Chapter 3
Governing the Soul: The Theoretical Support of Michel Foucault

In the schematics of chapter arrangement, the positioning of this chapter is to create useful imagery about an already established relevance of Foucault's work to the conceptual frame of paradox and to suggest important support for what lies ahead. His work is here treated as exceeding the complementarity of its application in Chap. 2 to be considered epistemologically crucial to arguments made in the chapters which follow. The theoretical resources discussed in this chapter – built around the central concept of governmentality – are predominantly directed to my analysis of policy discourses of neoliberalism in Chap. 4 and the construction and representation of field data using paradox in Chaps. 6, 7 and 8. The deployment of Foucault's tools of *problematisation* and *critique* is held over until Chap. 4, when they are used to both inform and illuminate a struggle for the 'soul' of the principal.

In drawing from Foucault's formidable catalogue, I am conscious of the significant and heartfelt criticism, often levelled by his acolytes, of the opportunist efforts of authors and researchers to simplify, manipulate, exceed and even corrupt his work (see, e.g. criticism levelled by Peters & Besley, 2007). My intention in what follows is certainly to avoid this type of misappropriation. However, it also holds that selecting from a catalogue of such breadth, depth, density and ambiguity necessarily poses risks of simplification, fragmentation and misunderstanding. I aim to mitigate these risks, not only by close reading and diligent application of Foucault's original work but also by restricting my use of his theoretical resources to those with which I have been heavily engaged and which are closely aligned with the arguments of this book. Optimistically put, my aim is less a rattling around and more a purposeful raid on his famous 'toolbox'.

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The orientation of my choices is framed and delimited by a central concern with revealing, and intervening in, the constitutive politics of school principals. Within these parameters, I am interested in gaining theoretical support for thinking about both the instatement of the influential shaping forces of neoliberalism, as well as the possibilities for working beyond and against its rational and taken-for-granted operations. Set in the wider field, my research seeks to engage with, and make a contribution to, the Foucauldian strand of critical leadership studies. In this work, I cast myself as an interlocutor with a small group of authors – many of whom are cited in this chapter – who use Foucault's work and apply his concepts to critiquing and disrupting conventional positivist accounts and to gathering, after Niesche (2011), 'more nuanced, theoretically rigorous understandings of the complexities faced by school leaders' (p. 139).

Foucault (1977b) captures the orientation of these interests in one of the few direct references to paradox in his work. In the context of what he terms the 'dreary succession of the identical' that flows from the generality of common sense, he asks:

> What if thought freed itself from common sense and decided to function only in its extreme singularity? What if it adopted the disreputable bias of the paradox, instead of complacently accepting its citizenship in the *doxa*? What if it conceived of difference differently, instead of searching out the common elements underlying difference? (p. 182)

He further claims that common sense, in its homogenising work of specification and repetition, exerts a particular subjectivity that eschews the thoughts of the errant individual and turns 'away from mad flux and anarchic difference' in order to establish 'the universality of the knowing subject' (p. 182). Foucault's entreaty to paradox not only links his work to the conceptual framing of my project but also shapes the approach taken in this chapter to the sorting and taking up of his theoretical resources. This approach takes Foucault's question as an important call to understand the forces at play that hold common sense in place and to contemplate what it would take to 'pervert good sense and allow thought to play outside the ordered table of resemblances' (Foucault, 1977b, p. 183).

In what might appear something of a backwards reading of Foucault's vast oeuvre, I organise my explanation around the concept of governmentality. This portmanteau creation, a fusing of 'government' with 'mentality', was developed as part of Foucault's late-career interest in 'how government is justified and rationalised' (Gillies, 2013, p. 68) and, according to Dean (2002), 'best summarises the multiple directions of his thoughts' at this time (p. 174). In accounting for my use of Foucault's work, governmentality is taken as a concept that is central to principal subjectivity and as shaping related ideas of power, discourse, truth and ethics.

I commence by describing how Foucault's (2008) understanding of governmentality as the 'conduct of conduct' brings the simultaneous operations of politics and ethics into play and creates a unique 'grid' for analysing these modern relations of power (p. 186). This is not to suggest that 'government' now replaces 'power' as a methodological target, but, rather, that the shift to governmentality necessitates a focus on both the diffuse sources of power – beyond the state – that go to governing

the conduct of individuals and populations and the specific and complex conditions under which this type of government is made possible.

Governmentality

In the fourth of his 1978 lectures in *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault (2007) describes governmentality as an 'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' (p. 108). Here, Foucault advances a broader and more pervasive form of government by adding everyday, informal political endeavours to the power of the state and its institutions, thus expanding the processes traditionally understood as shaping the individual. This expanded meaning is arguably the most influential aspect of bringing a governmentality approach to my project, as it takes the governmental process of conducting conduct to include both 'endeavours to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others' as well as 'the ways in which one might be urged and educated to bridle one's own passions, to control one's own instincts, to govern oneself' (Rose, 1999, p. 3).

Govern-mentality, following Lemke (2002), makes reference to government 'in a comprehensive sense' that exceeds the current 'political meaning' by 'adumbrating the close link between forms of power and processes of subjectification' (p. 50). In turn, this link helps reveal how government of the self and others is constituted, influenced and directed by what Foucault terms a *dispositif* or assemblage of institutions, programmes, procedures and calculations. Here the term dispositif describes a heterogeneous ensemble of discursive and nondiscursive practices that work to constitute the world in fixed and discernible ways. Foucault's dispositif is explained and deployed more fully later in this chapter and in Chap. 4.

Dean (2010) asserts that a governmentality perspective 'seeks to connect questions of government, politics and administration to the space of bodies, lives, selves and persons' (p. 20). This notion of self-government usefully supports an understanding of how governments act by implementing particular rationalities and mechanisms by which principals' conduct is influenced and dictated and how these practices make a particular version of the principal thinkable and viable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it is practised.

Foucault's genealogies described a range of different rationalities of government from different historical periods, including those associated with pastoral, sovereign and police power and, with the emergence of liberalism, as a 'form of critical reflection on governmental practice' (Foucault, 2008, p. 321). Links between these rationalities and some of my key arguments remain relevant and are variously applied in the following chapters. However, my predominant interest is in the emergence of the model social state under a form of governmentality that Foucault introduces in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) as 'neoliberal governmentality' (p. 192).

Neoliberalism: A Distinctive Governmentality

Drawing on Bailey (2013), neoliberalism, as a rationality of government, reflects a particular 'mentality of rule' which 'rearticulates classic liberal concerns for limited government, economic freedoms and individual responsibility' (p. 816). Positioned as a politics of 'not governing too much' (Foucault, 2008, p. 17), this *neoliberal governmentality* is, accordingly, described by Rose, O'Malley and Valverde (2006) as creating a 'problem space' which is concerned with 'new ways of thinking about and seeking to enact the government of freedom' (p. 92).

The paradoxical qualities of the phrase 'government of freedom' are dissolved in the interpretation, following Foucault (2008) – as well as in Rose (1999), Dean (2010) and Dardot and Laval (2014) – that, in neoliberal times, freedom is not opposed to government but rather becomes a *strategy of* governing. Understood in this way, subjects are required and obliged to adopt a certain set of freedoms that are made possible and shaped within government. For example, calls for individuals to become autonomous, entrepreneurial and self-monitoring and self-possessed are made to further the aspirations of government. They represent an exemplary exercise of what Foucault (2008) describes as 'biopower', as they respond to the population problematic by 'distributing the living in the domain of value and utility' (Foucault, 1978, p. 144) in order to control and regulate the population as a resource to be manipulated and optimised.

Neoliberal governmentality is not marked by a withdrawal or retreat from state control and intervention, but rather by new acts of subterfuge, incentive and 'steering at a distance' (Kickert, 1991 in Ball, 2006, p. 10) and by taking subjectivity as one of its key modes of power (see Protevi, 2009). The technologies and institutions of governmental power now develop, conjoin and operate in the guise of more benign and apolitical processes. They steer the performance of individuals and groups by processes of measurement, appraisal and comparison – they incite people to govern themselves and posit an 'artificially arranged' liberty (Lemke, 2012, p. 45) by championing entrepreneurial and competitive instincts. In short, thinking with Bailey (2013), they fold the 'mundane and everyday practices and conducts' of individuals 'in with the requirements and exigencies of the state' (p. 816).

Applied to the pressures shaping principals, the constrained freedoms of neoliberal governmentality are a resource of government that implicate principals directly in ruler ambitions and, therefore, are significant to understanding their contemporary make-up. Neoliberal governmentality reveals a new marking out of constitutive and constraining powers – an elucidation of a political rationality that shapes principals and their work 'through the coalescence of circumstances of their everyday lives' (Springer, 2012, p. 139). The subjectivities available to the principal are under the constant influence of a power/knowledge apparatus that confers particular privilege and primacy on principals and imbues them with certain knowledge and expertise while, at the same time, imposing restrictions on what they can think, say and do.

More forensically, neoliberal governmentality allows in what Rose (1999) terms 'a technological rationalisation of the human soul … a reduction of human subjec-

tivity and creativity to that which can be acted upon in the interest of government' (p. 54). As these new 'technologies of power' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18) do their objectifying work, principals enact their subjection as if an obvious and conscious choice and a matter of their own free will. These technologies manifest in practice, for example, in the pressing and essential status attached to new work principals are urged to undertake, in the replacement of coercive and prescriptive controls on the principal with more surreptitious tactics of empowerment and responsibilisation (see Wright, 2012) and in the attachment of their success and survival to principles of self-enterprise and market awareness.

Foucault's genealogical accounts in the lectures that comprise the *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) provide historical background and a governmentality perspective that forms a telling and prescient backdrop to understanding the novelty of modern-day neoliberalism. However, I do not take them as giving me direct and immediate licence to embark on a critical analysis of the political rationality of neoliberalism or the logics of associated policies. In fact, Foucault's relatively brief presentations about neoliberalism in these lectures give little direct encouragement to critical scholars. Flew (2012) notes that the 'excoriating critique' of neoliberalism was actually left to 'contemporary interlocutors' working from Foucault's relatively 'non-judgemental commentary' (p. 59).

My own orientation towards critical analysis seeks to work into a more ambiguous and empirical political space. It is founded on Foucault's recurring question, in his exposé of liberal modes of governmentality, about what amounts to 'too much', 'too little' or 'just enough' government (e.g., Foucault, 2008, p. 17). In repeatedly posing this question within the broader thematic of governmental reason (or *raison d'État*), Foucault draws attention to shifts in the technologies of power over the course of his broader project on the arts of liberal government. More particularly, Foucault (1987) expands on the strategic possibilities in governmentality for the self-governing individual when he says:

> Governmentality implies the relationship of self to self … in the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other … the notion of governmentality allows one, I believe, to set off the freedom of the subject and the relationship to others, i.e., that which constitutes the very matter of ethics. (pp. 130–131) ma

It is this reference to an ethics based on the freedom of the subject implied by governmentality that directs more productive elements of my critical work and shifts analysis of the constitutive influences on principals closer to what Orr (2010) terms 'the contours of an effective counter-politics' (p. 550). I now turn my attention to the possibilities afforded by an ethics of self-care founded in what Foucault (1988b) termed 'technologies of the self'[1].

[1] This shift to 'technologies of the self' garners support from Connolly's (2002) insistence that 'one needs to examine established tactics of self-identity … by exploring the means by which one has become constituted as what one is, by probing the structures that maintain the plausibility of those configurations, and by analyzing from a perspective that problematizes the certainty of one's self-

Technologies of the Self, Ethics and Practices of Freedom

Springer (2012) describes a form of 'neoliberal subjectivation' (p. 139) that can be interpreted, using Foucault (1982), as the process of subjecting individuals to relations of power that both subjugate them 'to someone else by control and dependence' as well tying them to their own identity 'by a conscience or self-knowledge' (p. 781).[2] Accordingly, while technologies of power under conditions of neoliberal governmentality may be shown to have a powerful subjugating influence on principals, it is through an interpretation of governmentality as bringing out the freedom of the subject (Foucault, 1987) that new possibilities may emerge in governing of the self. Foucault (1988b) describes 'technologies of the self' as permitting:

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

In the more empirically oriented chapters which follow, I highlight evidence of these technologies of the self being deployed in the field. I link these technologies to the efforts described by principal participants in my research to make decisions about the sort of subject they would like to be and to fit themselves around and against the subjectifying outside influences of neoliberal discourses. Skinner (2012) captures this interpretation when she says, 'technologies of the self provide an intervention mechanism on the part of active subjects, injecting an element of contingency to everyday encounters and alleviating the determinist effect that technologies of power would have otherwise' (p. 918).

Dean (2002) claims that, in governmentality, Foucault 'defines a novel thought-space across the domains of ethics and politics' (p. 174). In working further into this space in Chaps. 5, 7 and 8, I use the conjoined notions of *spaces* and *practices* of freedom to propose a form of ethics that imagines principals directing their thinking, as a type of 'caring for self' (Foucault, 1987) – a critique of their own discursive conditions and of the techniques and practices that shape their subjectivity. Further, I contend an ethics that enables taken-for-granted assumptions to be challenged and alternative views to be entertained, tested and publicly shared. This work draws from Foucault's (1987) claim, based on his genealogical analysis of Greco-Roman ethics, that:

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identity the effects these structures and tactics have on others' (p. 9–10) . Connolly brings a 'Foucaultian care for identity and difference' (in conjunction with a Nietzschean affirmation of the 'abundance of life') to what he terms an 'ethic of cultivation' (p. 10–11).

[2] 'Subjectivation' (sometimes translated as 'subjectivisation') is a word coined by Foucault and used in his post-1981 writings, to refer to 'the process by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 253). In his earlier writings, Foucault gave the existing French word *assujettissement* a similar meaning.

> in order to behave properly, in order to practice freedom properly, it was necessary to care for self, both in order to know one's self … and to improve one's self, to surpass one's self, to master the appetites that risk engulfing you. (p. 116)

My use of ethics remains fully awake to the powerful constitutive elements of neoliberal discourse and understands that the bodies of knowledge, belief and opinion in which principals are immersed require and form particular technical 'mentalities' that are not usually open to question by those who use them (Nicoll & Fejes, 2008, p. 12). In taking this ethics as a type of agonistic mobilisation of freedom, I do not consider the principal a docile subject awaiting determination by formidable political technologies. Rather, I take the 'conduct of conduct' in neoliberal governmentality as both penetrating deeply into the souls of individuals and calling them to action – exerting on them an urgent and formidable demand to make themselves agile, flexible and enterprising – as well as inviting them to 'practices of self' (Foucault, 1987, p. 122) that require them to take active responsibility for their own choices, expertise and susceptibilities and to watch, measure and audit the value they return to their schools.

The point of my focus on ethics, when set inside of and against neoliberal governmentalities, is to surface different spaces for, and practices of, principal freedom and to introduce the prospect of a struggle over principal subjectivity. In the apparent asymmetry of such a struggle, the processes of governmental shaping and constituting of principals are treated as bringing some contingency to overdetermined readings and, towards the use of a paradox interpretive lens, enabling the conception of alternative meanings and practices.

In the multiple moves out from this central concept of governmentality, Foucault's resources for understanding subjectivity are most closely aligned to the needs of my project. These are now expounded in two broad categories – (i) discourse and power/knowledge and (ii) the operations of power.

Discourse and Power/Knowledge

Central to the understanding of governmentality and the constituting of the principal subject are what Foucault (1972) describes as 'discursive formations' (p. 133). To reiterate, these formations derive from groups of statements in discourses that appear to cohere as uniform, meaningful and influential knowledge fields. The reason for bringing this theoretical postulate to my research is illuminated by Foucault's (1972) claim that analysis of discursive formations 'opens up a quite contrary direction: it wishes to determine the principle according to which only the "signifying" groups that were enunciated could appear' (p. 134). In the context of my research, discursive formations prompt consideration of how uniformity in discourse allows order and regularity to be discerned in the practices of government thus preparing the way for policy responses by (i) normalising and naturalising a particular cluster of meanings (Clarke, Bainton, Lendvai, & Stubbs 2015, p. 20); (ii) delineating

knowledge in ways that constrain what can be said and who can say it; and (iii) shaping problems in ways that 'subvert progressive intent' and, in doing so, restrict allowable solutions and resist attempts at change (Bacchi, 2000, p. 47).

This signifying group principle in discursive formations is articulated in my project through Foucault's renowned bracketing of power and knowledge in order to turn discourses into 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980c, p. 131). Perhaps Foucault's best-known treatise on the inextricable relations of power/knowledge is in *Discipline and Punish* (1977a), where he is concerned with the emergence, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of a modern and insidious type of power – 'disciplinary power' –and its capacity to generate detailed knowledge of the individual from its practices of discipline, surveillance and constraint. It is out of this entanglement that he claims that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another' (p. 27). A discourse depends for its power on the knowledge it constructs but, at the same time, this knowledge confers power on the discourse. Applied more directly to the connecting of the discursive constitution of principals, Bevir (1999) notes that power and knowledge 'interpenetrate within specific regimes that provide the modes of subjection, and also liberation, through which subjects constitute themselves' (p. 66).

Foucault (1980c) says that each society has its regimes of truth:

> the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

In these regimes of truth, distinctions between true and false, derived from the imbrication of power and knowledge, have the effect of fixing popular discourses in a time and place and giving them an outward appearance of impenetrability.

In utilising power/knowledge, I take Foucault's concept of the dispositif as usefully adding the component of calculation to power/knowledge pairings in discourse. The concept of dispositif refers to the complex and heterogeneous mixture of discursive and nondiscursive elements that are put into place 'as a result of calculations aiming to constitute the world in a determinate way' (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 110). Premised on the nonexistence of universals, they are apparatuses of power/knowledge that mark out reality according to a particular determination of the division between true and false. In my efforts to think and think differently about principal subjectivity in the chapters that follow, I work to critique expressions of power/knowledge in persuasive regimes of truth and in the dispositifs that mark out a neoliberal version of the principal subject.

Foucault (1972) says, of the analysis of discourse, it 'operates between the twin poles of totality and plethora' (p. 134). Such a description captures much of the order and intent of the analysis of neoliberal policy discourses which follows (see Chap. 4). Here, I am concerned, in the first instance, with the totalising qualities of dominant discourses and the principles that instate them as essential and permanent and which underplay and obscure their indeterminacy and contingency. It is in this type of analysis that regimes of power/knowledge can be seen as simultaneously

carrying acceptable versions of the 'truth' while working to hide their essentially political character and subjectivising tendencies. These suggestions of domination run the risk of creating a simplified image of power departing from the top on a linear and downward course to principals in schools. Such an understanding fails to engage with the plethora of discursive possibilities within and beyond dominant discourses. It is therefore necessary to reveal and account for the workings of power in ways that look away from top-down renditions and towards more nuanced accounts of how principals' lives are currently governed. The *will to truth* is a Foucauldian concept that provides insights into these workings.

The Will to Truth

Amongst the mechanisms that permit and prevent certain discourses, Foucault (1981) names 'the will to truth' – the desire to speak 'inside' the discourse that is attached to power because of its claim to truth – as 'a prodigious machinery designed to exclude' (p. 56). He claims that our conceiving of truth as 'a richness, a fecundity, a gentle and insidiously universal force' (Foucault, 1981, p. 56) masks how this will to truth excludes possibilities for bringing truth into question and for advancing other truth claims. From this masking work, 'true' discourses emerge as regimes of truth and take on hegemonic qualities that hold our attention and prevent us looking elsewhere.

Judith Butler, in *Giving an account of oneself* (2005), theorises that 'a regime of truth offers the terms that make self-recognition possible' because it constrains in advance 'what will and will not be a recognizable form of being' (p. 22). She identifies the site of this constraining work of truth regimes as occasions when an individual is compelled to give an account of oneself. Butler further argues that in giving such an account, regimes of truth offer 'a framework for the scene of recognition, delineating who will qualify as a subject of recognition and offering available norms for the act of recognition' (p. 22). The importance of Butler's insights is that they embed truth-telling in an account of how power works. They show that the individual only asks questions of power because of the demand to give a 'truthful' account of oneself. These questions are not, therefore, about the nature of truth but about the relations of truth to power.

As an extension of the necessity for me to take account of the explanatory possibilities in power and the will to truth, Butler's (2005) insights into regimes of truth and giving an account of oneself influence the remaining chapters in this book in specific ways. They encourage me to:

- Pay attention to whether an ethical demand on principals to tell the truth is, in fact, more likely to prompt a political account – so that it is not a truthful enterprise at all

- Consider whether an ethics based on freedom and care of self can only be credible if it recognises the restraints imposed on truth-telling and, concomitantly, includes a critique of the power relations in which principals are embedded
- Recognise that acts of truth-telling by principals bring 'the weight of power to bear on others' and so, themselves, constitute an act of power (Butler, 2005, pp. 124–125)
- Contemplate the various possibilities that arise when an individual principal continues to seek self-recognition and the recognition of others but does not recognise her/himself within available regimes of truth
- Proceed thoughtfully and tentatively to the possibilities of resistance and recalcitrance at the limits of established regimes of truth, knowing that to disclose 'a truth which threatens the majority' (Foucault, 2001, p. 18) always requires a certain risking of the self
- Be alert to extensions of the will to truth in the lives and work of principals, by diligently noting how the particulars of each principal's context must be detached 'from the porous universals' (Connolly, 2002, p. 61) to which they are constantly exposed and invited to embrace

Discourses, with their particular truth claims and capacity to produce the objects of which they speak, separate what is true and appropriate from what is wrong and untenable. My account of Foucault's development of power/knowledge, regimes of truth and the exclusionary work of the will to truth has drawn attention to the division of true and false and the totalising tendencies of discourse. To mitigate these tendencies, and repudiate criticism of Foucault as 'a prophet of entrapment' (Simons, 2013, p. 301), I will now use insights from Foucault's later work to more clearly articulate the possibilities for a 'space of action or room to maneuver' (Fairhurst, 2009, p. 1619) within and against these stymieing effects.

Subversive Spaces

Foucault (1978) describes a different joining of power with discourse when he says:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it … We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (pp. 100–101)

Applying this reading to my research appears to shift my consideration of the constitutive influences on principals to more subversive spaces, for example, where power may be given expression in critiquing dominant assumptions, contesting the

force of centralised directives, caucusing on alternative positions and engaging in acts of resistance, counter-conduct[3] and micro-emancipation.

In the various analyses which follow, I do not suggest that principals are free to position themselves and their work outside of institutional discourses or to seek an alternative and 'better' version of truth by having an excluded or marginalised discourse replace that which is accepted. Rather, I claim discourse as a site of both power and resistance and look to find within 'a multiplicity of discursive elements', those 'enunciations required and those forbidden' (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). This involves thinking about what principals say and what they are prevented from saying, when they are allowed to speak and when they are not, and the institutional settings in which they exercise power and those in which it is wielded over them. Further, it is an engagement with thinking about how counter-conducts, after Foucault (1980c), are entwined with the current operations of power, so that the politics of resistance become not 'a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power' but, instead, the political work 'of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (p. 133).

Foucault (1980c) asserts that 'power *is* "always already there", that one is never "outside" it, that there are no "margins" for those who break with the system to gambol in' (p. 141, italics in original). This assertion is compatible with various observations already made about the pervasiveness of neoliberal discourses in the lives and work of principals and is given full expression in my discourse analysis in the next chapter and in *the paradox of politicised subjectivity* in Chap. 6. However, Foucault also reiterates that discourse does not impose a condition of inescapable domination and that just because one cannot operate outside power, this does not mean 'that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what' (Foucault, 1980c, pp. 141–142). Working from this claim, I imagine a space on the 'constitutive outside' (Butler, 1997, p. 94) that is formed from the discursive summoning of principals to shape themselves inside intelligible and authorised boundaries. This thinking interprets current intelligibilities as 'far from filling all possible spaces' (Foucault, 2000a, p. 140) or of imposing an absolute limit on the necessity of what principals think and do.

In my discussion of the operations of power in the next section, I am, therefore, concerned not only with the 'general conditions of domination' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 142) that authorised power/knowledge pairings impose on principals but also with the possibilities for action that might remain available.

[3] The notion of 'counter-conduct' emerges in Foucault's (2007) *Security, Territory, Population* as he rethinks the problem of resistance inside of a governmentality frame. At its core, counter-conduct is 'the struggle in order to claim and obtain an *other* conduct' (Lorenzini, 2016, p. 11 italics in original). Counter-conduct is given more extensive explanation in Chap. 5.

The Operations of Power

Foucault (1980a) describes theoretical conceptions of power as located at, or emanating from, a given point as 'based on a misguided analysis.' Instead, he claims that, 'in reality power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations' (pp. 198–199). Foucault's (1982) notion of power relations, in suspecting that power is without essence or ontological origins and suggesting that its study should avoid its reification and unification in theory, shifts attention to the macro- and micro-practices of power and what happens when they are exercised. He asserts:

> The exercise of power … is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (p. 789)

This reading provides a reasonable tracing of the lines of discussion which follow about my application of Foucault's understanding of the exercise of power and my consideration of the freedom of the subject as its corollary. It evokes, in power relations, both the power/knowledge arrangements that make the individual 'an effect of power' and 'the element of its articulation', as well as structuring 'the possible field of action of others' (Foucault, 1980d, p. 98). Power relations are, therefore, not treated as akin to domination, but rather as productive – as creating what Simons (2013) describes as the 'conditions of possibility' for subjectivity 'which would not have any form without relations of force that govern them' (p. 307).

Power and Freedom

Foucault (1982) posits freedom as a necessary prerequisite condition for the exercise of power, albeit in 'a complicated interplay' (p. 790). He expands on this relationship:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. (p. 790)

The case for the interplay of power and freedom is further advanced by Foucault's (1982) account of how the conditions for the exercise of power rely on the freedom to choose from within a field of possibilities and how the prospect of recalcitrance marks the separation of power, freely exercised, from conditions of domination (or what he terms, 'determination') (p. 791). References to freedom, and its mutually constitutive relationship with power, take distinct forms in my empirical chapters. In Chap. 4, I draw on Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) to chart the historical enshrinement of freedom as part of the rationality and calculation of neoliberal

government and the associated development of security mechanisms, in the form of limitations, coercions and obligations, that seek to limit the risk of certain freedoms. This interplay of freedom and security is subsequently thematised in references, in the policy discourses of neoliberalism under analysis, to the already discussed constrained freedoms of neoliberal governmentality. Here freedom is taken to be a strategy of government that is manipulated through discourses such as competition, excellence and entrepreneurship, in order to further its aspirations.

Foucault (1988a) claims that 'the source of human freedom is never to accept anything as definitive, untouchable, obvious, or immobile' (p. 1). Chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyse, construct and represent my fieldwork through a series of 15 paradoxes. In analysis, I contend that several of these paradoxes function to open *spaces of freedom* within which principals might refuse the entreaties of definitive, obvious and immobile truths and, instead, think differently about themselves and their work. In turn, these spaces are implicated in Foucault's (2000c) conjoined notions of *thought* and of *stepping back* (p. 117) and their links to the possibilities for principals to understand how they have become who they are and what they might do about it. A resource for operating in these spaces is derived from Foucault's (1982) summation of the tying together of power and freedom, where he makes reference to the agonistic quality of relations of power. He says:

> At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' – of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. (p. 790)

This resource, which I fashion as a type of agonistic thought and practice, is further explicated in Chap. 5: *The Lines of Struggle* and then joined with the political work of paradox in the conclusions to each of Chaps. 6, 7 and 8. The notions of 'incitation and struggle' and 'permanent provocation' are taken to suggest a persistent disequilibrium in opposing forces and a reasonable expectation of dissonance and conflict. A more productive gap is visualised for the expression of resistance and freedom and, I contend in the concluding chapter, contributes to a *critical engagement* function in the explication of the pedagogical possibilities in paradox.

Power Techniques and the Soul

I will now extend the concept of power/knowledge to the 'techniques' (Foucault, 1982) of power and their application in the rest of this book. In its orientation to a central concept of governmentality, this means looking back into Foucault's earlier deliberations on power/knowledge, not as an exercise in retrofitting old ideas to newer concepts, but rather to acknowledge that governmentality – which Foucault (1991) characterises as now 'the only real space for political struggle and contesta-

tion' (p. 103) – incorporates various historical and contemporary techniques of power. As Bevir (1999) notes, based on his reading of Foucault's 1978 *Governmentality* lecture (in Foucault, 1991), this 'modern regime of power incorporates all of sovereignty, discipline and government' (p. 71). For constituting the subject, this means that it is reasonable to think about different power/knowledge regimes from different historical periods that now, often in a thoroughly modernised form, impose certain techniques on individuals as part of the governmental rationality which produces and sustains their subjectivities.

Following Olssen's (2006) interpretation, Foucault's interest in the *political* exercise of power is concerned with both its *individualising* and *totalising* functions – with its shaping of the conduct of 'both individuals and populations' (p. 215, italics in original). Two of Foucault's techniques for this collective exercise of power are now described – *pastoral power* and *disciplinary power*. These techniques are subsequently folded into, and rearticulated as, components of a modern form of power which I characterise as *the technologies of government.*

The notion of pastoral power is explicated by Foucault (2007) in its older Christian version through an extended shepherd and flock metaphor. He describes a 'power of care' that is 'entirely defined by its beneficence'. More expansively, he says:

> Pastoral power looks after the flock, it looks after the individuals of the flock, it sees to it that the sheep do not suffer, it goes in search of those that have strayed off course, and it treats those that are injured. (p. 172)

Foucault (2007) highlights qualities in the shepherd of vigilance and sacrifice and describes the shepherd's willingness to protect the flock from the violence of the sovereign. He also notes the individualising quality of pastoral power, so that the shepherd 'does everything for the totality of his flock, but he does everything also for each sheep of the flock' (p. 173). Finally, the merit of the shepherd is, to some extent, decided by successful management of recalcitrance from within the flock and a capacity to save those that stray and bring them back to the bigger group (pp. 228–229). In *The Subject and Power*, Foucault (1982) reveals 'this old power technique' as now transformed to a new apparatus of government, finding its support in a multitude of institutions and 'spread out in the whole social body' while still retaining its 'individualizing "tactic"' (p. 784).

My application of this power technique acknowledges both the 'pastoral governance' (Hunter, 1994, p. 64) of individual principals and the local applications of the shepherd/flock dynamic in the relations of principals and followers. Continuing to follow the lines of Hunter's (1994) discussion, it is concerned with the subjectifying process of 'comportment' that enfolds the objective of 'a pastoral pedagogy'[4] – to have individuals 'comport themselves as self-reflective and self-governing

[4] In the introduction to Hunter's renowned text *Rethinking the School* (1994), editor Meghan Morris describes Hunter's understanding of 'pastoral pedagogy' in the school setting as concerned with 'the arts of self-examination' and 'care of individual souls' (p. vii).

persons' (p. 57) – into the corresponding logics of neoliberal governmentality. While I take pastoral power as 'buried deep in the logic of today's political rationality' (Orr, 2010, p. 549) and as shaping the individual comportment of principals by techniques of 'governmental calculation and bureaucratic organisation' (Hunter, 1994, p. 83), I also note that it is a power that passes through the consciousness of individual subjects and needs them to decide to collude in its application. This requirement for higher levels of individual consciousness distances modern pastoral power from more pressing and immediate forms of domination and, in doing so, creates some space for my consideration of its different applications and possibilities, including those that run to acts of counter-conduct and resistance amongst principals.

Foucault's exposition of *disciplinary power* in arguably his most famous text *Discipline and Punish* (1977a) brought an irresistible new complexity to his work on discourse and power/knowledge by expanding it into a more explicitly political inquiry into the configurations and operations of power. Interpreted broadly, *Discipline and Punish* is an example of Foucault's abiding interest in the way discursive fields shift over time so that different discursive formations (or knowledge fields) bring different possibilities into play. In *Discipline and Punish*, this is a shift of power from the aristocracy to the middle classes, from the force of the ruling monarch's sovereign power to the normalising and panoptic gaze of disciplinary power – 'that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise' (Foucault, 1977a, p. 170).

The transition to disciplinary power shifts emphasis to the individual and their subjection under specific techniques of power. Foucault (1977a) describes the 'human body entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it' (p. 138). He says this new 'political anatomy' and 'mechanics of power':

> defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile bodies'. (p. 138)

My particular interest in deploying this productive conception of power in my research is to explicate those instruments of control, the 'means of correct training' (Foucault, 1977a, p. 170), that discipline the principal and to divine how they produce docility and foreclose on possibilities for individual freedom and agency.

The instruments of this 'modest, suspicious power' (Foucault, 1977a, p. 170) involve the coercive surveillance of *hierarchical observation* and the standardised calculation of *normalising judgement*. The procedure of *examination* is derived from combining these instruments together. Foucault's (1977a) evocative description of the examination, thus, captures the techniques of power that are enclosed within it:

> The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differ-

> entiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. (pp. 184–185)

I argue, along the lines established in Rouse (2006), that the techniques of power that comprise the examination open the lives and work of principals to inspection, rendering them as more visible and 'more thoroughly knowable or known' (p. 99) as well as inducing a 'strong element of self-scrutiny' (Morley & Rassool, 2002, p. 61). Each of these disciplinary instruments finds individual and collective expression in the empirical chapters which follow. For example, the policy discourses of neoliberalism, analysed in the next chapter, are shown to utilise forms of hierarchical observation in the processes and techniques of quality assurance, standards frameworks and school inspections. Some discourses are also shown to rely on the normalising judgement of methods of measurement and appraisal that rank and compare individual and organisational performance.

In the formation of principal subjectivity inside the symbiotic power/knowledge pairings of discourse, the scrutinising gaze of disciplinary power brings more searching and pervasive qualities to principal accountability and to the demand that principals give an account of themselves (see Butler, 2005). References to the various disciplinary techniques of surveillance, accountability, judgement and examination in my field data also reach to more visceral and affective aspects of principal subjectivity. Reflecting something of what Schwan and Shapiro (2011) describe as 'the private, invisible discipline of our psychological sense of selfhood' (p. 12), I observed feelings of anger, disappointment, intimidation and humiliation brought on by various disciplinary mechanisms. Principal participants described stressful, wishful and often futile efforts directed towards more favourable judgement and the foreclosure of opportunities to escape the homogenising gaze of policy and to subvert processes of regulation and standardisation.

From the observation and hearing of these effects, I determined the site of a struggle over principal subjectivity, after Foucault (1977a), to be the 'soul' of the principal. Foucault distinguishes the separation of 'this soul' from that of Christian theology, saying that it is:

> born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint … [it] is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. (p. 29)

These explicit references make clear Foucault's understanding of the soul as originating in the operations of a certain type of power (i.e. disciplinary power). By extension, and from some fainter leads given elsewhere in Foucault's work, I interpret other techniques of power – the already discussed pastoral power, and the technologies of government, to which I now turn my attention – as making extended and

different impacts on the soul of the principal. Furthermore, I characterise the struggle for the soul as not merely one of escape or relief from pervasive power/knowledge orderings, but as demanding a more complex depiction as a significant, multisided contest of the doxa and its often less obvious oppositions.

Biopower and the Technologies of Government

In building this summary of my use of Foucault's work around a central concept of governmentality, it is important to note that he emphasised the continuity of the individualising power techniques (i.e. pastoral and disciplinary power) discussed in the last section, into his later work on the conduct of conduct and its associated technologies of power. His interest in government emerged from the introduction of 'biopower' in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978). Here, he sought to show both the reorientation of these historical techniques as well as their incorporation into an 'explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and control of populations' (Oksala, 2013, p. 321).

In introducing the concept of biopower, Foucault (1978) encapsulated a shift away from the sovereign rule of juridical law and towards technologies of power that exert a positive influence on life, that endeavour 'to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (p. 137). Foucault (1978) describes biopower as having two poles of operation. The first pole is directed to disciplining the performances of the body:

> the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls. (p. 139)

The second pole focuses on 'the species body' and the supervision and regulatory controls of its biological processes (propagation, birth and death, the level of health, etc.) to form a '*biopolitics of the population*' (Foucault, 1978, p. 137, italics in original). At this pole, the population is turned to a 'calculable' and 'statistically communicable' social body in its 'policy-oriented and evermore policed form' (Orr, 2010, p. 549).

My predominant interest, in interpreting this 'the double itinerary of power' (Orr, 2010, p. 549) into my project, is in how bio-political technologies of government are constituted, influenced and directed by a dispositif of institutions, programmes, procedures, calculations and tactics and, in turn, how this discursive and nondiscursive ensemble simultaneously shapes the conduct and subjectivities of principals and ensures that the neoliberal aspirations of government are met (see Niesche, 2011, p. 36).

The detection of these technologies in my field data returns my attention to principals' souls and to sites where power is articulated on their bodies. Beyond the productive disciplining of policy technologies, such as standardisation, performativity and accountability, I seek, in the multifarious practices of government,

evidence of the more 'visceral and intimate' (Ball, 2012, p. 29) effects of neoliberal governmentality on principal subjectivity. This involves revealing and utilising what Foucault (1977a) describes as the 'capillary function of power' (p. 198) – a less juridical but more furtive function that works through everyday conversations and transactions and is rehearsed and embodied in professional relationships and school structures.

In concluding this chapter, I will join this capillary power with paradox as part of a more general discussion about fitting Foucault's insights to my paradox conceptual framework and an appraisal of the interpretive possibilities they add to deployment of a paradox lens.

Foucault and Paradox

In Chap. 2, I utilised Foucault's treatment of discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) as sets of statements formed and articulated as relatively autonomous systems of thought with the capacity to form the reality of which they speak. This interpretation provided an explanation of the formation and development of paradox in discourse. It also helped me account for the concealment of its presence or the weakening of its sides and opened a plurality of spaces for thinking about ambiguity, conflict, tension and dissension.

This application of Foucault's earlier treatise stopped short of a complete attempt to reveal the relations of power that intersect, cross and characterise the discursive struggles from which paradox emerges and develops. To move to the more political work of challenging the orthodoxy of absolute judgements and common-sense solutions, I now bring the already discussed theoretical resources that Foucault provides directly to my use of paradox. To this end, I offer four observations which mediate, clarify and build from the theoretical content of paradox established in Chap. 2.

The first of these observations links the exclusionary work of power/knowledge discourses with the asymmetrical qualities of many of the paradoxes that represent my empirical work in Chaps. 6, 7 and 8. Foucault (1981) provides a pertinent example when he points to education as one site of exclusion. He positions education as the instrument that rightfully should allow the individual access to every discourse, but claims:

> this does not prevent it from following, as is well known, in its distribution, in what it allows and what it prevents, the lines marked out by social distances, oppositions and struggles. Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers they carry. (p. 64)

In treating education, or more precisely the educational system, as part of a governing dispositif that shapes, approves and shifts what is permissible, Foucault helps account for the asymmetry of many of the paradoxes in my study. Unlike familial cousins such as dilemmas and dialectics, these paradoxes do not openly display the presence of equal and opposing sides, but rather, even as a relationship of forces that

are simultaneously present, their tendency is to have one of their parts rendered silent or subjugated by a truth regime to which it does not belong. The bringing of Foucault's understanding of power to these paradoxes works against these prevailing truths to build a more substantive and convincing case for thinking about the sides that have been quieted or quashed and 'the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth' (Foucault, 1980c, p. 133).

Secondly, to mediate the first observation, Foucault's thinking, across his entire oeuvre, was firmly resolved not to replace one truth with another. As Veyne, Potter and Davidson (1993) note, 'Foucault's originality among the great thinkers of our century lay in his refusal to convert our finitude into the basis for new certainties' (p. 5). In working with a paradox lens, this distinctly post-structural Foucauldian quality warns against the 'predetermined conceptual architecture' of the dialectic (Grant, 2010, p. 221) and the positing and defending of alternative solutions that run in direct opposition to the status quo. Instead, it suggests a more complex reading of paradox that allows for a plurality of oppositions and provides insights into the variegation and indeterminacy of the constitutive effects of power/knowledge and truth on the principal subject.

I endeavour to bring this quality of plurality to paradox through a series of principles which accumulate at the nexus of theory and empirical work. These include:

- Focussing on discerning paradox in the *practices* of principals in order to find, in their heterogeneity and singularity, sites where power is articulated differently, where different subjectivities become known and, following Rabinow and Rose (2003), where souls are produced, reformed and, even, sometimes liberated (p. 3)
- Working from Foucault's (1972) assertion of 'multiple dissensions' in discourse (p. 173) to reveal the 'presence of multiples' in terms of multiple levels, voices and tensions (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart 2016, p. 82) that are in play in my data and which bring a fluidity and complexity to paradox that cannot be fully conveyed in a two-sided rendition
- Following Foucault's (1980d) treatment of 'genealogical knowledge' as resurrecting and foregrounding 'the buried knowledges of erudition and those disqualified from the hierarchy of knowledges and sciences' in order to consider a more plural field of knowledge than that marked out by 'the tyranny of globalising discourses' (pp. 82–83)
- Depicting the oppositional forces in paradox, not as indicative of the bipolar qualities of a power/resistance dialectic, but rather as mapping a broader terrain of contestation and struggle over principal subjectivity

Thirdly, returning to capillary power and its contribution to my use of a paradox lens in Chaps. 6, 7 and 8, I note Fraser's (1989) observation that the capillary forms of power which Foucault identifies are obscured by the seemingly innocuous ways in which they circulate 'via a plurality of everyday micro-practices' (p. 18). In the formulation of various paradoxes, this capillary function is shown to surreptitiously privilege and naturalise dominant discourses and persistently reinforce current 'realities' (e.g. in the various *paradoxes of neoliberal policy* in Chap. 7), commu-

nicate subtle messages about the centrality and primacy of the principal (e.g. in *the paradox of team belonging* in Chap. 6 and *the paradox of hierarchy and distribution* in Chap. 8) and quietly hold in place stratified systems of control that work to legitimise designated leaders and differentiate them from follower groups (e.g. in the various *leader/follower paradoxes* in Chap. 6).

Jackson and Mazzei (2011) note that power exercised at a local and capillary level can be thought about as 'relational and productive' and 'unstable and unequal' (p. 54). Their description gives a clue to my accounts, in the conclusions of each of Chaps. 6, 7 and 8, of potential interventions of paradox into the more mundane aspects of principals' lives and work. In these accounts, I suggest that the elements of conflict, simultaneity and interdependence that paradox introduces may be usefully work on and against what Ball (2012) describes as 'the numerous moves, incremental reforms, displacements and reinscriptions, complicated and stuttering trajectories of small changes and tactics' (p. 30) that hold neoliberal forms of governmentality in place.

Fourthly, to conclude this section I direct attention to the contribution of Foucault's understanding of power and resistance to the warrior topos function of paradox. To recap, in Chap. 2 the theoretical insights of Roland Barthes were used to make the case for paradox as a warrior topos. This function was proffered as bringing a particular language to the analysis of political discourse and the establishment of a practical, oppositional politics. In my empirical work which follows, Foucault's work on power and resistance contributes to and fills out this warrior topos function of paradox in three significant ways:

(i) *Admitting Contingency.* Interpreting Foucault's notion of governmentality as widening the domain of power and its dissemination (see Leask, 2012) allows in 'different styles of thought' and new 'contestations and alliances' (Rose et al., 2006, p. 84) that contribute to variations in practice and in available subjectivities. This bringing of an element of contingency to obedient and oppressive readings of the neoliberal subject, I contend, allows particular possibilities for paradox as warrior topos to emerge. These possibilities reside in the interpretation of Foucault's (1987) 'care of the self' as shaping an ethics that extends beyond the safety of self-constituting practices to directing the freedom of the subject to acts of risk and refusal and to what Pignatelli (2002) describes as 'a relentless exposure to the perils of self-examination' (p. 169). In taking the self as 'the permanent heartland of subjectivity' (Hacking, 1986, p. 236), it is an ethics that opens principals to the inherent vulnerability of renouncing the established self and of deeply questioning 'the sovereignty of an authenticating or originating discourse' (Pignatelli, 2002, pp. 170–171).

In pursuing this version of Foucauldian ethics, I advance a language of paradox as usefully deployed at and beyond the limits of authorised efforts at self-government. This language provides a resource for 'accomplished' resistance through the affirmation of ethical work on the self (see Bardon & Josserand, 2011) as well as for agential possibilities in formulating practical oppositions to outside forces. I claim a warrior topos function in the potential of a paradox

language to ease the vulnerability of the questioning principal and to 'create critical purchase for *problematizing* and truth-saying' (Stickney, 2012, p. 657, italics in original) in order to open spaces of freedom – spaces in which principals can step back so that they can think and talk about the real possibilities for struggling against, and resisting, dominant constitutive influences.

(ii) *Rejecting Simplified Dialectics*. Foucault's (1987) understanding of power and resistance introduces new layers of complexity in the linking of paradox to political opposition by rejecting a simplistic power/resistance dialectic. He claims:

> in the relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance – of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation – there would be no relations of power. (p. 123)

Foucault's preference for joining, rather than separating, power and resistance also warns against my deployment of paradox to dichotomous readings of other dualisms such as centralised domination/individual autonomy, conformity/non-conformity and coercion/freedom. As McNay (2009) notes, political opposition 'must be thought outside these pervasive dualisms' (p. 74). These insights work to moderate and complicate any tendency, in my depiction of paradox, towards simplified representations of two-sided struggles between power and resistance. By extension they advise that I direct the warrior topos language of paradox to a coherent rendering of resistance within relations of power, while looking to depict plural possibilities in what Clarke et al. (2015) call 'repertoires of refusal, resistance and recalcitrance' (p. 26).

(iii) *Framing Resistance and Struggle.* In deploying paradox, I do not resile from conflict but rather treat it as reasonable (and necessary) in 'playing a certain game of truth' that speaks back to power (Foucault, 1987, p. 126). Even as the grandiose and homiletic storying of neoliberal discourses creates seemingly unalterable power relations, I subscribe to Foucault's (1977a) oft-quoted observation that 'we must hear the distant roar of battle' (p. 308). However, I distance the warrior topos function of paradox from connotations of militant confrontation in political resistance or 'a utopian reading of transgression' (Pickett, 1996, p. 448). Rather, I take the language of interdependency and simultaneity, which comes with paradox, as conjoined to more subtle versions that are enmeshed in relations of power and which take account of a multiplicity of positions and tensions – versions of resistance that most likely form in persistent and ongoing struggle rather than as decisive combat. Foucault (1978) provides support for this type of positioning when he says:

> there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. (pp. 95–96)

An axiomatic extension of my reluctance to use paradox language to mobilise grand narratives of resistance is my preference for a more contingent freedom than that associated with an essentialised agency or complete emancipation. I take principals as discourse users and, therefore, able to access certain individualised responses and independent actions from within a given discursive field. Drawing from the interpretive work of Bardon and Jossarand (2011) on 'the Foucauldian project' of freedom, the understanding of freedom I am trying to convey is usefully described as assessing 'how we can practice our liberty and become active agents of the power/knowledge matrix' (p. 506).

Not only do the insights in this account reject a 'doom and gloom' reading of Foucault's work (see Butin, 2001, p. 158) and the critics' metaphor of 'an iron cage with no escape possible' (Biesta, 2008, p. 173); they also provide paradox with a useful antidote to allegations that it is benign, non-committal and politically impotent in its depictions of reality (e.g. in Stevens, 1996). Instead, bringing Foucault's work to my deployment of a paradox lens bolsters its possibilities for supporting principals in practices of critique and counter-conduct that speak back to pervasive truth regimes. Furthermore, it connects them to a broader ethico-political project founded in an ethics of practices of the self, a seeing of the strategic possibilities in governmentality for different forms of self-governing and a realisation of the political potential of the principal position through practiced oppositions that insist on the intransigence of freedom inside complex relations of power.

Conclusion

To conclude, I take the political, social, ethical and philosophical endeavours of my project, after Foucault (2000b), as realised in practice through a type of curiosity about the reigning constitutive influences on principals and the empirical work of surfacing new and different possibilities. I give Foucault (2000b) the last word on this curiosity, but note, with some added confidence, its resonance with the work which follows:

> [Curiosity] evokes 'care'; it evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental. (p. 325)

My selective raid into Foucault's 'toolbox' continues in Chap. 4 where I (i) draw on his genealogical accounts of the emergence of liberal forms of government as a backdrop to my discussion of the constitutive influences of modern-day neoliberal policy on principals and (ii) deploy his tools of problematisation and critique in my analysis of a number of neoliberal policy discourses.

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