]. *So because they made that effort my mum would drive us back, whether we were at Sandgate, whether we were at all the shows all around Brisbane, to that school. And we went solidly for three months, every year for three or four years. And I think that was a big thing for me, because I was older and they took more time with me.* (Y4P5)

In other words, show people consistently articulated their critique of their past educational experiences at the level of systemic failure rather than personal prejudice. The show people's responses to this perceived systemic

failure derived from earlier generations' educational experiences. According to a member of the Showmen's Guild:

> *And there was no education at the time. It was purely correspondence, but of course the parents before them were very poorly educated as well. ...And of course what happened then was when that generation started to have their children, then they realised suddenly that they didn't have an education, and they realised suddenly that they were illiterate and how hard it was for them to survive in the world that was new back in the early '70s,...'80s period. They realised...it's going to be much harder in the '90s and the next century to survive without an education, let alone how hard it is now for us. ...So they got their heads together obviously, and of course it's all history now, and that is the showmen's education program. And it basically developed from that sense of need from the parents' perspective that they said, "We don't want our kids to grow up without an education, and to have every opportunity possible – opportunities that weren't given to us during that '50s, '60s, '70s period". And of course, the Showmen's Guild is a perfect vehicle to establish that program through the government. (Y4A1)*

The significance of this statement is its demonstration that the show people's 'tactics of consumption', which are explored at length in the next chapter, have been a direct response to, and engagement with, their experiences of marginalisation. The valiant efforts of individual teachers notwithstanding, the six educational options previously available to the show people worked in alliance with their absence of place and their constructed otherness to locate them outside 'the fold' of educational provision and its associated

unproblematic assumptions about forms of knowledge. The result is that the show people lack *"the power to provide oneself with one's own place"*, that same power that *"produces itself in and through"* (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36) the same knowledge that operates to marginalise and exclude the show people from the ambit of schooling provision.

5.6　Review of the chapter

This chapter has sought to answer the first research question guiding this study: *"How do the show people experience marginalisation?"*. The question was predicated on the assumption that the show people's 'tactics of consumption' in relation to their educational experiences, which are the focus of this thesis, can be understood only against the backdrop of their persistent and pervasive marginalisation arising from their itinerancy. A further assumption was that, while some manifestations of that marginalisation are overt and visible, many are not, thereby necessitating the application of the study's conceptual framework to the research data in order to make clear and transparent what for many show people are unconscious − although no less deleterious for that − experiences of being 'on the margins' of the settled community.

The conceptual lens deployed to identify and critique the show people's marginalising experiences was de Certeau's **(1984)** notion of 'strategies of marginalisation', considered in combination with the concept of 'place'. **As** he pointed out:

> *In sum, strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical pieces (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed.* (p. *36*)

From this perspective, strategies, like places emanating from and supporting 'the centre', can be seen to place show people immediately at a fundamental disadvantage: their itinerancy renders them outside *"a proper"* and therefore without power. It is this lack of power as understood by 'the centre' that both leads to, and is reflected in, their marginalised status.

More specifically, the chapter examined the following three attributes of strategies of marginalisation identified by de Certeau (1984) in relation to the show people:

- The show people's absence of place locates them outside a fixed location, whose strategic importance lies in its association with determining who has power and who has not.

- The show people's itinerancy and absence of place render them liable to perception as 'exotic' and 'foreign', which leads to the construction of their otherness in relation to the settled community.

- The show people's absence of place and construction as 'other', derived from their itinerancy, place them in opposition to forms of unproblematic knowledge about the 'proper' location and provision of schooling, so that the six educational options previously available to them forced them to choose between maintaining their lifestyle and maximising their children's educational opportunities.

In combination, the show people's absence of place, the construction of their otherness and their having to conform to forms of seemingly unproblematic knowledge endorsed by late capitalist schooling are all dimensions and indexes of their marginalisation. The significance of that marginalisation is profound and cannot be overstated: it is at the same time the impetus for their 'tactics of consumption' and their moves towards transformation, and the set of 'levels' or 'marks' against which they judge the extent of their progress at resistance and transformation. The show people's marginalised status is therefore integral to their 'learning on the run'.