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REFERENCE

The anxiety of whole class teacher questioning for primary pupils

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Abstract

The introduction of the National Literacy (1998) and Numeracy (1999) Strategies placed a "greater emphasis on whole class work" in primary schools in England at the end of the 1990s (The NLS, Framework for Teaching, DfEE 1998, p.10). As a result, it is likely that there has been an increase in whole class teacher questioning of pupils.

However, it has been suggested that teacher questioning of pupils in front of their peers may lead to an emotional response including anxiety, worry and fear (Holt 1964, 1982 revised) and associated negative feelings, including embarrassment and shame.

In the light of empirical data gathered principally in a Year 4 primary classroom during 1999 – 2000, this research aimed to explore further the emotional response of pupils at times of whole class teacher questioning, with a particular focus on lessons of literacy and numeracy.

In line with more recent educational research in schools, a key aim was that the main voices emerging from the data would be the children's own. There was therefore a strong emphasis on observation of their responses in whole class work, pupil interviews and associated pupil focused data.

Drawing on this, I argue that there is evidence that numbers of pupils experience feelings during whole class teacher questioning that may impact on their identity as learners and lead to their employing coping strategies that may be detrimental to their education.

Acknowledgments

Each venture
is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
...in the general mess of imprecision of feeling.

T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'East Coker' (1940) Part 5, p.31

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Abbreviations and definitions

Elementary	American term for the equivalent of the British primary / junior school age group (7 – 11)
Inset	In-service training for teachers
KS1	Key stage 1 (Years 1 - 2, also known as infants)
KS2	Key Stage 2 (Years 3 - 6, also known as juniors)
NC	National Curriculum for England and Wales
NLS	National Literacy Strategy (introduced 1998)
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy (introduced 1999)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education – sends teams of inspectors into schools to observe lessons, examine and report on standards found
PSE	Personal and Social Education
'Supply'	Term given when teachers go into schools on an 'ad hoc' basis to take classes when the usual class teacher is out or absent
Whole class	Usually mixed ability, mixed sex but same aged children taught altogether; usually in groups or classes of thirty plus
ACT	Affect Control Theory

<u>Transcription notes</u>

...	hesitation, pause or break in the conversation

Other notes and comments are included in the text.

Most children in school are scared most of the time,
many of them very scared.

Like good soldiers, they control their fears,
live with them, and adjust to them.

But the trouble is ... that the adjustments children make to their fears
are almost wholly bad, destructive of their intelligence and capacity.

The scared fighter may be the best fighter, but the scared learner is always a poor
learner.

(Holt, 1964: revised 1982, p.92 - 93)

Preface

As a primary pupil in the late sixties and early seventies, despite having no real academic problems, I recall being scared in school. In particular I was nervous of answering teacher questions. I was afraid of being wrong – but also of being right and possibly ostracised by peers for seeming 'clever'.

Over a decade earlier, on December 3, 1958, John Holt had been teaching his primary class as usual. He asked the pupils what went through their minds when a teacher asked them a question and they didn't know the answer. He states that a paralysed silence fell on the room and that:

They all ... said the same thing ... they were scared half to death.

He says he was "flabbergasted" and asked them the reason:

They said they were afraid of failing, afraid of being kept back, afraid of being called stupid, afraid of feeling themselves stupid (Holt, 1982, p.71).

Reading of this in the 1990s, whilst working as a class teacher with primary pupils myself, I was very troubled by what Holt had been told. It echoed my own experience as a pupil. But I had dismissed that as being particular to myself. Knowing myself to be somewhat shy and reticent, it had not occurred to me that what I had experienced could perhaps be commonly felt amongst children in primary schools.

Worse was the realisation that now being a teacher myself and with whole class questioning underpinning much of my class teaching, I could unwittingly be creating the same feelings in pupils that I had gone through myself all those years earlier.

It was not the teachers I had known as a child in school who worried me when I had to speak out in class. They were generally kind and supportive. It seemed that it wasn't primarily Holt in the role of teacher that caused the unease described by his pupils either. The pupils' peers seemed to be the major cause of the fearfulness that Holt described. Holt said that it seemed that:

> Most children in school are at least as afraid of the mockery and contempt of their peer group as they are of the teacher. (Holt, 1982, p.59).

In the mid nineties, for research for a master's degree, I had the opportunity to follow in Holt's footsteps. I prepared a questionnaire and through it asked a class about their feelings in lessons that involved whole class teacher questioning.

When we discussed what they had written, the children were candid and told me a story of fear and anxiety that mirrored what Holt's pupils told him about the mockery and contempt of their peers.

In the very frank and open discussion following my use of the questionnaire, all but one pupil described varying degrees of 'worry' resulting from times of teacher questioning. The children talked of strategies they employed to avoid teacher questions. They also spoke of the fear of being wrong as well as the fear of seeming too clever and risking the scorn of peers for being right. It transpired that they knew all about the stress John Holt's pupils had described behind many teacher - pupil exchanges such as when he wrote:

> Even ... where I did all I could to make the work non threatening, I was continually amazed and appalled to see the children hedging their bets, covering their losses in advance, trying to fix things so that whatever happened they could feel they had been right, or if wrong, no more wrong than anyone else (Holt, 1964, 1982 (revised), p.91).

Quite apart from the possible emotional toll, it seemed to me unlikely that children expending energy on such strategies could be achieving their best in school.

My small-scale study with these pupils suggested that it was an issue for primary children on which little seemed to have been written with reference to British pupils. I was conscious too that the renewed focus on standards within primary literacy and numeracy and the increased questioning that seemed to be associated with those initiatives gave added urgency and topicality to the issue of whole class questioning.

The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies placed a "greater emphasis on whole class work" in primary schools in England (The NLS, Framework for Teaching, DfEE 1998, p. 10). However, from what Holt and my own study had found, whole class teacher questioning of pupils in front of their peers was implicated in the generation of pupil anxiety.

It may be argued that some stress or tension can be a helpful spur to learning (Sutherland, 1983, p.70). However, I was concerned that what we were looking at fell outside the parameters of what may be considered as constructive.

Introduction

Background and Research Aims

If, as stated in the abstract and preface, the introduction of the National Literacy (1998) and Numeracy (1999) Strategies in English primary schools has placed a "greater emphasis on whole class work" (The NLS, Framework for Teaching, DfEE 1998, p.10), it seemed to be timely to examine the possible consequences of this.

John Holt's informal research with his own class of pupils had a profound impact on me and, as mentioned earlier, led to my own very small scale work with a Year 5 class. What the pupils told me led to my wanting to do yet additional research and as a result the research aims of this work are centered around wanting to examine pupils' feelings under whole teacher questioning further.

Research questions

- Does teacher questioning of pupils in front of their peers result in an initial general emotional response such as anxiety, worry and fear, as Holt suggested? (Holt 1964, 1982 revised)
- Are the feelings associated with teacher questioning leading to the pupils employing coping strategies that may be adversely affecting their learning?

The purpose of this study therefore is not to so much to identify exactly *what* emotion is felt under teacher questioning, but to ascertain whether what is felt is essentially negative - and from then to speculate what may be the outcome in terms of pupil learning.

In the light of the questions posed above, this research aimed to focus on lessons of literacy and numeracy because these seemed to be the times when such questioning was most used.

In line with more recent educational research, a key aim was that the main voices emerging from the data would be the children's own. There was therefore a strong

emphasis on observation of their responses in whole class work, pupil interviews and associated pupil focused data.

Plan

After a short Introduction, in Chapter 1 I refer further to the work by Holt, early work by Rowland, and Pollard et al that initially influenced me. Most of the first part of this substantial chapter however focuses on symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework that underpins this work. From describing origins of the paradigm and especially the work of Mead, I then describe the key concepts, focusing on symbolic interactionism in educational settings as being most relevant to this thesis. I then describe how it has developed to be the symbolic interactionism that it is today in the early twenty first century and why it is a useful paradigm in which to set this investigation.

In the second part of this chapter, I consider emotion as it has been studied using the model of symbolic interactionism. Throughout, I make links between the literature and the main issues under discussion in this thesis. There is then a shorter consideration of teacher questioning.

Chapter 2 informs the reader of the issues facing researchers in English schools in the late nineties and introduces the schools, pupils and teachers I worked with. Here I also present the main methodology of symbolic interactionism and my use of these methods to undertake my own research. The chapter continues by summarizing the practicalities of the data collection – the use of video, writing of pupil vignettes and case studies, field notes and interviews.

It is in this chapter too that I recount the first occasion I took a class lesson and discuss the issue of teacher questioning with the children. I also record here my discussion with teachers and their use of questioning in the context of the NLS and NNS.

The chapter closes with a detailed consideration of the issues surrounding validity in the symbolic interactionist framework.

In the much shorter Chapter 3, I describe the means by which I came to a clearly defined research role, with reference to the possibilities open to me, and the reasons why I chose to work as I did. I also relate how I perceived my role changed as the work progressed.

Chapter 4 opens with more discussion about the topic of emotion and specifically anxiety in schools - and follows with three vignettes of children. This chapter also describes how the pupil profiles were written in the early stages of the work.

This leads, in Chapter 5, to a more generalised account of the emotions and specifically anxiety I believed I saw amongst pupils in school.

Chapter 6 returns to my working with pupils on questioning, using imaginary pupils Sam and Chris, providing data on what whole class discussion and written work yielded in further lessons with the class.

In Chapter 7 the discussion about questioning continues, setting it in the context of the NLS and NNS.

Chapter 8 recounts the pivotal interview with Julia, my first pupil interview, using her replies to further illustrate and reflect on the issue of questioning and something of the emotional impact of it.

Chapter 9 offers the remaining pupil interviews. After an explanation of how they were conducted and the matters I had to consider in arranging them, I set out the replies I had from the questions put to all the children and offer my own thoughts on the answers I received. The chapter ends with an extract from a longer interview with two boys which hints at some possible alternative ways of working.

The final chapter brings together the findings and briefly summarizes how, although symbolic interactionism has its critics, I still think it was an appropriate paradigm for this study; I then discuss what I could have done differently and what could be done in future work. The important issue of validity is returned to again next, followed by a

summary of the problems of whole class teacher questioning, offering an imagined scene of what teacher questioning is like for pupils, based on their interview data. I then question the impact of the NLS and NNS and whether we should be concerned about the possibility of teacher questioning leading to anxiety. The chapter finishes with a summary of how the work offers original contributions to knowledge.

Selves and identities are never fixed

(Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.89)

Symbolic interactionism is a down to earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct

(Blumer, 1969, p 47)

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Research undertaken in the last decades of the Twentieth century had drawn attention to the social world of primary pupils and in particular, the role of peer relations. Kutnick is one of many who stress the role of peers. In discussion of the social and moral development of children he says: "But the role of the peer group must not be underestimated.... Peers have an important role in the cognitive, social, affective and moral development of the child." (Kutnick, 1988, p90)

In addition, ongoing research continues to reflect on the role of teacher questioning, a "common teaching strategy" in primary schools (Wood, 1991, p.113).

From early reading of others working in the field, I thought that this work lent itself to the research tradition of ethnography and symbolic interactionists as exemplified in the work on classroom strategies, perspectives, behaviour and interactions undertaken by researchers such as Hargreaves (1972), Woods (1983, 1986), Hammersley (1990), Rowland (1984) and Pollard (1985, 1996, etc.).

Symbolic interactionist theory states that children are social beings and "social participation is made possible as the individual comes to define and respond to his own line of activity from the perspective of others," (Burns, 1982, p.185). This is within the "dynamics" and "constraints" of the learning environment (Gipps, 1992, p.5).

1.2 Part 1 - Early influences

Although therefore the work of this thesis aimed to be grounded primarily in symbolic interactionism, my first research for a Masters degree was heavily influenced by reading John Holt and his diary like account of teaching in his classroom in America in the sixties. His book, *Why Children Fail*, did not purport to be a sociological treatise but the honesty and the process of thinking that it seemed to illustrate as Holt tried to come to greater understanding of how children learn had enormous impact on me. This was because what he described echoed some of my own experiences as a teacher.

The early writing up of the Primary Assessment, Curriculum and Experience (PACE) project, especially the first books that were produced from that project under Andrew Pollard et al similarly impressed me. Here again I found, in this case a team of, educationalists who clearly cared deeply about pupils' learning, exploring in what came across as in an open way, what made for 'successful' classroom practice. As someone still working as a teacher at the time, this was a very appealing study because it was practical and readily accessible. Overall, to me as a practitioner, it seemed useful and helpful – raising again as with Holt, issues that I as an experienced classroom teacher had been grappling with.

1.3 Further influences

I was very influenced too by the perspectives and approach of Stephen Rowland as outlined in his book, *The Enquiring Classroom* (1984). In it he states that the:

> subjective way in which we interpret the classroom and children's activities within it has been considered by many educational researchers to be something to be avoided at all costs (Rowland, 1984, p.1).

However, he himself takes a very different view. Dismissing some quantitative research measures, he says that:

> ...in order to understand children's understanding we must first gain access to it. This cannot be achieved by the researcher who is separated from the children both physically and psychologically by the research tools used to measure their behaviour (Rowland, 1984, p.2).

He goes on to argue that teachers are in a "privileged position ...to relate closely to the children, to prompt their thinking and thereby to begin to reveal it." (op. cit. p.2). I felt that the theoretical framework and research methods of symbolic interactionism would most enable me to adopt a position that would similarly reveal children's thinking.

Paul Rock talks about feeling isolated working in the sixties in the area of symbolic interactionism(Rock, 1979). I found myself, despite best efforts, somewhat isolated too despite working some decades after Rock. For myself, in the late nineties, symbolic interactionism was still not especially popular where I was working, nor much spoken about in the groups with which I was aligned. It was therefore by no means an easy option to choose. I knew it had its critics, those who in particular saw it as unscientific, having the researcher involved with his subjects through participant observation rather than as in the early ethnography where the scientist would tend to observe from afar. I return to the issue of criticism of the paradigm in the concluding chapter. However, I as referred to above, I considered at the time that for the questions I was asking, it was nevertheless a very appropriate method of working knowing that as Atkinson and Housley say of symbolic interactionism that from the early to middle years of the twentieth century it has " continued to inspire a developing programme of research into the early years of the twenty first" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p. 1)

Symbolic interactionism, a 'strand' of the broader interactionist perspective that is specifically connected to the social psychology of George Henry Mead, developed within the American social science tradition, in particular at the University of Chicago, the site also of the major development of fieldwork and 'ethnography'.

It has often been that the terms 'interactionism', 'symbolic interactionism' and 'the Chicago school' have been used virtually interchangeably - attributing aspects of the growth of this theoretical and in particular, methodological perspective, to different academics, according them differing significance.

A key idea within symbolic Interactionism is Mead's placing importance on human language and gesture, saying that language is 'significant symbols' – a specially developed form of gesture. " Language as a set of significant symbols is simply the set of gestures which the organism employs in calling out the response of others" (Mead, 1934, p. 335). Human language can convey things separate from how the speaker is feeling; whereas an animal will just use gesture in a stimulus - response form of communication (Atkinson and Housley, 2003), human language communication is more sophisticated than that, allowing participants in conversation to " exchange experiences, cumulate experiences and share meanings" (op. cit. p. 6). As Blumer puts it, " human beings interpret or "define" each other's actions instead of merely reacting... their "response" based on the meaning which is attached to such actions" (Blumer, 1969, p. 79).

People can also act reflexively, looking upon themselves as an other, something Mead calls the 'I', the origin of action - and the object of self-awareness, the 'me'. I and me are both part of the 'self', " the self is essentially a social process going on with these two distinguishable phases" (Mead, 1934, p.178). The self has a dual nature therefore, " the impulsive and creative" as opposed to the " socialised internalisation" of social customs and manners. Thus the human participant is able to take another's part, understanding how another may feel, allowing them to respond accordingly (Atkinson and Housley, 2003). This is not merely so for the case of one other but in terms of 'society'.

Symbolic interactionism thus conceives the self to be the lens through which the social world is refracted. It is the medium that realises the logic of social forms. Fundamentally however the self emerges from the forms. Self is made possible only by the activities and responses of others acting in an organised manner. Quoting Miller on Mead, Rock says that a self without others is "inconceivable" (Rock, 1979, p.146)

In Mead's terms, language can be seen as the means of managing and changing social settings, of which one may be the primary school classroom. However, as much as language, I wanted to examine the gestures and facial expressions that would perhaps

indicate an emotional response, further suggesting how the pupils were managing the social setting of the classroom.

1.4 The actor in interactionist methodology

Rooted in Mead's discussion of the 'I' and the 'me', the social actor in interactionism has the ability to be both subject and object of their knowledge and actions, as mentioned above, and capable of inner dialogue between the I and the me as well as engaging with those around. The actor of interactionism is capable of self-consciousness and self-awareness. Their actions are available for reflective knowledge, able to both reflect on their interactions with others as well as their own actions as objects of inspection (Atkinson and Housley, 2003)

For my own work for this project, examining children's feeling and perceptions in the setting of the classroom, the idea that others act as a 'mirror' is a helpful analogy. Cooley calls it the " reflected or looking glass self" (Cooley in Manis and Meltzer (Eds.), 1967, p. 217). The idea is that, in this case pupils are "reflecting back their *(the other children's)* perceptions and judgements" and in turn these give rise to feelings of "pride or mortification"(Cooley, 1967, p. 217). I would suggest that this links to embarrassment too. Cooley (op. cit. p.217) writes that " the thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection on another's mind" So conversations or transactions between two or more classroom participants affect the child's standing in their own eyes, depending on the imagined impact on their peers. To Cooley, there will some difference depending on whether the child cares about, in this example, their peers. He writes about "selective interest"…and that a child may care " much for the reflection of himself upon one personality and little for that upon another" (op. cit. p. 218). However my own data set suggested that although it may vary, children care much for how they seem to more of their classmates/ peers than might have been previously thought - and perhaps less so in terms of the teacher.

Although there were a few pupils, such as Roger, who despite being challenged by the teacher seemed to remain unaffected, other pupils generally looked to clarify a question a teacher asked before committing to an answer, suggesting uncertainty in

their ability to be 'right' and concern about potentially being shamed or embarrassed. I explore this in much more detail in later chapters but " the mutual gaze of social actors and their simultaneous acts of perception and judgement can clearly be threatening and potentially damaging" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.8).

If the early work on symbolic interactionism saw some of the main ideas as being based within the thoughts of Mead [1], work later in the century took ideas significantly forward through the work of Blumer. He has been referred to as one who codified symbolic interactionism, drawing together some of the key concepts from those that went before. He suggests that symbolic interactionism has three premises:

1. "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them" – for Blumer and of particular relevance to this project, "things" include school and the requests/ commands of others as well as " individual encounters in his daily life"

2. The "meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows"

3. These "meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer, 1969, p.2)

Thus symbolic interactionism sees people as involved in the process of "living", ongoing activity in which they develop "lines of action" in the many situations encountered. They have to "fit" their actions to others and in doing so have to indicate to others what to do as well as interpreting the actions of others. Others are just some of the objects in the world that have to be understood and their meaning changes according to interaction with one another. Additionally, within this, people group themselves in various and different ways, living in effect in different worlds and guiding themselves by "different sets of meanings" (Blumer, 1969, p.20 –21):

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[1] Others included ideas by Park and Thomas relating to urban ethnography and social change, etc.

The self has become the chief focus of interactionism. It is treated as the author and product of forms of consciousness, the medium in which society is created. Selves arise when language enables men to reflect on themselves as if they were strange and problematic. They are grounded in an internal dialogue between consciousness as subject and consciousness as object. That dialogue is ordered by conversation, and discourse has become a model for the analysis of interaction (Rock, 1979, p.236-7).

For Rock, symbolic interactionism attempts to offer a solution to " the problems that plague society", addressing " issues which other sociologies ignore" (Rock, 1979, p. 238). It "acknowledges complexity" and rather than adding further theory to theory, it offers an " extensive exploration of the social world. It is taken to be justified by its ethnography rather than by its formal statements about the nature of reasoning" (Rock, 1979, p.238).

Much work within the symbolic interactionism paradigm has involved projects and studies not directly related to education and schools but which still have relevant concepts. The research of Everett Hughes and his study of work had socialisation as a central concern; they found that coping strategies and survival tactics were a recurring theme and similarly I found coping strategies to be a key component of the classroom interactions of pupils in the schools I studied.

For Everett, the "coping mechanisms" became part of a self-sustaining culture and had practical consequences for the conduct of education and work. Socialisation was thus seen as a "process of mutual adaptation between the institution (*such as the work place*) and its members" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p. 11).

This was indicative of a growing interest amongst researchers in " the transformation of social selves or identities". The idea of the career "brought together the personal and institutional". The career has pursued a course "shaped by personal action and institutional constraint". " Socially managed processes of transition from one social position to another reflected the interactionists preoccupations with changes in social identity over time and also the intersections between the collective and the individual" (op. cit. p. 11). This touches on the interactionist interest in social roles in general, and

especially the analysis of them. As opposed to the functionalist approach where social roles are predominantly fixed, "interactionism stressed role making as much as role taking". "Social order was conceived in terms of negotiation" (op. cit. p. 12) which is never over in that it shows that the social continues to have potential for change and "renewal"(op. cit. p.12). Thus process and contingency is key – not systems and determinism.

1.5 Symbolic interactionism in educational settings

Sociologists of education were amongst the first to adopt and disseminate interactionist practices and approaches to the empirical investigation of educational processes and institutions. It has been suggested that such educational study, in retrospect, can look as though it followed a seamless and unproblematic route to the research work of today. In fact, interactionism was just one of various " intellectual currents" including others such as social anthropology, that contributed to the work of the time (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.90). That some with a background in anthropology were also working in educational settings led to a re-emergence of participant observation and ethnographic interviewing as their work came to embrace an interpretative sociology. This occurred in the sixties when Goffman, especially through *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959), outlined what became his influential thinking on people's presentation of one face – with a back. As well as meaning their internal feelings, in terms of pupils in schools this could be also be translated into their presentation of oneself to the teacher and classmates during times of whole class teacher questioning with the 'back' being what they say afterwards - whether whispered behind hands to close peers and friends or in the playground or other safe space – when they may suggest the opposite of what they said or appeared in class. This became a resource of interpretative ideas for researchers alongside other work conducted within a symbolic interactionist framework .

It is arguably a strength of British interactionists that they have drawn on diverse sources of inspiration. Certainly there have been relatively few who have been single-mindedly 'interactionist'. (Atkinson and Housley, 2003,p.ix) Thus interactionism informed the sociology of education in the U.K. throughout the 1970s and beyond.

Peter Woods states that interactionism is one of the key influences on the sociological studies of schools and classrooms alongside phenomenology, ethnomethodology and social psychology (Woods, 1979). In his own ethnographic work of a school, he chose to use an interactionist perspective because it allowed attention to be paid to the social actors' own voices, highlighted the processes of interpersonal negotiation and considered the social context of any action. For as individual or groups adapt so identities are formed which may then be threatened.

Particularly of interest to my own work, this and other interactionist work undertaken at the time also focused on students' identities and perceptions; the ever challenging routines of schools that mean that pupils with other pupils as well as their teachers are ever "engaged in a process of mutual surveillance, testing out of each others perceptions, responses ..." (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.95). Further work through the 1970s and into the 1980s such as that by Hargreaves meant that interactionism became the most important framework for detailed analyses of schools and classrooms. This was in part due to the work of Delamont too who through a symbolic interactionist framework highlighted the negotiated life of classrooms, amongst other issues.

Others that followed such as Ball in the early 1980s and Pollard from the early 1980s, also used interactionist frameworks in which to place much of their research studies. Pollard's work in particular with its focus on the formation, development and maintenance of selves in school settings and emphasis on coping strategies (Pollard, 1982, 1985, 1987 etc.) in the primary classroom I particularly identified with in terms of my own experience of children coping and negotiating in the classroom, both as ex teacher and beginning researcher.

Ball and Pollard were two of an increasing number of British educational researchers of that time who were describing schools and classrooms as "sites for the deployment of strategic interaction" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.99), an increasing emphasis on schools as places of work, accommodation and survival (op. cit. p.99).

British research has in recent decades therefore provided a culture within which interactionism has thrived. It has also demonstrated that interactionism could provide

a rigorous framework, substantial enough for extensive longitudinal studies to have taken place.

1.6 Interactionism today

Atkinson and Housley argue that the work of symbolic interactionism has changed and developed in many ways over the years, going beyond any " narrow sectarian boundaries" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p. 26). They argue that its methodological influence has even gone beyond sociology and certainly beyond any " specific theoretical school" (op. cit. p. 26) as qualitative research has extended its influence. Also, research work in general has developed from the quantitative more positivist positions most popular in the earlier twentieth century so that the social sciences are " more open to interactionist thought" (op. cit. p. 27). The more recent interest in language, culture, biography and autobiography they argue has engaged a wider audience with interactionism even if this is not explicit. Interest in career – both personal and institutional, transformation of self, narratives of personal experiences all link interactionist ideas with others. An example is the work of Norman Denzin and the idea of 'interpretive biography' which echoes " older strands" of interactionism with contemporary interest in " lives, voices and biographies" (op. cit. p. 28) for there is a long tradition in interactionism in 'life history', the analysis of documents of life, both spoken as well as written.

As the years continue, and as what counts as interactionism widens and expands, symbolic interactionism, within it, continues. So, more recent proponents of it may not be committed to just continuing and developing the ideas of Mead, Goffman et al, but add other ideas such as found in the 'new ethnography', the sort of work found in Denzin's edited journal *Qualitative Inquiry*. Not explicitly interactionist, it reflects the more avant -garde modes of sociological investigation, reflection and writing and the influence of post-modern. Thus in particular, a broad range of perspectives may be highlighted; giving voice to previously or otherwise "muted or silenced groups" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003,p. 30), something I felt important, hence my working as I did focusing on the children's own voices. In this I was following others, especially Pollard (1996, 2000) again.

Postmodernism "recognises multiple criteria of the validity of research – allowing ethical and local criteria rather than universalistic criteria to regulate research and celebrates a multiplicity of perspectives" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.30). Hence the short story, poetry and use of plays may be used to help offer up the multiple voices and perspectives. The new ethnography includes this and leads to much autobiographical and confessional writing with auto ethnography as the study of one's own immediate life world as well as sometimes one's self. It is very personalised. Thus in the work of P T Clough (1992) and others, interactionism, new literary forms and reflective practice it may be argued, come together.

Over the course of this study this latter form of working has been useful in helping me reflect on the issues under discussion, hence the offering of my own pupil biography, a short story of a child feeling embarrassed at having to talk in front of her class about why she did not have trip money and in chapter 10, the concluding chapter, a short imagined scene summing up what I suggest the data tells us about what teacher questioning feels like for some children. I suggest that these reflect the more recent developments of symbolic interactionist methodology and are useful ways in to understanding part of pupils' life world in school

Some may see this as a quite different approach from interactionism but others as a regeneration of it. It may be that it is too early to say but Atkinson and Housley's suggestion that Denzin's and others' work today "refers back to long-standing interactionist ideas and approaches but from a contemporary standpoint" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p.32) may be the most insightful summing up of what has developed.

Whatever, symbolic interactionism has never been static but has developed over the decades from its diverse roots, no single tradition really emerging and with a variety of perspectives. Nevertheless, aspects of it have stayed constant; the value on empirical research with the interactionist researchers detailed accounts of social institutions and processes has always been most highly valued and this, the methodology of symbolic interactionism, I return to in detail in chapter 2.

(Kemper, 2000, p.46).

1.7 Part 2

In this section I summarise the broad context of what led me to want to examine aspects of the emotional aspect of classroom life, looking at what has been said about emotion in general and specifically of anxiety itself: the possibility of debilitating and facilitating anxiety; then at anxiety in relation to school pupils, including their coping strategies and peer relations. In general, the anxiety of whole class teacher questioning for pupils seemed to revolve around issues of embarrassment, for themselves or sometimes others. Their worry or anxiety usually centred on being incorrect and losing face, looking silly and becoming embarrassed as a result.

The substantial part of this section is devoted to the key ideas about emotion expressed by those working specifically within a sociological framework.

Goffman, (1934) Hochschild (1983), Kemper (1978) and Scheff (1977) have been prominent in providing a foundation upon which a sociological theory of emotion has emerged. In particular, they talk of embarrassment and shame. These - and more recently others such as Shott - have added to the body of work with specific reference to symbolic interactionism. I outline their key thoughts, and begin to reference how they may be pertinent to this study, this then continuing through later chapters too where applicable.

The issue of emotion is then examined briefly in terms of social control and power. I follow this by exploring what Scheff and Block Lewis say about hidden emotions as this has particular relevance to the research question this thesis looks to address before introducing Affect Control Theory (ACT) and its role too within symbolic interactionism.

1.8 Pupils and anxiety

That maintaining face in front of peers was of paramount importance was a key conclusion of my earlier Year 5 study. This echoed Phillips when he wrote:

> the interpersonal setting is the crucible in which the child works out his destiny, for teacher and peer appraisals not only indicate his school success and failure, they indicate to him something more important - the place he has in the classroom group (Phillips,1978, p.61).

Anxiety as a term has as synonyms, nervousness, worry, concern, unease, apprehension, disquiet and fear - and all of these as well as others seem to be used within the literature. Importantly too, pupils also refer to their emotions under teacher questioning by a variety of terms, most frequently referring to it by how it made them feel, commonly calling that feeling sad. More detailed studies than mine can be could examine the minutiae of the differences between the various terms, and this would be valid. However, as outlined earlier, the purpose of this study is not to identify exactly what emotion is felt under teacher questioning but whether what is felt is essentially negative and to speculate what may be the outcome in terms of pupil learning.

Apart from Holt's work, and before I came to study the issue within the symbolic interactionist framework, I read literature from various sources which although eclectic, nevertheless I found helpful in starting to focus my early thinking.

Firstly, I knew from my own teaching experience that not all anxiety was necessarily problematic in terms of learning. Covington and Beery (1976) refer to the fact that there may be facilitative and debilitating anxiety. Thus anxiety may not necessarily negatively affect learning. For example, teachers may deliberately create some tension in order to stimulate focused work from their students. Jenny Shaw (1995, p.33) states that anxiety, "is explicitly cultivated by schools when they want to impress on children how hard they must now work". I knew that I had looked to create some sense of urgency with some past pupils when deadlines needed to be met. Indeed, the questionnaire I had previously used with the Year 5 pupils asked whether they could

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envisage 'anxiety' being 'useful' in their learning and some indicated that they believed it could help to keep them focused and on task.

At this point I found myself agreeing with Sutherland who stated that " it is the 'coping strategy' employed by pupils that determines whether anxiety is debilitating or facilitating" (Sutherland, 1983, p.62). However, despite this, having accepted that anxiety may not always be negative in terms of impact on learning, Holt and my own work with pupils did suggest that in general it could create negative emotions.

Looking to examine this further, I then read Buss who suggests that social anxiety, such as that created in the social setting of a classroom was problematic. He groups embarrassment, shame, shyness and audience anxiety together and stated that it is demonstrated by " being upset or disturbed by others' scrutiny or remarks, or merely because others are present" (Buss,1980, p.204). The socially anxious person becomes self aware to the degree that it causes a measure of 'discomfort' and leads to gaze aversion, inhibition of ongoing speech (op. cit. p.205) and similar.

Buss suggests that the social context that involves large numbers of people and has an element of evaluation are amongst those that are likely to create most anxiety. These of course are typical conditions in a classroom.

The amount of attention you receive in this setting is also highlighted as important by Buss. As he says:

> you may be asked a question or be singled out for ... your lack of attention...
> You are much more on - stage than when dealing with only one other person
> ...(and this)... ordinarily evokes a fair degree of social anxiety (Buss,1980,
> p.206).

The most usual aspect of social anxiety, according to Buss, is audience anxiety. In relation to children, he suggests that those who have been in front of an audience and "suffered being laughed at or corrected" (op. cit. p.207) are likely to withdraw, avoid similar situations or remain passive. It may also lead to the development of further social anxieties later in life but of more immediate concern is that such responses are not going to facilitate good learning.

Another study, this time of school children, was conducted among American pupils in the seventies. It looked to "analyse antecedents and consequences of anxiety in elementary school children" (Phillips, 1978, p.8) and then discusses possible solutions to what the author, Beeman Phillips, suggested his work found as " the pressing and unresolved problem of stress and anxiety in school" (op. cit. p.150).

Having established that there may indeed be an issue to address, the next issue was how to examine it more thoroughly and systematically than I had in the Year 5 study.

1.9 Sociology and emotion

Sociological models of emotion often dovetail with psychological and physiological approaches to emotion but sociological analysis of emotions is legitimate in its own right (Kemper, 2000).

Sociologists study how emotions are generated, interpreted and expressed "by virtue of human membership in groups" (Kemper, 2000, p.45). In general, sociological studies of emotions are in fact social – psychological. In other words, "social structures, processes, or outcomes of these are seen to produce emotions in the individuals concerned with emotions differing according to where in a structure process or outcome an individual stands" (Kemper,2000, p.55).

1.10 Symbolic interactionists and emotion

Psychologists see emotions as everyday private occurrences, arising from non-verbal levels of the mind. Brian Parkinson suggests that one approach is to recognise that an emotion is " a relatively short term, evaluative state" focused on something such as Goffman might term a scene (Goffman, 1959, p.185) - an event or "state of affairs" (Parkinson, 1994, p.19).

However, the symbolic interactionist perspective suggests we should take a more "complex perspective on emotions" (Heise and Weir,1999, p.141) that examines the

possibility of emotions being observable and of emotions being interpreted as meaningful and significant.

Some sociologists of emotion, such as Kemper, focus on "social - structural considerations in the determination of emotions" whereas others such as Arlie Russell Hochschild, incline towards the cultural. Thus Hochschild sees emotion as having a signalling function, situating people (Hochschild,1979).

Affect control theory (ACT) attempts to straddle the structural and cultural approaches, being partly derived from a symbolic interactionist view of the self, suggesting that people act in a fairly "homeostatic way to maintain their identity" (Kemper, 2000, p.54). ACT will be examined in more detail later in this chapter and is returned to again in the thesis' conclusions with suggestions as to how it could be used to undertake further work on the topic of emotion – including anxiety in the primary classroom.

Shott suggests that " emotions are, if anything, especially amenable to being shaped by the definitional and situational influences stressed by symbolic interactionists" (Shott,1979, p. 1321). She also suggests that four tenets/ beliefs of symbolic interactionists are especially relevant in a study of emotion.

- Firstly, the belief that the actors' definitions and interpretations need to be studied if we are to understand why people act as they do.

- Secondly, the belief that human behaviour is emergent, continually constructed as acts occur.

- Thirdly, the actions of people are not only influenced by external events and stimuli but are affected by their internal states and impulses.

- Fourthly, the framework of human action is their social structure - rather than determining it (Shott,1979, p.1321).

Summarising what symbolic interactionists would suggest in relation to affective experience of emotion, it is that within the usual "social norms and internal stimuli, individuals construct their emotions; and their definitions and interpretations are critical to this often emergent process ... the complex consequences of learning, interpretation and social influence" (Shott,1979,p.1323).

Particularly relevant in terms of the focus of this thesis is Shott's relating of symbolic interactionist theory to role taking emotions. Role taking emotions "cannot occur without putting oneself on another's position and taking that person's perspective" (Shott, 1979, 1323). An individual experiencing such a feeling as embarrassment or anxiety has "first cognitively taken the role of some real or imaginary other - or the generalised other" which Mead described as the organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unit of self (op. cit. p.1324)

Shott suggests that role taking sentiments are of two types: reflexive role taking emotions which are directed towards oneself and comprise guilt, shame, embarrassment, pride and vanity - and empathic role taking emotions, imagining what one would feel if you were in their position.

1.11 Social control

As mentioned earlier, Cooley created the "looking glass" metaphor. For Thomas Scheff, the emotions that underlie the looking glass self lead to a theory of social control that is crucial to society. He argues that we are constantly in a state of either pride or shame with respect to the opinion or judgement of others. He calls this the "Cooley - Scheff conjecture" (Scheff, 1988, p.399).

Continuing with the issue of social control, Shott suggests that both reflexive role taking and empathic role taking motivate conduct and therefore lead to social control. Three propositions of symbolic interactionism are pertinent to this according to Shott.

- Firstly, because people can treat themselves as objects, they can take themselves into consideration as factors in a situation and evaluate their actions and selves.

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- Secondly individuals often learn about themselves indirectly, through their "perception of the attitude of others", hence enabling them to be objects to themselves, as Mead suggests (Shott , 1979, p.1334).

- Thirdly, Shott also suggests social control as self-control. The generalised other is especially important (as Mead proposed) as group attitudes influence individuals' thinking and conduct.

Reflexive role taking facilitates social control through the feelings of embarrassment, shame and guilt checking behaviour. Although they may link or overlap, specifically embarrassment is the one that is most relevant to the focus of this thesis. Shott suggests that it arises from awareness that one's presentation of self is inept and that embarrassment is most likely to occur when others are present.

If embarrassment is experienced, then there is a temptation to try to repair the supposed damage to one's self esteem by trying to promote oneself as adequate - repair one's self presentation and convince others of one's worthiness (Shott, 1979, p. 1327). "By repairing their situational identities in this fashion, they mitigate their unpleasant feelings of embarrassment" but more importantly in terms of classroom interaction and learning , they may also try to "minimise interaction with those who have witnessed their inept performance" (Shott, 1979, p.1327-8). This suggests that pupils may withdraw from whole class and even group work, potentially damaging their ability to learn effectively.

1.12 Power

Part of Kemper's work focuses on emotional responses to supposed or perceived changes in the relative status and power of self and other.

Kemper has proposed that a very large class of human emotions results from real, anticipated, imagined, or recollected outcomes of social relations. From the perspective of a person in any interaction in a social relationship, there may be "the following outcomes: increase, decrease, or no change in the self's own power and

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status vis–a-vis the other; and increase, decrease, or no change in the other's own power and status vis–a-vis the self". (Kemper, 2000, p.46).

Of particular significance to this thesis is that Kemper posits that power decrease leads to feelings of fear / anxiety. Increase in other's power also leads to fear and anxiety. In addition, to accept more status than one feels one deserves leads to shame/ embarrassment (Kemper, 2000, p.47). Goffman (1959) referred to small group interactions, which consist mainly of conversation being able, when successful, to enhance the self of each participant. Generally, some members of the group come away with surplus emotional energy, while others experience a deficit. Together then "power and status constitute a grid of social relations that underlies all social interactions providing the individual with greater or lesser amounts of emotional resources of a relatively stable nature" (Kemper, 2000, p.49).

Kemper adds that those who are rich in "emotional energy are seldom likely to experience anger, except of the righteous kind. Those low in emotional energy are more likely to experience fear" (Kemper,2000, p.50). If they were experiencing fear I would add that it is very likely that it is alongside anxiety. Although in the research I was investigating *all* pupils' reactions in periods of teacher questioning, the child I would describe as 'anxious' is the one my teaching experience tells me is most like likely to experience the negative, debilitating effects of it. This is borne out by some of the Phillips' research that grouped pupils as acquiescent, negativistic, self-enhancing and self-critical. The anxious or 'negativistic' pupil coped less well than many others (Phillips,1978).

1.13 Goffman and embarrassment

Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) presents a sociological perspective of social life typically conducted within the confines of a building. Using the terminology of the theatre, Goffman discusses the 'performers' presentation of a situation to the 'audience'. Much revolves around the importance of people working together as teams (similar I suggest to peer friendship groups or possibly ability groups within a class). Especially relevant to this study is his consideration of what happens when a 'faux pas' occurs (Goffman,1959).

He says that whether or not it was intentional it will result in " the persons present ... becoming flustered, ill at ease, embarrassed, nervous and the like"(op. cit. p.186). In reference to adult 'performers', Goffman asserts that tact in an effort to minimise the error will be employed in most instances (op. cit. p.204). Indeed I would add that adult 'performers' in schools (the teachers, classroom assistants etc.) would usually go to great lengths to minimise the effect of a pupil's error – hence perhaps the pupils telling me that they were less concerned about the adults than their peers in class? I will return to this point later in the thesis.

I think it may be argued that some pupils will also be " motivated to act tactfully because of an immediate identification with the performers...." (op. cit. p.204). However, others may also snigger or exchange disparaging looks thus perhaps deepening the sense of loss of self-esteem for the one making the mistake. In Goffman's terms, ".. the self conceptions around which his personality has been built may become discredited" (op. cit. p.214). Thus " it seems that there is no interaction in which the participants do not take an appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated. Life may not be much of a gamble but interaction is" (op. cit. p.215).

Later work saw Goffman (1967) highlight again that the emotion of embarrassment or the expectation of embarrassment is important in each social encounter because some measure of rejection possibly follows which in turn leads to feelings of embarrassment, shame or humiliation. Scheff suggests that the thought and perception of social expectations affects how we react almost continuously but it is subtle and almost invisible to being observed by outsiders making it difficult to describe (Scheff, 1988).

Scheff notes that Goffman's examination of embarrassment focuses on the social aspects whereas Helen Block Lewis focuses on what is being felt inside (Scheff,1988). Helen Block Lewis proposes that some shame goes unrecognised because what she calls undifferentiated shame is marked by efforts to disguise or hide it from others and even the self. A second form of shame that she calls bypassed shame she suggests leads to focusing on the incident to the exclusion of present

events. This has important implications for the learning environment of a classroom, for children are then not thinking about the teacher's learning objectives but replaying the embarrassing incident, as I suggest I saw happen with some of the Year 4 class.

Whatever the focus, whether it be the external or internal, or as Scheff puts it, both "between and within interactants" (Scheff, 1988, p.300) the effect may be similar in that in may impact negatively on the learning of pupils.

1.14 Affect Control Theory (ACT)

In symbolic interactionism, emotional experiences are "shaped culturally as individuals formulate events in words, and individual experiences are shaped socially as others contribute to the verbal formulation of one's experiences" (Heise and Weir,1999, p.139). Affect Control Theory offers a model that aids understanding of how emotion attributions are created by the linguistic framing of events. The theory models the formation of behavioural expectations, the redefinition of people as a result of their actions, and the emergence of emotions during social interaction.

ACT's basic motivational maxim is that people will act so as to produce impressions that confirm the underlying connotations of self and others' identities. ACT suggests that choosing actions to confirm the sentiment attached to one's identity effectuates the social role associated with that identity.

Faced with unsettling events that seem to refute feelings or sentiments, people work to achieve confirmation. Heise and Weir have done some work using ACT and suggest that first, people try to re-interpret ongoing actions in a way that will lead to impressions matching feelings. If that fails, they try to create ensuing events that restore similarity between feelings and immediate impressions. Failing that, they redefine the situation, changing the characters of interactants through attributions and labelling, so that the impressions being produced in the circumstances match a new framing of the situation.

ACT posits that emotions embellish ongoing activity in a way that transforms a person with a given identity into the person who is evidenced in an ongoing event.

That is, a person's emotion combined with the person's identity creates an obvious persona that corresponds to the impression of the person being produced through actions. Emotion makes a person in a given role feel and look the way events have made that person seem.

1.15 Summary of the literature on emotions

> By entering a situation in which he is given a face to maintain, a person takes on the responsibility of standing guard over the flow of events as they pass before him. He must ensure that a particular *expressive order* is sustained — an order that regulates the flow of events, large or small, so that anything that appears to be expressed by them will be consistent with his face. (Goffman, 1967, p.9)

Good face is lost in any kind of negative happening — one of which could be making a mistake at times of whole class teacher questioning. A pupil maintaining a good face must avoid such happenings. Participating in events that support face also sustains expressive order, but there are alternative ways of doing this. For example, a pupil can affirm a good face through humour - or achievement of course, i.e. by answering a question appropriately. Safer though perhaps to try to avoid a negative happening. Is answering a question in front of your class potentially such a 'happening'?

Most work on this topic has been undertaken with adults, albeit young adults in some cases. This thesis sought to add to our understanding of observable emotional responses during potentially stressful/ anxiety creating occasions with children suggesting how they may be forming their learner identity as a result.

1.16 Questioning

Teacher questions have always had a dominant role in primary classrooms (Edwards and Mercer 1987). Hammersley (1977, p.57) states that they are a "central interactional form", in both oral and written media.

In this section I begin by presenting a brief overview of the literature on such teacher questioning in the primary classroom. As has been outlined, the focus of this study was the *emotions* under teacher questioning, the effect of this form of interaction in a public context, not the teacher questioning itself. What I offer next therefore is a broad but brief contextualisation of what the literature states Year 4 children typically faced in terms of questioning in a primary classroom in the late nineties. This is not from any specific theoretical standpoint because I am not offering what teacher questioning should be as such nor examining in any real detail how children may perceive it. I am looking at it merely as a form of interaction; a special sort of conversation perhaps because again, I felt that such a quest, however valid, was beyond the scope of this project. Instead, by using relevant data from a major study on teacher questioning, Galton's ORACLE study, I am suggesting what teacher questioning is for pupils and what I consider needs to be included by the term 'teacher questioning' for my purposes. I therefore focus on literature that essentially relates to the quantity and type of teacher questioning that has been reported as being prevalent in primary classrooms.

1.17 Questions in the classroom

In a primary school, classroom talk or discourse has been traditionally dominated by the teacher's questions. Mercer reported on this in the late eighties (Mercer, 1987, p.45). In a more recent report on classrooms between 1976 - 96, Galton wrote that:

> Teaching in today's primary schools at Key Stage 2 is very much a matter of teachers talking and children listening ... when questions are asked of children, these questions require them either to recall facts or to solve a problem for which their teachers expect a correct answer (Galton et al 1999, p.33).

Further illustrating the dominance of teacher questions, a study of both primary and secondary classrooms found that:

> over the class hour there were eighty-four questions asked by the teacher and two from all the pupils combined;

> over the school year, just one question per month per pupil was typically asked (Dillon, 1990, p.7).

However, not only are questions posed by the teacher the most common from of dialogue, but they are diverse. Just as there is no such thing as *the* classroom context, the classroom is but "a complex of multiple contexts" (Dillon, 1990, p.9), there will not be classroom questioning as one identifiable entity. There are multiple contexts each "entailing a differentially apt use of question" (op. cit. p.8).

Wood reasons that this is because teachers have a range of roles and objectives to contend with and that the " common teacher response .. is to initiate and sustain interactions not by showing or telling but by demanding and asking" (Wood, 1991, p.113). He continues:

> Teacher questions ... are often specific, demanding a narrow range of possible right answers. Teachers often know the answers to the questions they ask, and children, by four years of age, possess the ability to recognise this fact ... and (are) likely to be inhibited by such questions. (op. cit. p.113).

Corroborating this, Love and Mason assert that, "where pupils perceive questions as testing ... they may be confined by tensions and concerns about getting things right" (Love and Mason, 1995, p.264).

Mercer states of teacher questions that:

> ...most of the questions that teachers ask do not, in the most straightforward sense, seek information. They are part of the discursive weaponry available to teachers for controlling topics of discussion, directing pupils' thought and action, and establishing the extent of shared attention, joint activity and common knowledge (Mercer, 1987, p.46).

Writing again some years later, Mercer also said that " there has been a lot of research on the *kinds* and *number* of questions teachers ask" (my italics) and that if British primary teachers are typical, " the majority of those questions are concerned with managing the class" (Mercer, 1995, p.28).

Managing the class will involve managing the pupil's tasks and workload. Galton, in his classroom fieldwork for ORACLE found that:

> ... the bulk of teacher - pupil interactions are concerned directly with the pupils task - 84.5 per cent, and that " ..open questions, the form of questioning most

closely related to encouraging enquiry and discovery learning ... represent an extremely small proportion of all questioning (Galton, 1980, p.85 - 87).

Thus a distinction clearly has to be made between the type of questioning we as adults are likely to be more used to when talking with other adults – that of genuine enquiry and questioning to discover facts and information - and what seems to be happening in primary classes, that of questioning often being used to control and manage.

1.18 The ORACLE study

The ORACLE study (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) was undertaken from 1975 – 1980. It was the first major British study of primary classrooms (Galton 1994), focusing on 60 East Midlands classrooms.

Pupil / teacher (or other adult) interaction was the focus of Pupil Records and was tabulated according to details of the interaction.

Teacher Records recorded the conversations had by teachers and was tabulated according to the subject, audience and curriculum activity covered. Thus the project illustrated the curriculum as defined by both teacher and pupil activities (Galton, 1989).

Although interviews were an important component of later stages of the work, Galton's methodology as part of the initial ORACLE research was quantitative. It measured pupil progress and produced figures relating to the type and length of interactions between the pupils and their teachers through the use of systematic observation.

Because ORACLE was so comprehensive I used elements from it as a starting point for the classroom work I undertook. My own intention was always to be essentially qualitative, aiming, through interviews and observation, to focus on the emotional impact of all teacher questions. The details of exactly what type of question was being asked was therefore of secondary importance to me. However, in order to suggest some definition of what I was looking to examine, I turned again to ORACLE.

1.19 Teacher questions - a definition

Given that teacher questioning can involve a multitude of types of dialogue and intentions, a description of what a teacher question is, is complicated.

In the ORACLE work, Galton adopted his own definition by starting with a consideration of all teacher / pupil interactions.

He breaks down the typical teachers' interactions with the pupils as follows:

	Percentage
1. Questioning	12.0
2. Making statements	44.7
3. Silent interaction	22.3
4. No interaction	21.0
	100.0 (Table 5.1 - Galton, 1980, p.85)

Fig.1

With reference to the specific nature of questions, Galton states that he is working on the understanding that " a question is defined as any utterance which seeks an answer" (op. cit. p.85). Therefore Galton classifies rhetorical questions as statements and any commands that elicit a verbal response as questions.

Although not a question in terms of requiring a verbal reply, from the very start of my observation work, I noted that rhetorical questions may cause embarrassment for pupils, and may therefore be linked to anxiety.

For my definition of questioning I therefore include what Galton calls statements as well as questions. Even what he has termed non verbal interaction I deem needs inclusion in my definition for this study.

This is because some of the most potentially embarrassing moments for pupils could occur when virtually the whole class was aware that the teacher was looking silently at a pupil. When the pupil realised and looked up, interaction of a sort occurred

although usually, still no words would be exchanged. The question, for question it certainly was, was surely understood by both parties to be something along the lines of, " Are you going to pay attention to my lesson now?" The smiles and stifled giggles of pupils nearby, usually ensured the measure of discomfiture the teacher may have been looking to create in the pupil to get their point across.

To summarise using Galton's terminology, I am concerned with the effect of what he calls teacher questioning, statements and silent interaction (i.e. gesturing, showing, marking / checking work with a pupil). This therefore includes most teacher interactions that are conducted on a one to one basis in front of a number or all of the pupil's peers.

Researching as I did in the late nineties nearly twenty years after ORACLE, Galton's work could be disregarded as outdated. However, Galton undertook some further work in the later nineties himself. In it he noted that in this new 1996-97 study, carried out in 38 primary schools - most of which had figured in the earlier study – he found that both group work *and class teaching* had doubled"(Galton 1998, article).

The PACE findings of pupil experience echo what Galton had said, namely that whole class interaction in the 1990s was double that of the 1970s, with teacher time spent on instruction also rising "dramatically as did the proportion of closed questions used" (Pollard et al, 2000, p. 282).

Of questioning, Galton noted, "the ratio of questioning to making statements has hardly altered (1:3.6 compared with 1:3.7 in the late 1970s). Thus, the shift to class teaching has substantially increased the amount of talking at pupils… with only 10 per cent of questions …cognitively challenging" (op. cit. article).

Therefore, in some respects little has changed in teacher questioning of pupils. But, the amount of class teaching has risen. I will return to this and the impact of the NLS and NNS in a later chapter.

1.20 Symbolic interactionism and this project

Having outlined the main tenets of symbolic interactionism, I list the following specific principles from the framework that I took to underpin this work and looked to examine and identify with the study with the Year 4 pupils.

1. Recognising Mead's focus on language as symbol, to look beneath the apparently obvious meanings of language used by the child participants in class and to me in an attempt to convey the complexity of what they might mean, their own definitions, and how it might relate to their feelings (Mead). Also how they might be using language to manage and change their social setting.

2. To be aware that the pupils would respond to all classroom participants (child and adult) depending on the meanings they attached to other's actions and to therefore try to interpret such meanings (Blumer) as they may be creating for themselves.

3. The extent to which the children were seeing each other as in Cooley's looking glass, reflecting back to themselves their peers and others' judgements of them, and the feelings that may arise as a result, such as embarrassment, anxiety, pride amongst others. I investigate too their "selective interest" (Cooley, 1967, p 218)– especially in terms of pupil peers and school adults.

4. What sort of inner dialogue might be happening between the I and me (Mead) of each child and whether that might be negotiated through discussion with the child. For example, if alternative readings of events are suggested.

5. What coping strategies or mechanisms (Everett, Pollard et al) the children seem to employ.

6. What change in identity over time might be apparent, with the emphasis on emergent, continually constructed, changing and negotiated roles?

7. Where role taking may occur, where is it reflexive and /or empathic (Shott)

8. Evidence of change of status leading to emotions including anxiety (Kemper)

9. Evidence of embarrassment (Goffman, 1967) as well as undifferentiated and bypassed shame (Scheff, Block Lewis)

10. Overall, the impact of the social setting of the classroom at times of whole class teacher questioning; just what sort of learning selves the pupils seem to be constructing for themselves through the use of language used both with others as well as internally, as a result of interacting primarily with others at such times.

The above includes the elements of symbolic interactionism that Shott (1979) suggested most relevant in terms of studying emotion. They necessarily overlap. It is a feature of symbolic interactionism that it permits such overlaps; the preservation of the puzzling and the muddled (Rock, 1979) which then allows the researcher working within it to "cast some light" rather than try to offer complete analyses of human conduct (Rock, 1979, 231 – 235).

That apart, I underline again that my underlying assumption is that as the children are constructing their learning identity, if it is not always or usually a positive experience that it may be undermining their confidence in themselves as learners and discourage them from fully participating in whole class teacher questioning. My contention if that were the case, is that they are not learning in school as effectively as they might otherwise.

Working on these understandings, through the following chapters I trace how the data findings reflect on the above before offering overall conclusions as part of the final chapter, chapter 10.

Copying maps from the board of places they neither knew nor cared about, the kids settled in peaceful silence. We could watch their faces relax as the anxiety died away. The anxiety was that they would be asked to give and think, when they supposed they had nothing to give or think with.

(Grundsell, 1978, p.50)

Chapter 2
Research design and methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design I chose and the methods I used to come to further understandings of the effects of teacher questions on pupils in the whole class context.

Because this work is underpinned by the symbolic interactionist framework, I discuss the methodological stance of that paradigm, focusing in particular on participant observation, an important way of working within that paradigm.

I then highlight some of the constraints of working in primary classrooms in recent years in the light of the relatively new government guidelines for schools. What follows then is a description of how I set up the project from its initial pilot stage (April – July 1999) to the main data collection covering the following school year (September 1999 – July 2000).

I then explain how I revisited the issue of anxiety, first with children outside the research schools - then introducing it through the imaginary characters of Chris and Sam with the Year 4 research pupils. I go on to describe my use of small-scale pupil interviews when I discussed the subject of anxiety and related issues openly with each of the Year 4 children.

The methods of data collection are reviewed. These included the use of video as well as fieldnotes made away from the schools. I also discuss the writing of pupil profiles and their value to me in furthering my thinking about the work.

The use of case study and long interviews, both with pupils and teachers, are outlined. I explain why I used each before I conclude with an assessment of all the methodological issues raised and how I might set about things differently in future work.

2.2 The methodology of symbolic interactionism

It has been suggested that perhaps symbolic interactionism has been at its most influential in terms of the methodological framework it espouses (Atkinson and Housley, 2003).

Blumer saw it as vital that the nature of the empirical world be respected and believed that the methodological stance of symbolic interactionism did attempt to so respect the world by engaging directly with it (Blumer, 1969). He stated that engaging directly with the world through exploration and inspection - also referred to as "naturalistic" investigation (Blumer, 1969, p.46) – means that symbolic interactionism "fits itself" to the world it is seeking to study (op. cit. p. 48).

" ... the methodological boundaries and affinities of what passes for interactionism have expanded and become more permeable" (Atkinson and Housley, 2003, p. 117) since its early days in Chicago, with little relationship now with the work of those working in interactionism's infancy. However, although modern interactionism draws on inspirations from many sources (Atkinson and Housley, 2003) it has played a key role in the growth of ethnography – as well as qualitative research in general. As Rock says, there is absolutely no doubt as to the intellectual affinities between interactionist thought and ethnographic research methods (Rock, 1979).

Writing of more recent developments, Plummer (1991) highlights that the range of research tools has grown with photography, video, letters, dairies and life stories becoming much more commonly used. He claims that more subjective methods are widely used too, methods that perhaps in the past were thought unsuitable but have now gained respectability. This has led to researchers mining their own personal experiences more than before – and using fiction more readily too.

2.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation "has become chiefly associated with the programme of symbolic interactionism" (Rock, 1979, p.178). By choosing it as the main means by which I researched the field of the primary classroom, I, by using my training and experience of being a teacher, as well as researcher, followed in the tradition of others Rock reports on such as Roth who when a patient himself observed a ward of TB patients and the pool player, Polsky, who through his career was ideally placed to observe the hustler (Rock, 1979, p.214). As Rock goes on to state, many interactionists have, then, capitalised on their non -academic selves for the purposes of analysis (op. cit. p.214).

> The importance of the self may also be revealed by a discussion of the distinctive methodology of symbolic interactionism. Participant observation inserts the self of the sociologist into a research setting, permitting him to record and experience events as they unfold (Rock,1979, p.237).

> As observer, the sociologist must survey social life from without, treating it in a fashion which is unfamiliar and disturbing to ordinary experience. As participant, he must attempt to merge with the world about him. Merging and distant appraisal are irreconcilable.. in the main, that tension is resolved by formulating ideas and explanations *in situ*, ...resolving dilemmas in practice and not in speculation (Rock,1979, p.237-8).

A particularly succinct description of participant observation sums it up as a "method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher (or otherwise) ...observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning people over some length of time"(Becker and Geer, p. 109 in Manis and Meltzer (Eds.) 1967). Done well, Becker and Geer suggest that it is a method of working that " gives us more information... than data gathered by any other sociological method" (op. cit. p. 109).

In their essay comparing participant observation with the interview process, they highlight that the participant observer may see things not reported in interviews and may be able to encourage study subjects to talk about events because he/ she observed them (for example as I was able to do as outlined in the later chapter with Julia). Finally, it may be useful too to help fill in the gaps of what may be left partially said

in interviews (op. cit. p.113). This I would suggest needs much caution but was something I experienced in my own data collection when in some of the interviews with children I was able to make suggestions about what a child might mean by drawing on events I'd seen in class. From this experience, I felt that the combination of short semi structured interviews after a lengthy time working as participant observer in the school, helped me triangulate the data and added weight to the validity of the conclusions reached. Sometimes it could feel that I was doing this instinctively, and I therefore felt cautious, but Becker and Geer suggest that this is normal, that the participant observer, because they have worked alongside their subjects in " situations of the kind that normally occur for them" (Becker and Geer, p. 118) instead of the abnormal interview situation, " he builds an ever-growing fund of impressions, many of them at subliminal level, which give him an extensive base for the interpretation and analytical use of any particular datum" (op. cit. p. 118). This " sensitises him to subtleties which might pass unnoticed in an interview" alone. The outcome of this will be that the participant observer is pushed to " continually to revise and adapt his theoretical orientation and specific problems in the direction of greater relevance to the phenomena under study" (op. cit. p. 119).

Regarding the ethics of working as participant observer, especially with children, Fine and Sandstrom suggest that the key is the issue of respect. This will be especially important albeit difficult if they choose to reject involvement in the research. If it happens it of course "has to be accepted" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988, p. 76) because as in the case of working with adults, the issue is one of informed consent. In the case of my work, I found that it may (as Fine and Sandstrom acknowledge) be possible to return to a child who initially refuses to take part, and by giving them a fuller explanation of the process, encourage them (successfully in my case with Jed) to reconsider.

Fine and Sandstrom recommend obtaining informed consent – certainly from children in the age group I was predominantly working with, Year 4.

An ideal type of participant observation suggested by Fine and Sandstrom is that of friend (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988, p. 17) with other researchers also suggesting the

possibility of true equality of friendship between adult and child as in the least adult role.

2.4 Research in primary classrooms in the late nineties

As referred to before, an early influence when I was preparing to undertake this research was the work done by Stephen Rowland, especially when he was in class with Michael Armstrong. However, whereas Rowland, working in the seventies, was able to find a school to work in that "encouraged an informal atmosphere and approach to teaching" (Rowland, 1984), these days it may be more restricted.

Research now has to be conducted in primary classrooms which are focused on the requirements of the National Curriculum (NC) and Literacy and Numeracy strategies (NLS and NNS respectively). Thus, Rowland pursuing his own research agenda worked and talked with the pupils during lessons, but with what can be seen as the constraints of the current guidelines, I had little opportunity to do similarly, an example being the way my interviews had to take place in the children's break and lunchtimes.

However, there were some advantages for me. Teachers in schools told me that they believed there was increased whole class teacher questioning resulting from the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. Focusing on the questioning at the beginning and end of lessons as required by the strategies probably therefore gave me more opportunities for sustained concentrated observation of this sort of working than I would have otherwise had.

2.5 The research design

I wanted my research design to reflect what were at the time very recent changes to primary school teaching in England, the implementation of the NLS and NNS. This was with the idea that after the work was completed I might be able to write from it for different audiences, including in particular teachers facing the challenges of whole class questioning within those frameworks.

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I originally envisaged working with classes throughout KS2 but with an overarching focus entirely fixed on the issue of any anxiety being generated with therefore minimal focus on specifics of any classroom environment such as ethnic or gender issues, socio economic factors and such. This was because I considered detailed exploration of such factors beyond the scope of the work and also because I hoped that a general approach would keep the findings most relevant for most teachers' classroom situations.

The design was originally over ambitious nevertheless, and working across the KS2 year groups proved to be beyond its scope, as is discussed more explicitly later. Otherwise, it more successfully allowed for a lengthy introductory period, necessary I believed because of the topic under examination being potentially sensitive, and accommodated too the fact that the researcher was new and inexperienced, by allowing scope to work in a variety of ways that allowed exploration of researcher role, including working as observer, participant observer, teacher and interviewer. This is more fully examined later in chapter 3.

The original design allowed for the possibility of some returning to the pupils with data, partly for purposes of validation and partly to provide findings upon which further work might be based. In the event, this was also over ambitious.

The research design is detailed throughout the following sections of this chapter. What does need to be noted here however is that all names used, whether for schools, teachers or pupils, are of course pseudonyms.

2.6 The teachers and schools

I could not have undertaken the research without the goodwill and support of many teachers in several schools, the main one being Helen Smith.

We had met when she had accepted a post to work at the same school as myself some two years earlier. Although we had worked in different buildings, the few occasions that we had met and talked had led to our becoming friends. At the end of the school year, when I left that school and then started the PhD at Sheffield Hallam University,

Helen left to take up a new post at Marlborough Community School. We kept in touch and knowing she was now working with Year 4, when the time came to look for a school that would have me in to do some pilot work and then be part of the subsequent main data collection, I asked her to consider having me working alongside her. She had no hesitation and made the initial contacts for me to meet with her new Head teacher and begin the process of my gaining access to the pupils.

Having been in teaching since the mid 1980s myself, I had many teacher friends working in the profession. However, I asked Helen if I might work with her because I believed that in her classroom I would be most free to research as I planned. I felt confident that we could work together well. I knew for example that there was mutual trust between us, we had a similar approach to classroom management and that we tended to respond to situations similarly. This meant that I wouldn't have to spend time and energy concerned about the class teacher's reaction to what I was doing but could give all my attention to observing and working with the children. I knew Helen to be confident in her role as teacher so unlikely to be much affected by having me watching her as she worked with the children. This was important and a key reason I didn't work with another potential teacher partner who was new to the profession and, I judged, somewhat uncomfortable at the thought of my watching her teach.

During the pilot work, the details of which I outline later in this chapter, I began contacting other schools with a view to using them for the main data collection too. I chose those which were in my immediate area, or with whom I had some association. Schools in my region are not close to universities or other institutions so I anticipated they would be unfamiliar with the requirements of someone researching within them. My judgment on choosing schools where I was known or known of was therefore practical. I was hoping that this might lead to their being more likely to be open to the possibility of my working with them again, albeit in a different role than that of teacher.

As it turned out, I had been overly apprehensive about the reaction of schools being approached. The only school that felt unable to discuss the project beyond my initial phone call was local but one that I had no real connection with.

I was pleasantly surprised by how receptive all the other schools were to my initial enquiries. The school where I arranged to work with a Year 6 class was some distance from home but was one I'd worked in very happily some years earlier. They had actually had such a turnaround of staff that the Head teacher and Year 6 teacher were relatively new and didn't know me after all (although I still knew other members of staff) but the Head nevertheless invited me in and after we had discussed the work, gave her go-ahead to the project enthusiastically and unreservedly.

The school where I arranged to work with a Year 3 class was near my home. I made contact because I had two friends working in there in non-teaching roles, their own children also attending the school. From what they told me, I thought the Head teacher might be open to the idea of having me undertake some of the project there. When I visited, I found that the Year 3 class teacher Sara and I had actually worked together some years earlier. The Head teacher, seeing that we knew each other, immediately gave me the go ahead to work with Sara on the research and so she and I made arrangements.

I followed up the visits to the schools with a letter to each Head including an ethical code for my working in the schools. These documents may be read as Appendix 1 and 2, the example given being the one adapted for Marlborough Community.

However, I had been overly optimistic about how much I could do. As I prepared the practicalities of the work for the autumn term and allowed for the unfolding timetable restrictions and occasions the teachers would be unavailable, it became obvious that I would not be able to see the children in each of the three classes as often as I felt necessary. At the start of September, I therefore contacted the school with the Year 6 class again, discussed the problem, and agreed with the Head teacher to put the work there on hold. This kept my options with them open but most importantly, left me with more time and flexibility to work with just two classes in the remaining pair of schools from later that month.

2.7 The issue of anxiety

As outlined in the main introduction, I had undertaken a small study, which hinted at there being some anxiety present at times of teacher questioning. However, I had not actually talked about anxiety with pupils now for almost a year.

With the time lapse, I wanted to familiarise myself again with the sort of concerns children might express about whole class work and especially teacher questioning. I therefore arranged to talk to children who knew me or to whom I was familiar in July 1999 – a few weeks before the start of the main data collection and a year after the initial small-scale study.

The first child, Joe, had known me since he was 7 years old. At the time of the interview he was 11. As well as being a pupil in the class, which was part of my original study, he and I had continued the teacher - pupil relationship as I had been tutoring him regularly in maths and English over the intervening months. He remembered the questionnaire I used in July 1998 when he was in the Year 5 class with me - and also recalled much of the subsequent class discussion we had had about anxiety in the classroom.

Joe agreed to be recorded on video and the following is edited extracts from the tape:

JA	...when would your *(current)* teacher ask questions - the literacy hour perhaps?
Joe	Yes.
JA	Can you think how you feel when questions are being asked? Perhaps she says "Who can tell me...." - whatever. How do you feel?
Joe	I feel, um....what could that be...if I get it right or if I get it wrong and if she asks me, do I screw up in front of all the class?
JA	If she asks you ...? *(seeking clarification of what he said)*
Joe	...and I answer, do I mess up in front of all the class?

This second extract picks up where Joe has just told me that they think he is stupid when he answers a question incorrectly:

JA   .... who's they?
Joe   The rest of the class.
JA   The rest of your classmates. Many of them? (*Joe looks thoughtful*).
        All of them? One or two really?
Joe   Almost all of them.
JA   When they say something like that would it be later or....
Joe   Just when I get something wrong and if they're sitting behind me or in front of
        me, lots of them turn around.....
JA   So the people around you might say something there and then. Would it
        perhaps carry on the playground or later on at lunchtime?
Joe   Occasionally it does.

And finally, in answer to why he doesn't more readily offer opinions in class:

Joe   Because I didn't like to express what I think .... 'cos, sometimes it makes
        other people ...... if no one else agrees with me they think it's really stupid.

I could not know whether the impressions Joe formed about himself in relation to his
peers were entirely accurate. For example, I found it hard to believe that the majority
("Almost all of them.") of the class would make adverse comments if he got a
question wrong. Although I knew Joe well, the fact that I had not seen him interacting
with his teachers and peers during his most recent school year was limiting in this
respect.

However, our conversation was a helpful exercise because it reinforced that even a
very capable child could and did experience anxiety. It showed me too that for the
subsequent work of the main data collection, observations and fieldnotes of
classrooms coupled with recorded interviews such as that with Joe, were likely to give
the most complete picture of the pupil classroom culture and suggest most reasons for
the anxiety of teacher questioning.

The second occasion I was able to arrange to talk with children on the subject of
teacher questioning was with a group of eight Year 3 - 5 children. I had not taught
these children but I was a familiar face to them through my knowing their parents and
seeing them socially. On the whole, they knew each other well.

As with Joe, the following is again edited from a longer taped conversation between
us all:

JA   ....but when questions are being asked, what do you feel like I wonder? Would anyone like to tell me? (*Several hands go up)*

Jane   Um........ I just feel like I can't do it.

JA   You can't do it?

Jane   Um, yeah.

JA   And what does that make you feel like?...*(girl pauses)*...What does that make you feel like.., happy or sad or worried or.....

Jane   *(interrupting)* Worried.

JA   Worried. Okay. What about you?

Mary   When I can't do it, I, ...um....it makes me feel unhappy because I feel that everyone else can do it and I'm the only one who can't.

What cannot be demonstrated by merely reading the children's comments was the way they clamoured to talk about the issue. They spoke over one another and despite knowing me less well than Joe had, were eager to share their concerns with me.

Both conversations were in some respects superficial in that I didn't probe. However, they were enormously helpful in reassuring me that this was a largely hidden issue which gave the children concern and was thus worth further investigation.

2.8

Figure 2: Timetable of research design, the pilot study and main data collection

Apr-99	Pilot study with Helen	Also start contacting and visiting further schools with a view to using them for the main data
May-99	"	collection from September.
		Reading continues.
Jun-99	"	
Jul-99	"	Joe and Year 3-5 children talk about anxiety / Design of study and use of video explored
Aug-99		
Sep-99	Mid / end September - start visiting both Year 3 and 4 classes for main data collection	
Oct-99	First supply teaching day with Year 4	
Nov-99		
Dec-99		
Jan-00		Camcorder introduced and begins to be in regular use with Year 4 class
Feb-00	First pupil interviews begun	
	Whole class supply teaching introducing imaginary pupils Chris and Sam	
Mar-00	Year 4 interviews continue	
Apr-00	Complete Year 4 interviews	Interview Helen (class teacher)
May-00	Last lesson using 'Chris and Sam'	
Jun-00		School trips with Year 4 to local parish church and Planetarium
Jul-00	Helen leaves school for new post	Interview Kath (Head teacher)
Aug-00		
Sep-Dec 00	Occasional days supply work with class, now Year 5 - with final visit in December 2000	

When I spoke to Joe and the group of Year 3 – 5 children, it was during the final weeks of the pilot study in July 1999. The study had begun in April, at Marlborough Community, with Helen and her current Year 4 class.

I went to the school as a participant observer / classroom helper regularly, the number of visits each week depending on the access I had to the other potential research schools. I was still visiting these during this period with a view to arranging more for the main data collection starting the following September.

With Marlborough Community being a relatively small school, I quickly became recognised by staff and regular helpers within the school and I cultivated the social contact initiated on my behalf by Helen and the Head teacher, Kath, by taking opportunities to have at least some of each break time in the staff room. Even children from other classes quickly came to know me by name when they met me in corridors, the photocopy room and other communal spaces.

During this initial pilot work, I was primarily looking to investigate the practicalities of recording the research and did not raise the issue of anxiety. In addition to experimenting with the effectiveness of recording on cassette and videotapes for the main study from September, field notes were made after and away from the school. An example of field notes is given as Appendix 3.

The use of the purpose-built music / radio room was also explored both in terms of the technology it provided but although ideal for both recording and playing back video recorded interviews, it was very well used by all classes and therefore usually unavailable to me in practice.

2.9 Use of video

I was reluctant at first to use video recording in school to support the data collection even though it is increasingly used by symbolic interactionists. Early concerns I had were that the technical aspects of the set up, the running, as well as the possible novelty of it for the children, could hinder what I wanted and intended to be very unobtrusive research. However, my reading of the literature showed that others had used it successfully and contrary to my initial thoughts, suggested it offered some valuable advantages for the sort of discreet research I wanted to undertake. The appeal of the use of video and audio records is particularly clearly outlined by Erickson (1992). He states that advantages can be:

> 1.The capacity for completeness of analysis" (Erickson, 1992, p.209). The event may be revisited by replaying the tape observing "from a variety of attentional foci (op. cit. p.209).
>
> 2. Avoidance of "premature interpretation" and "opportunity for deliberation" is afforded by the ability to replay events.
>
> 3. It reduces the dependence of the observer on frequently occurring events (op. cit. p.210).

In participant observation it can be the commonly occurring event that comes to be understood best (op. cit. p.210). Actual observation of the comparatively rare event, such as the fleeting moment of embarrassment or tension may be, I realised could be aided by having video footage which may be replayed to examine the event closely.

Erickson is also clear however that there may be limitations when using video. He notes in particular that there will necessarily be "the absence of participation as a means of learning and the absence of contextual information beyond the framing of the screen" (op. cit. p.211). However, I hoped that my use of participant observation and in particular my use, in effect, of the role of teacher assistant, should address these issues and minimise any distancing the use of video may cause. I was also sure from the outset that I would try to not be seen as camera operator but would set it up

and leave it as far as the children were concerned – thus in fact distancing myself from the camera almost as if it were nothing to do with me.

This had its drawbacks, particularly when an unexpected event occurred in class and I had to stay where I was, knowing the camera wasn't running – or was facing the wrong way. Frustrating though that was, I remained away from the camera aiming to continue to give the impression that it was something quite separate from me.

2.10 Video – the pilot work

The video recorder that was available for use for the pilot study was rather old and large which tended to make it intrusive. Helen, the class teacher found that the tripod literally got in her way, the classroom being quite small, and it soon became joked about in the school as my "BBC outside broadcast unit", so big and cumbersome was the equipment. I decided I would need to experiment further with a smaller video recorder such as a hand-held camcorder, or otherwise abandon the idea of using video altogether. In the event, a camcorder was obtained and I used that much more successfully in the final weeks of the pilot study in July 1999.

The impact on the pupils of having a new smaller video camera in the classroom was far less disruptive, not least because it could be sat on a small table top tripod and so did not have to be negotiated / walked around as the large camera had been.

Different lessons were recorded, both whole class and groups. I experimented with setting the camera in various positions around the room and found that three sites were particularly good in terms of seeing the most children as well as being tucked away sufficiently for both the children and the camera to be safe. I generally could see up to 13 –15 pupils in shot from any of these locations. External school noise was always a problem with either camera and could drown out the quieter children's voices on tape, but on the whole I was impressed by the quality of what I was getting and it seemed well worth the additional effort over and above just using fieldnotes.

In that I was choosing the view of what the camera was going to see I was constructing and selecting the reality. However, I essentially simply set the camera up

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so that I had tapes that regularly showed me everyone in the class over, for example, a week's lessons. I rarely chose whom to watch as such.

The classroom had a high proportion of glass. Consequently, when the sun shone, although it was not obvious in situ, the children were often in silhouette when viewed later on tape. This needed to be constantly borne in mind when recording but it could not be completely overcome and sometimes led to it being difficult to make out which child was being observed / speaking.

It was obviously important to ensure that the pupils were used to having a camera in the classroom in the hope that they become less self conscious and more natural than they may otherwise have been for the main data analysis. Mercer (1991, p.48) found that in work he did that although early video recordings show some children distracted by the camera, "such signs of interest soon diminish and are not apparent at all" in later recordings. On the whole, I found much the same of the Year 4 class I was working with.

The children had experienced video as part of their learning, having had students using video / camcorders to record them on previous occasions. When I introduced the video recorders, they were therefore interested but not excessively so and within three weeks of my regularly going in with the camera, showed very little awareness of it. This in part was probably also due to the fact that whatever they did in front of the camera (a little sneaky face-making or waving behind the teacher's back was as much as I got) I made a point of never commenting. In the first week or two, a few asked if I'd seen the videotape (made on the previous visit). I would say, "Yes" and move on, making nothing of it and refusing to be drawn.

When using the camera, it seemed courteous to ask permission of the children if I was filming them in small groups or pairs. However, when using the camcorder to record the class overall, no reference was made to it at all after initial permission had been sought.

In the earliest recordings, Helen made reference to it once or twice. She felt a little awkward with it herself at the start, but as later video tapes showed, it wasn't long

before both she and I forgot its presence - hence some unusable footage when one or other of us had accidentally stood in front of it and I got home to watch tapes of our backs. An aside, this nevertheless perhaps usefully demonstrates just how all consuming teaching can be so that immediate surroundings and other considerations can genuinely be forgotten in the busyness of teaching and taking care of the class.

I used the pilot study as an opportunity to decide on some ground rules for myself, which I could then use in the subsequent main data collection. For example, I thought it important to always answer any questions the children had about the camera. They were generally posed one to one - the usual being "Is it on?" to which I would reply honestly depending on whether it was or not! Occasionally the camera would remain set up for a lesson even after recording had been completed but generally I would put it away when the next break time allowed - mainly for reasons of safety for the equipment itself. Although a small camera, set on a tabletop tripod, it was a relatively cramped classroom and the camera was still large enough to be knocked accidentally if children needed to obtain materials from nearby.

I avoided being seen setting it up or changing tapes where possible. If a child returned to the classroom to fetch something at a break time then they were likely to find me working on and preparing the camcorder for the next lesson but in general it was set up before they came into class at the start of the day and was dismantled after they'd gone out to play or gone home.

In this way, I hoped that the camera would just be seen as a tool that the children would just take for granted appeared whenever I was in school.

To further help me think about using the camcorder to its full potential, I watched the camera work of the film unit who recorded a series based in a Year 2 / 3 class, on BBC 2 during February and March 2000 entitled: *The Secret World of Year 3*. They clearly aimed to record life at the children's physical level as much as anything else, as I also did by setting my own camera at table height - but unlike them I did not generally move around with the camera, deciding with Helen that this would intrude too much upon her lessons and be disruptive.

The one occasion I did record 'on the move' was at the very end of the school phase of the research when everyone was very relaxed and work had all but finished a few days before the school year came to an end. I found it extremely difficult to both film and walk about although the children seemed to enjoy it and found it amusing. However, they became noticeably more self conscious when I pointed the camera in their direction and there was no doubt that the lesson was held up for short periods whilst I moved to different locations. It was an interesting experiment but reassured me that my choice of tabletop set camera work for the rest of the research had been the better decision in this case.

The video recorder used tapes that could be removed for playing to the children on the school video player. The video camera could then be used a second time to record the pupils' reactions to their watching themselves on the original videotape. It was then able to record the researcher-led follow up discussion too. I considered this an approach that could be useful primarily because it freed me to focus on chairing the discussion rather than combining that with also focusing on remembering pupils' reactions and responses. It was also an approach I'd read had been used (Silvers, 1977) and had been helpfully employed to provide a form of triangulation as first generation tapes are reviewed, this review being recorded as a second generation tape which then led to the possibility of a third, reflexive review of both.

I imagined I would use this facility far more than I did in the event, the main difficulty being access or lack of it, to the school video recorder in school. However, at the end of the summer term, I played the children a tape I'd recorded of them. It caused much curiosity and hilarity at first and then led to some interesting discussion that I recorded on a second tape. Although the home use of camcorders is increasing all the time, the reaction of many of these pupils to themselves on screen, suggested that it was still something of a novelty for many.

As I already had observed in person, the video analysis of lessons showed that the teacher talked most, with teacher-pupil interactions usually the common teacher-child-teacher-child form of verbal communication. It was unusual for this to alter. Generally the pupil's answer completed an interaction. It was rare for a child to begin or initiate it except in discussion of things other than subject specific issues. Overall

there was very little talk initiated by pupils, and the structure of most discourse was one of teacher initiation with just a single pupil response.

The video data was watched by myself firstly, transcribed and then analysed to provide an insight into how pupils reacted to teacher questions. As I will mention again at the end of chapter 5, I could, with hindsight, have been more incisive in terms of grouping and coding these interactions. However, what I did at the time was to note moments/ incidents that I thought could be demonstrating an emotional response and described it (as in chapter 5). I subsequently met with an ex teaching colleague, Linda, the main person other than myself to see the video data, and compared notes. This resulted in a form of cross-validation before I went on to further data analysis. I did also create something of an ongoing cycle as video footage was regularly returned to consider whether additional understandings or alternate readings could be reasonably obtained.

A typical week saw my recording about six hours of footage but about an hour of this was pre lesson time and not transcribed. For transcription, I focused almost exclusively on times of whole class teacher questions posed to the Year 4 class (the camcorder did not go to the Year 3 class). However, the footage of other times - for example, of the class coming in and taking their seats could be illuminating and was sometimes transcribed, as in chapter 8 with pupil Julia.

2.11 Classroom and general observation for the main data collection

The pilot work resolved most of my technical difficulties and clarified some thinking for the main data collection. From September 1999, I therefore started work in the two classrooms, with Helen and her new Year 4 class and Sara and her class of Year 3.

The teachers in both the research schools had asked me to give them some time with their new classes before I started to come into school too. So it was that I started visiting Helen from mid September 1999. I generally went twice a week, adding visits to the second school, with Sara, from the end of September.

Working with friends meant that contact over work-related issues was particularly straightforward. For example, it could be awkward discussing issues in school where young ears could be listening, but despite both teachers being in an even more demanding post with additional responsibilities than when I'd worked with them in the past, both were willing to have us communicate by phone from the start. We often came to prefer this form of contact for the privacy it afforded us. It also meant too that we were all freer whilst in school to respond to the sudden or unexpected. For example, it was often the case that if I'd arranged to talk with them at a certain time, it would have to be postponed because a parent needed a word or, in Sara's case, as the music specialist in the school, a music problem involving a pupil arose. Helen and I, both having computers online also made regular use of email to check or make arrangements and raise issues to consider before we next met.

As well as observing in class, in order to most rapidly become known and familiar I looked to find additional ways to be amongst the children. So it was that assemblies were attended and sometimes contributed to; playground and lunch hall duties were attended with the class teacher and opportunities to attend additional school activities sought. These included visits to outside venues such as the local parish church (both schools) and sports fixtures. In the case of Helen's school, supply teaching was eventually begun on an ad hoc basis too.

The decision to do some supply teaching was not one Helen, Kath (her Head teacher) and I made early in the work. We agreed to review the possibility as the research progressed, my hesitation initially being that it could confuse the role I wanted to undertake with the pupils. However, I knew that the school could have difficulties getting supply cover for their teachers to attend courses and similar, which could result in their not going.

In the event I did five formal supply days of teaching as well as taking some impromptu lessons and parts of lessons. Some of this time was given to help out – part of the give and take of researching when one is dependent on the goodwill of the school; but whatever the reason, I used all the occasions to progress the work in some way.

Whereas some supply days were useful for specifically raising issues pertinent to my work with the children, such as the Chris and Sam lessons (which I refer to in detail later), all were valuable for deepening relationships with the pupils. In these early days of the main research work, the data collection came from general observation and informal interviewing masked as chatting and general conversation, "participating and developing personal rapport as a means of trying to understand the perspectives and actions of people within the case" (Pollard, 1996, p.289).

It was particularly easy to develop this rapport and start to gain insights into the children's perspectives and reasons for their actions and reactions when I was in charge of the class as supply teacher for school special events such as their annual Art day and World Book day. These days fell on dates when Helen was due to be out on a series of days for a course, and I was specifically asked to take the class in preference to other supply teachers so that the children weren't left with someone who wouldn't know the class and school agenda.

Within the timetable of these special occasion days, I would have a mental list of children I aimed to talk with and get to know better. This contrasted with ordinary visit days when I was just in school as participant observer and helping Helen, when I found that I could tend to be asked to assist the same pupils and thus just get to know a few. This had been quite acceptable initially and early visits had given me a broad impression of the class and the main groupings within it. But I wanted to have spent time with all the children. Supply work to a large extent not only put me in charge of the class but also gave me the most freedom in terms of my own agenda. In particular it gave me opportunities to spend time with children I knew I had not really seen as yet. Every class is likely to have its anxious pupil(s) but my contention was that, as Holt said: "most children in school are scared most of the time." (Holt, 1982, revised, p.92). It was very important to me therefore that all felt they had got to know and trust me well enough to discuss any feelings that they may have experienced.

This and other issues relating to role are explored more fully in the following chapter.

2.12 Pupil Profiles

From the outset, I wrote what I called Pupil Profiles each time I returned home from a school visit. An example is given as Appendix 4. There were some 64 children in the two classes and it was important to me to learn the names and have some idea about each child as soon as possible. The children were amused if I couldn't remember their names at first but I was concerned that if I didn't learn their names and remember them quickly, it would just look as if I didn't care to take the trouble – hardly conducive to the trusting relationship I hoped to build.

To begin with, the profiles were most valuable as an aide-memoire. I included details about each child's appearance (to differentiate them in my memory); stories they had told me (about pets, holidays, illnesses, siblings) and any incidents that would help jog my memory for the next visit. I usually also noted initial impressions about how each child seemed in school, with their peers as well as their attitude towards the work and teacher questioning. I believed I detected a mild rivalry amongst some children about the children I visited in the other research school. This made it all the more important to demonstrate my commitment to all of them in both schools by taking the trouble to get to know them quickly.

Once I knew each child by sight, events involving the children became the main items I wrote about in these profiles. They were usually incidents in class where perhaps I had noticed an argument or verbal exchange that afforded me further insight into peer relationships, pupil and attitudes.

Having become familiar with the children I took every opportunity to watch and observe teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction. It soon became obvious that I needed to focus this observation further and so I started looking specifically for any occasions or moments when pupils seemed to be experiencing anxiety under or as a result of questioning by the teacher or adult-in-charge whilst in front of their peers. Some examples of what I found are outlined and discussed as Chapter 3.

2.13 The main research school, Marlborough Community school

In practice, I came to appreciate that the 64 children over the two classes was still too many children to observe and work with in depth. At the end of the autumn term, in December 1999, I therefore arranged just to continue with the one class, Helen and her Year 4 pupils, for the remainder of the school year.

The Year 4 class was not at the most convenient school being a considerable distance from my home. However, it was Helen's school and I had already completed two terms there, and had done the pilot study with her and what was now the Year 5 class. I felt that I was already well accepted within the school generally. This contrasted with Sara's school where I'd been for a shorter time but was still thought of by at least one other teacher as Sara's student! Helen's staff was interested in the project and me and this meant that I felt that there were more possibilities for the work there than with the more reserved staff in Sara's school. In the event I even found the journeying time was not such a drawback and that the two hours or so spent each visit travelling to and from Marlborough Community afforded excellent opportunities to ponder events witnessed that day, consider their significance and plan future visits accordingly.

The school was in the North of England. It was one form entry and at the time of the data collection had 232 children on role with an additional 43 in the Nursery. The majority lived in the immediate area, in privately owned housing. A significant number also lived on an adjacent Council estate. Approximately one sixth came to the school from the neighbouring Education Authority and these generally came by car. Most pupils however walked to school.

The school was predominately white with less than 1% of pupils from an ethnic minority background. I took the decision that it was outside the scope of this study to look closely at the social class of the pupils. I am aware that studies have suggested that it may be a factor in how children answer questions (Robinson and Rackstraw, 1975, p.77 ff) but that was not the focus of my study at this time.

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The school catered for the full range of academic ability and in the most recent full Ofsted report (1996) at the time was described as " a very good school with some outstanding features". This was echoed in the short Ofsted inspection of February 2000 that also described the teaching as "very good overall" with the "work challenging" and "the pupils highly motivated."

Kath, the Head teacher, in my interview with her in July 2000, described it saying:

> Our school is average, in an average catchment area; the children come in of average ability.

However, for the past few years it has been in the top 100 schools and in the 2000 report, Ofsted inspectors recorded that standards in the school were "well above average."

In both nursery and junior departments it exceeded the national expectation of achievement for pupils, with a particular strength being its teaching of speaking and listening skills although the writing observed was also highly praised as "impressive."

A verbal report from one Ofsted inspector in March 2000, in the initial feedback after the short inspection that term, spoke of the questioning in the school. He said that the day-to-day handling of questioning and of mistakes within questioning was dealt with "superbly" in all classes and he presumed staff had had an Inset day on this or had learnt through shared good practice. He also said that the result is that children are keen to learn through their answers and that the child's self esteem is raised.

Helen recorded these comments for me as the inspector met with just the full time staff of the school.

2.13.1 The class

The class under observation for the main data collection was a mixed Year 4 group of 32 pupils. 19 / 20 girls and 12 / 13 boys, (*one girl left at Christmas 1999, one boy*

joined in January 2000). Many had no siblings. Four pupils (*from January 2000, five*) were categorised as having special educational needs and one of these was enrolled on an additional programme within the school to attempt to alleviate his severe social interaction problems.

In September, I spoke to the class with Helen, their class teacher present. I explained why I was coming in and that I would be asking each of them by themselves if I could interview them about teacher questioning.

The children had some queries that I answered. In general I had the impression that they were happy with the arrangements suggested. Most in fact made it clear that they would readily agree to speak to me one to one - and many even seemed quite excited at the prospect.

2.13.2 The school day

On arrival, the pupils may wait with the parent /adult who accompanied them to the site or may go and play, often depending on whether peers have already arrived. There is a lining up procedure at 8:50am when all the teachers appear in the KS1 play area to greet and lead the children in.

The Year 4 pupils come into a corridor, walking past the Year 3 classroom and cloakrooms opposite, stopping to hang coats and games kit bags as necessary. The teacher has usually gone ahead into class by this point. The children may therefore wait around for friends / peers again here and then continue past pupil toilets and a drinking fountain to their classroom. Those that have sandwiches for lunch put their lunch box in a tray outside the classroom.

This may seem unimportant detail but from what I saw, this long walk to the classroom with various small tasks needing to be undertaken, could either allow peer conversations to occur or, conversely, be a potentially lonely time for the children. This same area also offered children the opportunity to speak to one another after a lesson perhaps, about their ability to respond to a teacher question. This was observed

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to happen and in some informal chats I had with Year 4 they told me it happened – particularly in the girls toilets near the exit.

Off this same corridor is the Music / Radio room where classes go to have a music lesson or watch videoed programmes. The soundproofing is not entirely adequate and when a trumpet lesson or similar is going on, it can be very disruptive to the Year 4 pupils sitting nearest the open wall of their classroom. Helen was new to this classroom and since I often sat in this open walled area to observe, we discussed just how difficult it was to hear teacher questions when the music / radio room was being used – a practical problem in reference to whole class questioning since children sitting here could also be "out of the action" (Wragg, 1993, p.139). Helen endeavoured to overcome this by consciously trying to question / talk to children in all corners and areas of the room.

The rooms throughout the school were semi open plan, approximately one half of one of the longest wall given over to a concertina soft door, which was generally open or pulled back, hence the issue of noise being greater in this school than for example, the one with the Year 3 class I saw.

If the pupils were to continue on through proper doors at the end of the corridor, they would go through a small gallery area off which the KS1 classes work and then come out into the main school hall that doubles up as the dining room, gym and assembly hall. The Year 5 & 6 classrooms are off the other side of this hall and thus the lower end of the school and the two upper aged classes are segregated for most of the time.

The other long wall in the Year 4 classroom is almost totally made up of windows. The two shorter walls of this basically rectangular room are where the teacher may put display work. Often, she wants to put up so much that the work spills over onto glazed areas and spaces above the static blackboard etc. There is also space outside in the corridor although some of this is behind a row of child high sinks and there is a risk that children's work here may be splashed and therefore spoiled.

Also just outside there is a round table where the GTA (general teaching assistant) works with the pupils with special needs. I sometimes worked here doing small group

work. Further along two computers with two chairs each are set up for the Year 3 and 4 pupils. Both Year 3 and 4 teachers tend to use these for pairs of children at any one time.

The Year 4 classroom was a modern, but small, room with 17 double desk type tables. Helen had these grouped in squares (4 pupil) or rectangles (6 or 8). This was her choice – the Year 3 teacher for example, having arranged his tables differently, in a horseshoe shape around the room.

Helen kept to the arrangement described above except for Art and Circle time work when tables were moved aside or to create central blocks of furniture.

Helen had initially looked to seat children according to academic ability, the focus being their competence in maths and English. Thus, although the children might have a friend on the table, in practice the majority of their table would just be classmates with no special relationship to them. Friends might be on tables nearby though so there would inevitably be a certain amount of looking around to each other when that was the case. In terms of gender, all the tables were mixed most of the time.

Helen moved children fairly regularly throughout the first half of the Autumn term with a view to fine tuning the positioning of children into academic groups. The children would also often have a second seating arrangement, depending on the lesson as Helen was conscious that those most competent in literacy were not necessarily the highest attaining mathematicians - and vice versa. The only real exceptions were the children who had been identified as having special educational needs, who usually stayed on their table of 5 for all lessons. Helen also made certain that their table was both near her desk as well as the blackboard that ensured that they could be given extra support without her calling across the room to them.

However, due to behavioural difficulties, Helen then substantially rearranged the main classroom in the New Year. Other changes occurred from time to time too, such as to accommodate the fact that a girl (Caroline) left and a boy (Jed) joined the class over the Christmas holiday.

2.14 The main data collection with the Year 4 class

Through September and early October 1999, I saw the Year 4 children in groups, taking them out of class to do a maths project on weight. This had been agreed with Helen as something that would not only help me in my ongoing programme of learning pupil names and profile building but would also be a useful support to Helen's scheme of maths work. Otherwise, when in school, I was engaged in observing whole class work, reverting to a more classic teacher role when the pupils were directed to individual tasks, walking around the class, supporting their learning as seemed helpful or was requested by Helen.

Very quickly the children started using me as a resource for helping with academic problems, putting their hand up and looking to me or calling me over, much as they would Helen. On occasions, Helen would use the opportunity of having me present to take a special needs group aside for a short time, leaving the remainder of the class to be overseen by me. After the first formal supply teaching when I took the class for a day in October, she and I both noticed that any reservations the children had about using me as a proper teacher seemed to have disappeared.

The children also saw Helen and I talking and helping each other, which further supported the role I was looking to take on as trusted adult helper / teacher. This issue of role I felt was an important factor in the way I approached the work and I discuss it at greater length in Chapter 3.

It had been agreed with the Head and class teacher that I would write to the parents checking whether any had any objections prior to embarking on my interviewing of the children. The letter I wrote was sent home with the children on Friday 14 January. It may be read as Appendix 5. Although Kath the Head teacher anticipated I might encounter some objections, in the event I did not have any comments from the parents at the time. Much later, some parents who saw me after school on occasions asked about the project and it was pleasant to find them both interested and supportive.

I initially hoped that from the start of the second term I would record instances of teacher-pupil interaction in whole class time of questioning and then play these back to the pupils most directly concerned, video recording their responses. What actually happened in most cases was that the events happened off screen. This posed a dilemma. Did I request specific children, in camera shot, to be used by the teacher thus creating a somewhat artificial environment - or did I re-think the methodology?

What I actually started doing was after observing incidents I would invite the pupils concerned to participate in an interview as soon afterwards as possible. If it had not been caught on camera, I would recall the event and invite them to comment on it. An early example of this is the transcript of Julia and Melanie with reference to an incorrect answer Julia gave in a science lesson. This is discussed in detail later.

However, I still had further problems over the interviews. It was now January / February and the weather was often such that at morning and lunch break times the children were in the school building rather than out on the school yard. This made finding a private area to conduct the interviews impossible on occasions. With time going by, I was concerned that I would be unable to get to talk with all the pupils by Easter.

The school only has two break times - a morning break of approximately twenty minutes and a lunch break of forty-five. Having only these times to talk to the children, I came to realise, was too little with the problem of so often losing these times to inclement weather and ad hoc events such as the children practising for class assembly.

In addition to this, in mid-February the school had an Ofsted inspection and Helen and I agreed that I would come in and perform my usual role of participant observer / helper but not actually have the camcorder running or do any interviewing. To compensate for this, Helen found occasions when she could spare children for a few minutes to enable me to interview them. This might be times when they were not participating in a games lesson or had completed lesson work ahead of time.

The week prior to the inspection the class in general seemed very tense which affected the data that week. During the inspection it became clear that the pupils were very aware of what was going on and were very conscious too of the impression they were making personally on the inspectors. For example, in response to my query about why he was nervous of an inspector who had visited the class and gone around the tables questioning the pupils minutes earlier, Paul told me that if he couldn't answer the man's question correctly, he was afraid that the man would think he (*Paul*) goes to a "bad school".

The Ofsted inspection also had an impact in that it left not only the staff tired, but the children too. I had already agreed to take the class as a supply teacher on the last day of the half term, which was the Friday following the Ofsted inspection. I had expected Helen to tell me which texts and work she needed the class to do. In the event, she offered me carte blanche. I had little time to prepare but it was an excellent opening to introduce something that could open up initial class discussions for my own work.

2.15 The introduction of Chris and Sam and the issue of teacher questioning

In February 2000, immediately after the Ofsted inspection, I took an English lesson on Chris with myself in role of teacher researcher. Chris and later Sam were names chosen because:

a) they weren't the names of any pupil in the class

b) they could be either gender

I introduced these imaginary pupils through stories that revolved around times of whole class teacher questioning. Chris hadn't been listening and didn't immediately know how to respond to the teacher when she asked Chris a question.
The children were then invited to brainstorm possibilities as to what Chris might have felt and then what Chris could / would do to extract him / herself from the situation. The children were also questioned about the likely reaction(s) of Chris's peers. The children then wrote stories about how Chris felt and coped.

I arranged with Helen that I would do a follow up to the Chris story with Sam, on the first afternoon back after the half term break, in effect on the next teaching day.

On this occasion Sam, in a similar scenario, *was* able to give an answer to the teacher and was praised. This time, instead of asking the children to write a story, I asked them to write answers to questions that were:

> Sam felt?
> The other children around Sam felt?
> Later, after the lesson, some of them said?
> Can you think about how you yourself usually feel when it is a time of questioning in class? Please will you try to describe your feelings?

Almost three months later, in May 2000, I conducted a final lesson involving the characters Sam and Chris in an imaginary science lesson. This lesson, conducted after the pupil interviews, gave me the opportunity to explore slightly different issues, including vocabulary that had arisen from the interviews.

These lessons were helpful in raising the issue of teacher questioning with the class because most of pupils had not been interviewed when the first two lessons were conducted. I was very short of time in the interviews and the vocabulary used by the children in the lesson, especially in the brainstorming sessions I felt proved helpful to many pupils when they came to try to tell me about their own experience of teacher questioning. The full account of the lesson is given in a later chapter.

2.16 Method of working - Fieldnotes

Across the whole time I was in school whether teaching lessons, working as participant observer or interviewing, I was returning home each evening and recording fieldnotes.

Rowland chose in his own fieldnotes to:

> ...describe and interpret in detail an activity of one or two or perhaps a small group of children with whom I had been closely involved, or whose work seemed to be particularly interesting. (1984, p.8).

Once I had spent the initial weeks familiarising myself with all the pupils, I followed a similar pattern. Rather than focus on pupil work though, I focused on occasions that looked as if they might be creating anxiety. Details on how I worked on this I have discussed more fully in the chapter on anxiety.

Rowland's notes followed "no predetermined structure" (1984, p.9), another strategy I thought wise to adopt to avoid limiting myself and what I might find. However, he subjected his notes "to a continual process of categorisation and reanalysis" so that "the theoretical ideas I was developing were grounded in the broad range of the children's learning." (1984, p.9) This was to safeguard against the classroom enquiry resulting in merely a "confirmation of one's own presumptions" (1984, p.9), his approach being based on Glaser and Strauss (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.

The continual process of reanalysis I also adopted, on two levels. Firstly, I was continually checking that the very time consuming writing up of the fieldnotes was always proving useful for recording and informing the work. As a result, the fieldnotes changed dramatically from how they had begun as I adapted them to the different stages and changing needs of the research.

Secondly, once the videotaping began, they changed again as they became an important backup to the tapes, recording the details of events and perhaps more importantly, almost a diary of thinking as I looked to come to some understandings of what I was seeing in the classroom interactions.

This diary style of writing was important because a diary not only records events but also provides a means of reflecting on them in the light of the feelings generated. Rowland wrote that:

> The ways in which we make sense of the actions of others are inextricably linked to the ways in which we see ourselves. For this reason, the process of reflecting upon children's understanding inevitably involves an element of introspection, a conscious attempt to perceive not only how the child views the world ...- but how we perceive this world too. (Rowland, 1984, p.10)

As well as having to check my own perception of the world as an individual, grounded in my own experience as a pupil, I was also having to make the change from seeing and perceiving the classroom as a teacher, as I was used to. As I made this transition I found I began to see events from different angles, often differently, albeit a subtle change, from how I had when teaching full time.

During the most intense months of the data collecting part of the research, I continued to read other researchers' experiences, talked regularly with the teachers as opportunities arose and talked too, at whatever level I could, with the children involved. It was always very important to me that all my theorising was directed towards being practical both for the classroom and teaching. Thus I hoped to avoid what Rowland warns against, that distancing descriptions of the particular too far from "the theory that underlies or emerges from" it will " inevitably lead to theorisation that is sterile" and remote from teaching (1984, p.147).

2.17 Interviews with pupils

John Holt's findings about how nervous children could feel when asked a question by a teacher struck me because the nervousness seemed to be widespread. My own work with my Year 5 class had suggested the same. I was very keen therefore to talk to all the Year 4 children in Helen's class to see if they too, in general, found teacher questions caused anxiety.

The responses to the class work using the imaginary Chris and Sam had already suggested that the experience of anxiety under teacher questioning was indeed common. Now I wanted to see if I could clarify why and exactly what circumstances created this state of affairs.

Exactly how I set up and conducted the interviews, it seemed more appropriate to describe in the context of the results in chapter 9. Essentially, however, each interview came down to my asking children four short questions. Many were happy to speak to me one to one; others had a friend present.

The four questions used were worded differently for each child but were all looking to query in essence:

How it felt when the teacher asked the pupil a question.

Pupil's perception of peer reaction when they answered teacher questions.

Whether the person of the teacher mattered to the pupil being asked questions.

Whether the subject being taught affected their feelings on being questioned.

Despite being the opening query, question one often became a more detailed conversation than the other three. This was because, to answer it, the pupils had to differentiate between times when they had answered the whole class teacher question correctly as well as otherwise. I also often took the opportunity to ask about general feelings about teacher questioning times in the context of this question too.

2.18 Validity and reliability

The roles I looked to adopt at different stages of the research, their impact and my work as participant observer is explained in chapter 3 on role, but here I want to discuss the broader subject of validity and reliability.

The issue of validity may be examined in terms of generalisability or external validity - and internal validity, meaning that what is uncovered in the research is real (Woods, 1986). This internal validity may also be referred to as ecological validity, concerned with the impact "researchers and their methods may have in influencing the actions and responses of participants" (Ann Filer with Andrew Pollard in Walford, 1998, p. 71).

In terms of the external validity of the work, with the work essentially being carried out in one class, it could seem unlikely to be generalisable. However in so far that the school was a reasonably representative school, not atypical of many primary schools in the U.K. at the time, I point to Woods (1986, p.50) who says that that fact in itself improves "the chances of external validity". He suggests that choosing a school in which to research that is normal in terms of curriculum, area, neighbourhood social mix and so on would constitute typical (op. cit. p.50).

In terms of internal validity, working as participant observer Woods suggests (op. cit. p.50) means that one can "claim to score highly". This he argues is because of the number of methods used to collect the data, including observation, interviewing and the disguised participant role, which I used when first with the Year 4 class. Woods also purports that interviewing is in itself a form of participant observation (Woods, 1986)

A key question I asked myself when interviewing the children was how I could know if they were speaking to me honestly, describing their reality as they saw it? I was, as Woods states the researcher should be, alert to " possible influences operating on informants" (Woods,1986, p.83) such as, especially in the case of pupils, the desire to please - or situational factors such as a recent event that might have led to strong feelings, which could lead to affecting their judgement and reaction to my questions. Having watched the children in ordinary everyday classroom interaction on a regular basis, I was confident that I had gained some appreciation of their dependability and had a good idea of recent events in class that might affect them. I also had the opportunity to check what was told me with other pupils or teachers – as well as the chance to revisit what had been said on subsequent visits to the school if I deemed it necessary. Hence I was able to "cross check" where I thought appropriate, as Woods advises (Woods, 1986, p.84).

Woods, as others, also highlights the value of key informants – people who identify with you and with whom you have a closer relationship than others. Of the pupils, Priya and Roger could be relied upon to help me understand the context of classroom life from the point of view of pupils. As well as them, Helen, the classroom assistant and other staff members including the Head were helpful in helping me appreciate external factors that might influence the pupils' response to my work in some way. This was especially valuable in terms of home factors that I could not otherwise have known about; as Woods puts it, "a sense of history" (Woods, 1986, p. 85), interpreting things as part of a continuum.

Even with the above safeguards in place to help ensure that I could make reasonable claims as to validity, there was still the issue of my own self getting in the way

through misinterpreting the things being said – as well as other potential problems such as transcription errors and misunderstandings over terminology. The understandings I developed were of course coloured by my "own assumptions" and affected by my own "role in the research setting" (Connolly, 1997, p.169). Hence there was always a need to remain critically reflexive, to aim to know myself and my own preconceptions, as well as appreciating that the relationship I had with each of the pupils was different. This again is considered more fully elsewhere, in the chapter on role.

For more straightforward issues such as potential difficulties over meanings, respondent validation is valuable. Miles and Huberman (1994) amongst many others discuss this as potentially useful. They note that it is a time-consuming process but helpful especially if it is built into the process. I undertook respondent validation where I could with pupils at the time of interview by repeating back what I understood them to have said. They were also given ample opportunity to add to their responses. Wherever possible too (time permitting) I allowed them to go off at what might seem to me to be at a tangent to the question posed to make sure I was not missing a valuable point by shutting down an answer in my anxiety to not take too much of their time.

I am aware that respondent validation could also involve some sharing of the transcribed texts with the child subject. They would then be asked whether they would confirm them as "an accurate representation of their experience" (Pollard, 1996, p. 303). Unfortunately I had less opportunity to do this with the children. The most I could do was usually with Helen when I sent her passages of text attached to emails, which we would discuss afterwards over the phone or sometimes at school. The reason I didn't do more with the children was due to my having so little time with them and the fact that most of the transcription of their interviews and lessons was done after I had left their school. In another piece of research I would ideally time things differently so that this wasn't the case. However, as stated earlier, wherever possible, I tried to 'say back' to children what I thought I had understood them to have said in their interviews and although this made some rather long and repetitive, it did satisfy me that I had understood their meanings at the time as fully as reasonably possible.

Outside the school, I also discussed the emerging data with colleagues and my supervisor (an ex school teacher) at university and with Linda, another ex primary teacher who worked on some of the transcriptions with me. With Linda too I worked on the video data collected. This is relevant because it was valuable having so many experienced teachers examining the data, and because another form of validating data is to, as Hammersley suggests, use our experience to underpin our judgements of claims arising from research. For example, he suggests that in the absence of the generation of data the truth of which can be quantified, there could be the following means of assessing validity claims.

Firstly, he suggests we question just how plausible a claim is. In the case of the pupil interviewee's description of their feelings, does the picture of their life world seem reasonable? Does it have internal coherence? (Hammersley, 1998, p.143 - 144)

Secondly, Hammersley advises we may question whether a claim has credibility. This would take into account "the nature of the phenomena concerned, the circumstances of the research ... etc." (op. cit. p.143). [2]

Thirdly, where claims are being made which do so require further evidence, Hammersley argues that we need to "employ much the same means to assess its validity as we applied to the claim itself: we must judge *its* plausibility and credibility" (op. cit. p.144).

Fine and Sandstrom make the point that having been children in school ourselves, that in itself can be useful. "Our own experiences, if properly mined, can be a valuable resource for research" (Fine and Sandstrom,1988, p.76). I found that talking with experienced colleagues as well as other adults about being pupils in school once too,

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[2] I mentioned earlier when recording Joe's interpretation of peer reaction to his being 'wrong' that "I found it hard to believe that the majority ("Almost all of them.") of the class would make adverse comments" . In this respect Joe's claim did not seem to have, to use Hammersley's criterion, 'credibility'. It didn't entirely ring true. It would be rare for a class of children to all or even mostly be watching any teacher-pupil interaction unless very dramatic. However, knowing Joe well and knowing he was a practical and literal young man, not usually given to exaggeration, I didn't doubt that it *felt* as if all his peers were watching him and thinking him 'stupid' and this is perhaps the most important point in this context.

we thought that what the children were saying about being very concerned about what their peers thought when they were being questioned whole class, rang true. However, those of us who were or had been teachers generally felt that in the modern classroom concern about this should have been eliminated through newer child centred teaching methods. I will return to this further later in the conclusions in chapter 10.

Triangulation is another term commonly used when looking to validate data. This can include the mining of others' experiences as outlined immediately above as well as in school employing cross-checking, using observation with interviewing and similar methods of working.

In discussion of triangulation, Woods suggests that the strongest bond is when interviews are accompanied by observation and quotes his own research when talking to pupils in Games for whom the main concern seemed to be about being shown up. He describes how talking and interviewing, thoroughly "saturating" the subject until no new information was emerging, accompanied by ongoing observation of lessons, also led to greater participation, which in itself cued him into other pupil issues (Woods, 1986, p. 88-89).

Research dairies can have a validating function in that they help identify personal elements through the researcher honestly recording impressions, problems and uncertainties as well as 'breakthroughs' (Woods, 1986, p.113).Typically they are different from transcriptions and field notes although I tended to combine them with the latter and used the resulting writing for reflecting on as well as recording actual events. In my own research, often the resulting field note / diary notes had been thought through on the travelling to and from the school and written up and soon as possible after returning home.

Reliability, " the extent to which the same observational procedure in the same context yields the same information" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 80) was a concern throughout. Closely linked to the issue of internal validity, the key dilemma here was the question as to how far my relationship with Helen affected what the children told me. Because we were friends, and because I worked in a supporting role to her some of the time, did this affect how the children talked to me? Did my research design

which had implicitly part of it, a good working relationship with this class teacher so that I could concentrate solely on the pupils engagement with teacher questions, backfire so that it led to the findings being an artifact of the design? If this question may be merely be raised here, it will be returned to in the concluding chapter of this work, with suggestions of alternative ways of working that I could have adopted.

2.19 Long interviews / case studies

Most of my interviews with pupils were relatively short. There were several reasons for this. Firstly the fact that time I had available for them was the children's own in that I was taking their break times. Although some children made it clear that they were more than happy to talk to me and give up their free time, I felt it important not to assume this was generally the case. Many I judged would have been too polite to have said otherwise!

Secondly, I wanted the interviews to be similar in terms of questions asked and time allowed so that I could draw some comparisons between them later.

Thirdly, the children were still relatively young and generally not used to talking with adults as the interviews required. Some were clearly puzzled that I should be interested in their opinions. I felt therefore that to keep them brief and to a few pertinent issues would be least likely to create any discomfort on the part of the child.

However, I did conduct some longer interviews with pupils. The first was with Julia and Melanie, referred to earlier, after a specific incident when Julia had been upset about not answering a science question as well as she had wished. This was the first interview with any of the children and it was longer than the others because as well as wanting to explore what Julia wanted to say about the incident, I was experimenting with the interview format. In retrospect, I could have done some dummy interviews at the pilot stage of the work, but I hadn't thought to at the time. Unlike most of the interviews, I transcribed the text soon after our conversation, like a case study. It then helped my thinking for the future interviews with the remaining Year 4 children.

The only other long interview with children was with Pat and Roger. This took place much later in the work after all the other interviews and was set up to further explore some of the issues raised by the class in the short interviews.

The longest interviews of all were with the teachers, Kath and Helen. Because some of the constraints I felt when interviewing minors were absent, these interviews were semi-structured around a much longer set of questions than the four used for the children. In these interviews, I wanted to try to more fully understand the teachers' use of questions in the light of the NLS and NNS.

Although I had no intention to evaluate the overall impact of the NLS or NNS at this early stage of their implementation, I considered a constructive means by which I might present some of the aims, objectives and approaches of the teachers' questioning in the classroom, would be to do so in the light of what the new NLS and NNS documentation and training material requires, since this was affecting how they now undertook whole class teacher questioning of pupils.

These interviews were conducted in the last months of the research by which time I had been out of Sara's class for some time. I therefore did not interview Sara but just talked with Kath and Helen as the main teachers involved with the Year 4 class. I used the same questions for both. These were to:

Query their perception of the impact of the new guidelines for literacy / numeracy on the use of teacher questions

Ask about their intentions behind their teacher questions in general - what they want to achieve?

Ask about their use of closed / open questions

Query the decision making process behind whom (*which pupil*) to ask questions of - including the importance of differentiation

Ask about the time lapse they would allow for answers and their thinking behind their choices

Query their responses to pupil error / incomplete answers

Query responses to correct pupil responses

Ask about their perception of pupils' feelings in times of teacher questioning

Ask about their own feelings in times of whole class questioning

I aimed to allow flexibility in each interview to enable the teachers to expand on their replies or even take the discussion off on a related tangent if they wanted.

What I present in chapter 7 is an edited account of the key points they both made in their respective interviews accompanied with comment on how their responses related to aspects of the NLS and NNS documentation. In the chapter I also include observations of my own that seem pertinent or confirm what the teachers have said and then suggest some overall conclusions in the light of these and the teachers own remarks and comments.

2.20 'Ways in' through fiction

The fictionalisation of educational experience offers researchers the opportunity to import fragments of data from various real events in order to speak to the heart of social consciousness

(Clough, 2002, p.8)

It wasn't until I had finished the data collection in school, had transcribed much of what was on the tapes and was experimenting with different ways of structuring the work in order to present it for this thesis that I wrote the short story found as Appendix 6. Entitled *The School Trip,* it helped me think about one fairly ordinary school event that I'd observed happened to Elizabeth in Helen's class. Elizabeth forgot to bring in a note and money for a school trip. She was questioned about it in front of the class and although Helen was typically kind, hiding well any frustration she may have felt, Elizabeth was ill at ease and defensive.

Fictionalising it, I considered how a similar event might seem from several points of view – that of the pupil, a parent, the class teacher as well as in a smaller role, the Head of school. I was interested in examining the different realities that a story version of the event may reveal or illustrate.

Perhaps the most crucial one was that the event affected each one *immediately* involved, i.e. the child, mother and teacher – in terms of quite strong emotional responses. Worry and concern gave way to relief and gratitude in the child; the mother was somewhat distressed but then pleasantly surprised to be asked to accompany the class on the trip; the teacher also started out feeling worried and concerned for various reasons - but in the story has the possibility that her discomfort will give way to the outcome she hopes for.

It certainly caused me to think that if whole class questioning may lead to anxiety / worry and concern for the children – then it is also almost certainly having an impact on others involved, in particular the teacher. In the story, the event has the potential to lead to closer relationships between the participants that perhaps underlines that the effects of an episode of whole class questioning may also be positive. This is reflected in the small amount of data that showed that the pupils could be supportive of one another when experiencing whole class questioning (something illustrated fully in later chapters)[3].

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[3] It had not occurred to me that the story was an appropriate means of exploring the data that others would be interested in until John Coldron told me of work on narratives and fictions in educational research and introduced me to the work of Peter Clough.

In the light of what I have since read, I would like to explore the possibility of more fiction writing as an appropriate means of disseminating my findings further in future. When read first by one of my supervising team, my story moved them to tears. As far as I know, none of my other writing had provoked such a response and so I think I need to explore the possibility of using fiction further for this work as there may be a useful parallel between the study data and this form of expression that may help readers most fully appreciate the experiences of the children.

Relatively little research into teaching has solicited pupils' views.

(Wragg, 1993, p. 98)

Chapter 3
My Role

3.1 The familiar face

I was conscious that the topic I wished to discuss with the children was potentially sensitive. I therefore spent much time going into the school regularly, initially, to just become a familiar and trusted face. I felt it untenable to arrive and directly start the observation and interviewing work. If the pupils did experience any anxiety under teacher questioning, I saw no reason for them to tell me about it unless I had earned their trust.

The value of becoming familiar is highlighted by Walford (1991). In writing about his experiences with pupils, he says:

> .. I believe that my time spent in classrooms observing contributed vitally to the willingness of the ...children to talk openly with me - without it I would just have been another visitor for whom special rules of conversation operated. (Walford, 1991, p.96)

Taking the time to go to the class regularly also allows opportunity for the children to raise their own concerns about a researcher's presence. Rowland said of himself in Armstrong's class that:

> the children saw me as a second teacher, but soon began to ask questions concerning my role. All these I attempted to answer clearly and openly.... gradually, several of the children developed a very good idea of the nature of my work and this proved helpful since they would often draw my attention to anything they thought would interest me. (Rowland, 1984, p.8).

As with Rowland, I was also introduced initially as a second teacher. I also made known something of my particular interest in the pupils and their experience of school. How exactly I explained this varied depending on which child I was speaking to and my perception of their ability to understand.

3.2 Getting to know the class

Through September and early October (1999), Helen and I arranged that I would see every child in Year 4 as part of a small group of between three and five. As previously mentioned, we achieved this through my taking them out of the classroom to some outside tables to do a maths project on weight. For me, this was a great help in learning names and beginning to build both a mental and written pupil profile on each child, the writing being done away from the children on my computer at home.

Otherwise, I spent much of my time in school observing whole class work. After whole class questioning, when the pupils were directed to a follow up task, I would go around the room as their own teacher did, supporting the children's work as required. Very quickly the children started using me as a resource for helping with academic problems, by putting their hand up and looking at me - or asking me over to them. On occasions, the teacher would use the opportunity of having me there to take a special needs group in one area of the room, leaving the remainder of the class with me. After my first Supply teaching day in the Autumn term, she and I both noticed and discussed that any reservations the children may have had about using me as a proper teacher seemed to have disappeared with most seeming equally happy with either of us helping them.

The children also observed the teacher and I conversing and helping each other. This further supported the role I was looking to take on at this early stage of the research of trusted adult helper/ teacher. Helen seemed to be a popular member of staff with the children and so it seemed that it was a case of if she liked and trusted me I was probably okay. Being several years older and a more experienced teacher than Helen, she sometimes spoke to me across the classroom about teaching matters and I suspect that this further helped my standing with the children as they witnessed the ensuing short discussions and saw Helen often agreeing with suggestions I might offer.

3.3 Choice of specific research role

Because my focus in the early months in the classroom research was to build rapport and become known and trusted, I was conscious that I had effectively chosen a

particular research role that was now relatively fixed. However, I was aware of and considered alternatives that others had used and found effective for their own research in schools.

As Graue and Walsh (1998) explain, there are a number of roles that the researcher might take when trying to come to some understanding of participants' perspectives. They suggest that each should be chosen dependant on theoretical decisions, "the understandings the researcher hopes to generate" (op. cit. p.75).

I chose to work as participant observer as Spradley first termed it in the late seventies as opposed to, for example, Corsaro's reactive role or Mandell's least adult role.

From my reading, I had had a sense that the least adult role was a particularly pure approach that was very appealing. However, I doubted I could effectively assume that role. Having only left full time teaching relatively recently, I knew that I still tended to react as a teacher almost instinctively. In addition, I knew the class teacher I would be working with as a friend as well as ex colleague. It would be difficult to sit by as with taking the least adult role, and observe objectively without helping her or the children if my assistance would be useful.

At a conference ("Sites of learning" conference, University of Hull, September 1999) I had heard a Danish researcher taking a least adult role, speak of herself sitting in class, watching children bullying a student teacher. I knew, rightly or wrongly, that had I encountered the same situation, which as described seemed to me insupportable, I could not have just sat by as she apparently had. Although the research was very important to me indeed, I knew myself well enough to know that the children and / or the teacher would have any support I deemed necessary if I was put in a position where I had to make that sort of choice.

Despite my earlier impressions, there were limitations with the least adult approach as I realised when reading Epstein (1998). She looked to take a least adult role, waiting for children to initiate any interactions. She sat and ate lunch with pupils, hung around the playground and tried to resist behaving in a teacherly way. Despite this, Epstein concluded that whatever she did, she would still be " constantly re - inscribed within

the discourse of adult - in - school, which is, primarily, that of teacher" (Epstein, op. cit. p.31). She remarks: " adult researchers into children's lives cannot be children" (op. cit. p.32).

Epstein seems to be just one of many actively seeking to behave differently from a teacher when researching in school. The inference is that children will be less open with teacher - type adults (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988). However, I suspect that this underestimates the capabilities of children. In my experience, most by Year 4 are very able to adapt and interact satisfactorily with teacher type adults in school who are there for reasons other than to teach them.

3.4 Working as participant observer

However, having made the choice to be a participant observer meant that, as I had suspected, there were occasions when my own work was momentarily delayed or side-tracked. Obviously I avoided this where possible and staff that might ask for my help would only do if it were extremely important. I generally felt that my research was respected and only once, towards the very end of the work felt in any way put upon. I helped as asked but voiced my concern over that occasion and it didn't happen again.

However, inevitably I missed seeing some events. To keep this in perspective, I knew that by not being in school every single day, this was happening anyway. However, to minimise it, Helen and I telephoned and emailed regularly. Primarily our contact was focused on school issues and she kept me abreast of significant events or developments amongst the pupils too.

The advantage of having the camcorder present when I *was* in school was that it would often see other events even if I couldn't because I was otherwise occupied in the classroom.

A particularly revealing example of this was when there were three adults, including myself, in the classroom all working with different groups of pupils. In one corner, Lucy and Lydia had what virtually amounted to a silent fight right in front of the

camcorder! It was extraordinary to watch this event on video later having had no idea at the time that it was happening.

I was encouraged that it demonstrated that the children could be completely unaware of the camera. The film shows the girls looked towards me a couple of times as the adult nearest and presumably the most likely to look up and see their disagreement. Neither though looked at the camera at all and there's no doubt in my mind that they weren't fighting for any kind of performance. Despite looking irate with each other, their body language and actions were guarded – even from other pupils. They were acting as if they clearly thought they would have been in trouble had they been seen by either the adults or told on by their peers. That they hid from me as much as Helen and the teaching assistant suggests too that they viewed us all similarly – it was important to be hidden from all us adults. I subsequently mentioned the incident to Helen and we checked the girls had resolved their differences – but never mentioned to them that I'd seen their disagreement on film.

Overall, I feel sure that I gained more than I may have lost in keeping to my decision to fully participate in the life of the class. This was even the case when my participation occasionally extended to helping outside the classroom for short periods. That I had some opportunities to do this was important to me. I had always known I'd want to have the Head, Kath's, views in an interview with her about teacher questioning - as well as observe her teaching Year 4. That I could do this was agreed early in the research but as a goodwill gesture I was keen to be able to give something back to either her or the school. I was very glad then that she felt able to ask me to look after Year 3 for a few minutes when she required their teacher's expertise urgently outside one day, and was happy on another occasion to enable her go to a meeting when she was responsible for Year 4 and take them into assembly for her; little things in themselves but things that I'd trusted would go some way to continuing to build rapport and relationships with her and the staff as a whole.

Graue and Walsh write that even Mandell working in a least adult role did adapt to the changing needs of the teachers and children she worked with saying that:
" sometimes teachers needed an extra pair of hands" ... but that " taking on those duties did not damage her status with children" (Graue and Walsh, 1998, p.77). I

found that to be true all the more so when in the role of participant observer; in fact, I felt certain that the more I got involved, the more it *enhanced* the status I was looking to achieve with the pupils and others in the school.

Having appreciated that I couldn't take on a least adult role, I was all the more intrigued by Corsaro's reactive strategy. It seemed to fall between the other two strategies – least adult and participant observer - so perhaps was the best of both?

Hsueh – Yin Ting used this approach, reacting only when or if the children ever approached her rather than taking the adult in authority approach of instigating activity, or as she puts it, taking action first with the children then reacting to that (Ting, 1998). However, in practice, I knew there would be occasions where I would feel I would have to initiate action. When this happened, I like to think that I was normally subtle and discreet - for example, just a look, a raised eyebrow or shake of the head when the child made eye contact with me. I was looking to either facilitate Helen's continued smooth running of the lesson, or to perhaps avert a small conflict between children near me or in my eye line.

Sometimes though things happened which required more direct intervention. On such occasions I might go over to near where there was a problem between pupils and /or look to discuss an incident after the lesson had ended. Perhaps in a different classroom I could have behaved differently, had I wished, but in this one with being a friend of Helen, and so soon after leaving full time teaching, it was largely unworkable for me to merely respond as a reactive strategist.

However, this did not mean that I chose researching as a participant observer merely by default. As mentioned earlier, I felt certain that my choice of topic needed a rapport to be established with the pupils that couldn't be effectively built through my sitting passively at the side of the classroom. Working as participant observer, helping the children, especially with their work when they asked for the assistance, I believed would be an important part of making the crucial relationships that would enable me to obtain the data I hoped for.

That withholding my help was detrimental to my relationship with the children was demonstrated by an event in the autumn term.

An incident on the motorway had delayed my arrival at school so much that, unusually, I arrived after registration and just as the first lesson began. In terms of the research at this stage I was still looking to be come that trusted, familiar face. However, it was a lesson when a student was first in working with the children. I'd not met her and had not therefore asked her whether she'd mind my being there. I decided to remain nearby but not intrude until I'd had opportunity to speak and clarify things with the student. But some of the children, because the school was open plan, could see me and requested my help once the student had set them a task. I kept my distance and shook my head to them and left her to deal with their enquiries, but they looked confused. It took much explaining later and I was never quite sure that some understood my reasoning. They were used to adults being helpful to them and seemed rather perplexed. This expectation of their helpfulness put on adults by the children again was a consideration in my choice of 'role'.

Thus, even with hindsight, I remain content that the decision to be a participant observer was not only the most appropriate for me at that time but was also the most helpful for this particular investigation.

3.5 My changing role

Graue and Walsh also state in the context of the role the researcher adopts that " role construction is an ongoing process" and " role negotiation occurs repeatedly over the course of a study" (1998, p.76).

I looked to engineer this quite carefully. In the Spring term, I aimed to move from being merely the friendly face to being a little more authoritative when talking whole class - but otherwise still quite relaxed and informal. During the second half of this term I'd planned to do the majority of the small pupil interviews and was conscious that by that point I wanted to be more an older sister type adult to the children.

The transition was not easy. They were a lively class, many members of which tended to take the proverbial mile if you gave them an inch. I needed a measure of authority for the whole class lesson time I used to introduce the Chris and Sam work

(outlined in full later) but didn't want to be inscribed with any teacher qualities that could be less helpful for the research. By this I was thinking in particular about issues of strong discipline that could be misunderstood and cause children to become wary of me.

A typical primary / junior schoolteacher has to take on an enormous number of roles. Many I felt sure were perfectly compatible with the research and, as I mentioned at the beginning of this work, I was aware of the increasing number of teachers successfully taking on action research projects within their own classrooms that confirmed this. Research and teaching can obviously work well hand in hand. However, because of the possible sensitivity of the questions I wanted to ask these children, I wanted to play down some areas of the disciplinarian aspects of teaching as well as any obvious assessment of their academic ability. This was because I thought that these more than most other activities had the potential to distance myself from the children.

Within these limits I set myself, I also adopted as much as I could of Helen's and the school's style and approaches to classroom management. It was exhausting at times as I had to constantly check my own instinctive teaching style built over my decade or so in primary classrooms, to mould myself to what I had set myself to do and be. It was well worth it though as I felt that to a significant degree, I did indeed manage to negotiate my role with the pupils so that many of them were able to adapt their own pupil role to be particularly open and conversational in the interviews. An exception was poor little Jed who when I asked to interview him thought I was going to tell him off because, as he put it, teachers were always telling him off. This was largely untrue and in fact I had noted adults going out of their way to be encouraging and supportive of Jed – none more so than Helen. However, it is nevertheless interesting to note that this was his perception.

Having largely taken on the role I wanted for the interviews, I found it was much more difficult to return to formal teaching. This became very clear to me when I took the class later in the research, early in the summer term 2000.

The individual and paired interviews were over and it was an occasion when I said I'd look after the class whilst Helen left school early to attend an appointment.

I can remember there was a moment when I just knew that something indefinable had changed. It suddenly didn't seem fair to be a teacher to the class when I'd been something different, i.e. a researcher /friend / older sibling type person to them. It wasn't a specific remark or attitude exactly but a combination of things that caused me to feel increasingly sure that I was now asking a number of the children to make an adjustment in their thinking towards me that they either weren't able to easily cope with or, quite reasonably, weren't willing to make. I therefore made it known that I would not accept any more Supply work with that class that school year and I subsequently just worked alongside Helen in the class in such a way that I wasn't put in the teacher role for any length of time for the rest of that last term.

Another incident that caused me to consider how I was now seen by the children happened a few weeks after the decision to do no more whole class work as teacher.

I visited the school the first day after a haircut. I was conscious of the shorter cut as I wasn't very comfortable with it and must have run my fingers through my hair so that a section remained sticking up. I had been sat doing small group work, out in the corridor with Warren, Paul and Jed. Priya came over to us, said nothing but flattened the offending section of hair down, grinned and went back to her seat. As she sat down, we had eye contact. I laughed at her grinning at me and carried on with the work with the boys; otherwise, with it being an unusual day with the school celebrating their award of a Charter Mark with balloons and a party I did not see her again that visit.

I don't recall a child doing anything quite like that before. In my teaching career, I'd had pupils take an interest in any new clothes I might wear for work; when I was first engaged, many took my hand to see the ring and so on, but this was different in that it felt much more personal. Interestingly, I would not have done the same to Priya! The nearest was probably the tying of trainer shoelaces for various chidden when they were late for rugby or PE.

Priya had been the first to question me about my presence in school in September but how did this action of hers suggest our relationship had changed and developed over the months. Would she have done the same to Helen? I felt it was unlikely. Something about what she did, the kindness of it (so I didn't go around all day looking ridiculous?), the confidence of her actions and the personal nature of it suggested to me that for her at least, I had become someone more akin to a friend? There had been earlier indications that our relationship was already fairly strong at the time that I interviewed Suzanne with Priya present. In the short extract below Priya responds to my query about the thinking behind answering a teacher question.

JA   What actually happens when you put your hand up and the teacher asks you and you hesitate and then you say…

Priya   …sometimes what you say, you say, (very *momentary hesitation here before she decided to continue)* I'm **telling you the truth here,** what you say is 'I forgot' if you wanted to say something else.

The phrase "I'm telling you the truth here" struck me at the time as being rather illuminating. It seemed to suggest very clearly that the truth may not always be told – or more likely in my opinion, the pupils may be economical with it. It also suggested that she and I had successfully built trust. Priya trusted me not to run off to other staff and tell on the pupils, in this case about their coping mechanisms during teacher questioning.

Months later, after the summer holiday, when Helen had left the school to take up a new role and post elsewhere, I agreed to take the class, now Year 5, for an afternoon's supply teaching. On a personal level, I was keen to see the pupils after the long summer break but had reservations about how they'd receive me. I needed to adopt a more typical teacher role again if this and any subsequent supply days of teaching work were going to be successful.

In fact the pupils made it obvious that they were very pleased to see me and, to my surprise, I was not aware of any real difficulty as I successfully resumed the classic teacher role after so many intervening months.

However, the initial minutes meeting with the children were again most illuminating in the context of this discussion of role and bear some scrutiny.

It was rather chaotic in that I arrived during lunchtime when the weather was intermittent heavy showers. To reach the children's new classroom, I had to walk through the lunch hall so those Year 5 pupils still eating were the first to see and greet me. As I was saying hello to this group, others appeared from the playground as it had begun to rain and they'd been sent inside. I was mobbed in that I was literally grabbed by quite a number who held on as I moved to get to the classroom to set up my work for the afternoon. Others created a second group, pressing in. There was a lot of loud conversation. Various questions were asked of me, as it was obvious they'd not been expecting me.

One of the pupils asked if I was **teaching** them today. I thought that was fascinating as the implication was that the pupil concerned well understood that I could be in school for other reasons. That I was seen as a real teacher nonetheless was shown by someone else then asking if I was going to be his or her proper teacher now. Their own teacher was leaving at the end of term, so they perhaps thought I might be taking on that job.

It was an appropriately informal atmosphere at this point, Year 6 still coming in to their room next door and there being a lot of noise and typical post lunch activity in the cloakrooms nearby. One of the pupils called out to two new Year 5 pupils that I was Miss Smith's (Helen's) friend. Someone else said "You can see that we really like Miss Anderson". The comments were all said over each other with more similar ones beside.

For me, it was a lovely afternoon, not only because of the warmth of the children's reaction to me but also because Kath (the Head teacher) took the trouble to pop in to the classroom and welcome me back. At the end of the day, even some parents came in to say hello and chat over recent school events after, presumably, their children had gone out and told them I was there.

At the start of the research, I had gone to the school with much fear and trepidation. Some eighteen months later, here I was obviously having accomplished becoming the Walford's familiar and trusted face – and perhaps more besides.

Reflecting on the whole issue of role after some further months now since not returning to the school, I think it is obvious that these children were by and large, well able to cope with my being a small part of their lives - in a number of roles.

3.6 Role and understanding of the child's world

Much has been written about how adults may attempt to understand a child's world:

> The ways in which we make sense of the actions of others are inextricably linked to the ways in which we see ourselves. For this reason, the process of reflecting upon children's understanding inevitably involves an element of introspection, a conscious attempt to perceive not only how the child views the world ... but how we perceive this world too. (Rowland, 1984, p.10)

I aimed to keep these wise comments of Rowland to the forefront of my mind throughout the research and spent much time, particularly when driving home after each school visit, considering how and where I may have been filtering my observations and conversations through preconceptions of my own.

'The world' in this case is of course the primary school and specifically, the classroom. My reflection on the possible understandings of children is largely what this thesis is about and I have already considered how I perceived the classroom from the adult standpoint - that as teacher and researcher.

But what of the preconceptions I bring because of my own experience as a pupil? I did start this writing with the reflection that I had been something of an anxious pupil in my own primary school days. Was that the reason the Holt book so struck a chord and so led me to embark on further research? Wary of unhelpful introspection, but conscious that auto ethnography had become as increasingly useful method of working, I decided on a short period of reflection to see if I was approaching the work

with any other bias that I should perhaps consciously work to compensate or allow for?

My own primary school experience was in a school at the end of the road where I had been born and grew up. This meant that it was easy for my sister and I to go home for lunch. Although I remember those lunchtimes, listening to the radio with my mother, very fondly, I did miss what could have been the valuable peer friendship creating/consolidating time that occurs at those long lunch breaks.

As an infant (KS1) pupil, I was in mixed sex classes but the Junior (KS2) school was single sex. On going into what is now termed Year 3, I lost some friends who happened to be boys and recall around that time being without anyone to play with at breaks. I imagine some girl friends must have gone to other schools at that time too as I don't think that as an infant pupil I had spent break times exclusively with boys!

It couldn't have been a situation that went on for that long but it was an unhappy time and I remember propping walls up, watching others playing, trying to look as if it didn't matter – the importance even at that age of maintaining that façade! I didn't need Rowland advocating some introspection to remind me of those emotions! However, I already knew that throughout my teaching career, it had certainly made me acutely aware of looking to help pupils who might have been experiencing similar loneliness.

The Year 4 class in 1999 – 2000 had some pupils prone to being loners and Helen and I both kept an eye on the progress of these pupil's relationships in particular. In the early days of my research, one of my initial focuses was children's friendship patterns and I spent much time observing the solitary pupils and trying to help Helen's efforts to socialise them into friendship groups. However, because they were without peers to play with, these pupils affected my research when out on the playground in breaks, as they would tend to gravitate to Helen and / or myself, thus making it difficult to observe the others at play. Elizabeth was the worst case of this but there were many others too – often when relationships with peers had broken down.

How exceptionally important peer relationships can be to a child. When a pupil in Year 3 myself, my teacher wanted to reorganise the class groupings and asked who'd like to partner who. When it was my turn, I recall being astonished at what seemed to be a sea of hands offering to be my partner. It did wonders for my confidence and is the foremost memory I have from that year!

However, another significant event at the end of my own time in Year 3 was that I was one of a group who were told we'd be moved directly into Year 5 after the summer break. The understanding was that we were the brightest pupils and we should be pleased at being chosen to jump a year, but I remember being dreadfully worried all summer holiday about how I'd learn 'joined up' writing as I knew they did that in Year 4! Such a relatively insignificant thing to an adult perhaps – but a mountain to climb for me at that time. It is something again I've never forgotten and led me throughout my time on the other side of the fence, as teacher, to not be quick to dismiss pupils' work or other concerns. What seems unimportant to an adult can be devastating to a child.

Apart from some problems with peer relations, soon rectified when in that first year I made a good best friend, school was a place where I tended to experience success and praise. I was aware therefore that as an adult, I could possibly underestimate the worries of less academic children and needed to be careful to appreciate some of the emotions they might be experiencing being labelled as Special educational needs or knowing they were in the bottom group for subjects.

Another experience in my Junior years was that I was bullied. I always had the impression that the bully disliked me for being bright – which of course echoes the comments of the Year 4 children made in 1999 – 2000 about peers mocking them for being clever. It overshadowed my days and I think I sometimes played up illnesses to stay away from school more than was necessary to have a little more respite. This left me as a teacher with a tendency to be very quick to be suspicious of children absent for somewhat uncertain causes, and it reflected in the research by my paying special attention to those children on their return to school, seeing if perhaps they had wanted to be absent for reasons other than ill health.

I ended up having the same teacher for two of my four Junior years. Fortunately, this teacher seemed particularly fond of me and this relationship boosted my confidence again. So, overall for me my primary/ junior years were happy, successful times. However, although academically successful, it was the relationships – both positive and negative- that had probably mattered most. But do I say that just because the work was less of an issue for me?

Because I had personally experienced a good relationship with an influential teacher, I was probably expecting the children throughout my research to similarly state that the person of the teacher would matter to them. I had to listen very carefully to what they were actually saying when we discussed that issue. In my case, part of the reason that teacher stood out more was that she contrasted sharply with others in the school who had a different approach to their work. No such variation in teachers' style was as obvious in the school headed up by Kath, hence perhaps one reason for the different children's responses there.

Considered singly many aspects of classroom life look trivial.
And, in a sense, they are.
It is only when their cumulative occurrence is considered
that the realisation of their full importance begins to emerge.

(Philip Jackson, 1968, p.177)

Chapter 4
The first Anxious moments in the primary schools

4.1 Introduction

Having completed the pilot study, this chapter describes how the formal research in the schools began, concentrating in particular on the record keeping I set up from the outset.

I describe three short events or vignettes where children are in a potentially stressful situation as a result of being asked something by a teacher or support worker. The presentation of these events is designed to illustrate my thinking and the questions I was considering at this early stage of the work when I was still working solely as participant observer. It is illustrated principally through excerpts from records I made at the time.

A significant amount of the data I will be presenting in later chapters revolves around teacher questioning at the start of lessons. To contrast, the events in this chapter are examples of different occasions of teacher questioning of pupils although still occasions when a large audience of pupil peers were present.

For Priya, the most public event of them all, it occurred in whole school assembly, in front of all the primary and nursery children in the school as well as all their teachers.

Alex's question was put to him outside his Year 4 classroom but led to his walking in and out of the room numerous times in front of his somewhat bemused teacher and the rest of the class.

For Ann, the question was put to her whilst she was standing in front of her peers giving a presentation at the end of a morning's work as part of the plenary session. Through each I am hoping to show a number of things.

Firstly, it is an opportunity to present some of the methodology of working I adopted which is not explained elsewhere. The pupil profiles and field notes are the key sources of material in these accounts. The notes titled 'context of the incident'are taken from field notes. The other notes, entitled 'reflections' are also taken from notes made at the time that, as mentioned earlier, I used like a diary to challenge my thinking, draw conclusions and consider how to progress the work.

Secondly, it introduces and starts to familiarise the reader with some of the ways of workings of the research schools, with particular reference to the literacy hour as well as other occasions typical of the school timetable.

Thirdly, it illustrates my changing role, moving from seeing the class primarily as a teacher – to a position of teacher /researcher.

Finally, because I was keen to include all the Year 4 children in the later interviewing, it was impossible to describe most of them in any detail. With the exception of one case study later – that with Julia, this is the only other real opportunity I have to offer to the reader a more developed picture of children and the way I was working with them.

4.2 "Priya, would you come out and help me please?"

The first example chosen is a period of several minutes when a child was asked by the Head teacher to play a game of finding a lolly pop in front of the whole school (KS1 and 2).

It is taken from field notes and pupil profile notes made after a visit in mid October 1999.

We had all gone to assembly and I was sat behind the class. Kath (the Head teacher) was needing three volunteers. Whereas I have often seen her wait for true volunteers and allow the pupils to put their hands up, from whom she then chooses, on this occasion she looked around and asked Priya from the Yr. 4 class to come out and help her.

Priya was almost as far away as she could be so it took about 10 seconds for her to reach Kath at the front of the hall. This is a long time when people are watching you. Whilst she was stepping through the children to get there, Kath spoke to the rest of the school. She said that she picked Priya because she always heard good reports about her; she knew she was a good worker and was kind and helpful so knew she would not mind. As Priya reached her, Kath then said to her, " You don't mind do you? No? Good!".

Priya did not appear to have answered but she may have smiled her agreement. She had her back to me so I could not observe any response.

She then had to leave the hall whilst Kath hid a lollypop. She returned and was guided by the school calling out " Warm" or "Hot" or "Cold" or whatever. When she found the lolly, she was congratulated and told to keep it for after lunch.

4.3 Profile for Priya; noteworthy incidents and conversations

Probably the most mature pupil in the class - very capable in most respects. For example, when Peter (with special educational needs) was being difficult on his own table and was moved to sit by her, she coped admirably. Peter has particular problems in that he seems to have to call out and make noises. Even the boys sometimes reject him so Priya, being a girl, seemed to me to do particularly well with him. She was kind and tolerant and did not belittle him but made efforts to help and support his work (which he seemed to appreciate).

Early in October '99, Priya questioned me about my business in school, why I was there, which other schools I visited etc. She did not seek me out but used an opportunity that presented itself when I had come to her table to support the pupils working there. It drew my attention to her since most of the children were not taking the initiative with me; it was still very early days.

The following visit, she impressed me again. She reported her group's progress independently to me. Although I was the nearest teacher, so it was the most sensible course of action, some others had crossed the room to tell Helen.

Priya has the ability to keep her own counsel. One of my last visits of the Christmas term saw my being drawn in to an incident involving Alison who, amongst other things, complained about Priya looking at her. Helen was not easily accessible at this point and by now the children generally seemed quite happy to use me as a second teacher to sort their problems. Priya saw us talking and was aware of the complaint from Alison but kept her distance and let me handle it without coming over to put her case as might have been expected from many of the other girls.

The very last week of term, Priya attended the School Christmas Fayre with everyone else. I was not directly involved, so was just wandering around, looking. When I came near to Priya she said that she had been waiting for some time for change from two Year 6 girls running a cake stall. I asked her if she wanted me to talk to them and she said yes. I did but later on, she still had a problem with them. They seemed to have run out of change. I got them some from another stall and gave Priya hers making sure one stall girl was watching, counting it out in front of her. Both Priya and I were annoyed at the girls – I was so annoyed at their belligerent attitude that Priya and I had quite a chat about them there and then. I asked her if she'd had trouble with them before (perhaps on the yard and perhaps because of Priya's Indian ethnic origins). She was non-committal and I left it, telling her to go off and enjoy herself. Later though she came to find me about another problem with money where there was a disagreement over the change Priya was entitled to – different girls! Perhaps she was just better at maths than any of them - she was certainly correct on both occasions.

I include this rather lengthy account because it demonstrates that despite her capabilities, Priya is still a child in need of some adult support. It also raises the fact that Priya may be contending with issues due to her ethnic background.

4.4 The teacher and the context of the incident

At this early stage, my first impressions are that Kath seems to be an extremely competent Head. She is very demanding of both herself and the staff, looking constantly to improve the school. For example, in December (1999) the school was

awarded the Charter Mark Award for excellence – almost unique in the Education authority.

Although Kath has won my admiration in many respects and has been friendly, helpful and welcoming to myself, whatever pressure she has been under, I have sometimes wondered how easy it is for her to always put the pupils first. I appreciate that there is an argument that by putting the school first, the children are being put first but there can be perhaps a subtle difference and in her role as Head I imagine there can be conflicts of interests.

In this assembly, I would argue that Priya's needs were probably not put first. The child was clearly uncomfortable even though she put a brave face on it. I suspect many others would have responded differently, and did when Kath repeated the lolly game twice more with two children who <u>had</u> put their hands up!

I strongly suspect that what was most important was that Kath needed a safe pair of hands to demonstrate the game - particularly to the tiny Reception and Yr. 1 pupils. However, is it a good thing to encourage children out of their comfort zones to tackle things such as Priya was made to do? Not all stress is bad?

4.5 Reflections on the incident

I imagine that some of the pupils watching would have envied Priya. However, Priya demonstrated an emotional response by blushing as she rose to go to Kath initially, did not clearly articulate an answer in reference to whether she minded helping (she certainly demonstrated no enthusiasm) and looked uncomfortable and somewhat confused as the game was explained. Interestingly though, she did not look away to any friend or her teacher for moral support. For once I was able to stare - to watch intently without fear of bothering the child any more than she already was - and am therefore certain of this.

On looking around for the lolly, she continued to look awkward. She smiled at times but not a smile of genuine pleasure, more a half smile of embarrassment as she moved around. When it was all over I thought she just looked relieved and the way she threw

herself quickly back down in her place on the floor, as though to remove herself from sight and rejoin the anonymity of the rest of the seated pupils, suggested this too.

Why did Priya not enjoy being the centre of attention? Why did she appear to feel anxious and embarrassed having been asked to help?

I suggest the following:

1. There was a real danger of not following Kath's instructions and doing it wrong.

2. The fact that it was the Head teacher in front of the whole school and all the teachers would have meant that everyone would have known if she had indeed done it wrong.

3.Being chosen caused her to blush instantly. Priya may be such a modest girl that her sense of identity caused this response.

4. Having no clear route to the front, having to walk over the obstacle of many other pupils in her way, risking falling and now the subject of almost everyone's eyes contributed to the deepening of her embarrassment. At the same time, she would have been hearing Kath's praise of her – which may also have embarrassed her.

5. The risks of the situation continued as the game was played out. She possibly had the conflict of feeling one thing but having to put emotion aside to concentrate on what she was being asked to do / perform.

6. On achieving the goal, Priya, on returning to her seat may have then had time to reflect on the likely responses of her friends and other peers, Cooley's looking glass, giving rise to certain feelings such as embarrassment although possibly too some pride?

It is a situation which bears contrasting with a similar occasion which occurred with Rachel, another Year 4 pupil. It had happened in assembly a week earlier. Kath asked for some people to come up and hold illustrations for her. Rachel and many others put up their hands. Rachel's body language was one of eagerness and she was one of four picked. She looked delighted and stood patiently holding the picture for some five or so minutes. On being thanked and dismissed, she looked very pleased with herself and returned to her seat beaming (a rare sight!).

This was different in that Rachel had the opportunity to offer her help. She also had an easy job to do which only required standing where told. Was the difference that Rachel saw the request to her for help, the being chosen, as a change of status leading to an increase in personal power, resulting in an emotional response of pride (as Kemper, 2000 posits)? Why did Priya apparently not see a relatively similar situation in a similar way? Does how they respond depend on the identity the children have constructed at this stage of their personal development?

4.6 "Where is your book, Alex? Go and find it please"

This second vignette is when Alex climbed across seated pupils *three times* to fetch a book yet did not *seem* perturbed. My question is, was there just no outward sign of inner tension or did it really not bother the child for possible reasons that I discuss below?

It is taken from pupil profile notes made after a visit in October 1999, already introduced in full as Appendix 4:

.... watching him, he really looks 'out of it' for much of class time. Went in and out several times to get a book to read with Mrs. D. the classroom assistant; didn't seem embarrassed despite disturbing Helen and the class waiting to do literacy around the white board in the corridor. Was he aware that everyone was waiting for him to get settled? He showed no sign.

4.7 Profile for Alex

An exceptionally quiet, almost silent boy, likes to keep work hidden from other pupils - allowed me to look at his maths estimates once, only when I asked. Talks quietly but rarely.

A very interesting/ surprising incident occurred in October when looking across, I saw him smile conspiratorially with Patrick when some papers slid off Helen's desk and landed on the floor between them. No one else showed any sign of having noticed. He didn't see me watching because of the angle at which I was sitting in relation to him. He smiled to himself and then again with Pat on and off twice - neither looked to Helen to share the joke or even see if she noticed – she hadn't.

He can be diligent and quite imaginative. He will accept help from Helen, myself and peers but says virtually nothing nonetheless. He is often out with Mrs. D. The incident in question was when he was supposed to be out working with her.

He was once very bothered by my asking him how he would start his writing on a newspaper story about the Mary Rose. He was looking down as usual but also looked quite distressed, an odd expression, so I moved on to help someone else. An incidence of anxiety? I discussed it with Helen afterwards and she felt it likely that he was finding that particular piece of work overwhelming and just didn't know what to say to me. Alex's coping strategy was therefore apparently one of avoidance.

The story the Head, Kath, has told Helen is that there is violence in the home – the mother being beaten by the father. Apparently, when attempts were made to help (bringing in relevant agencies), the allegation was then denied although it was the Head herself the mother had told.

Alex does seem unusually withdrawn - afraid of adults generally? Men? There are only two men working in school (a class teacher and the caretaker) - I haven't had chance to observe him with either on a one to one basis.

All the children just seem to completely accept Alex as he is. I've seen no pressure being put on him by them at all. There seems to be no teasing or bullying despite his being very out of the ordinary.

By the end of term, Alex did work more happily with me and wrote a good story on dinosaurs - once I got him started by writing an initial sentence for him.

The same day he shared a joke with Helen when out doing his target setting. She recounted it to me afterwards. Alex and she were in the corridor discussing his first term. She played around, half teasing and told him very jokily that he must get noisier and TALK! Eventually she said he started to laugh and agreed that he should set talking as his main target! Helen was so pleased with him for seeing her point and saying so!

4.8 The teacher and the context of the incident with Alex

This was the only time I have seen Helen really quite exasperated by Alex. The whole incident became so bizarre that it seemed almost funny. Alex, however, said nothing throughout and we had no idea if he was going to be coming back through a fourth time!

It transpired later that he just wasn't taking the correct book to read to Mrs. D. who was out of sight around the corner in the corridor. I don't know why she sent or allowed him to come back through everyone so often. Perhaps she was also exasperated with Alex and was trying to make a point to him?

4.9 Reflections on the incident with Alex

Whatever the reasons for it, it is my view that this incident ideally should not have happened, especially to Alex who seems to have the least adequate personal resources to cope. Or does he?

I don't think that many of the pupils would have been *too* bothered picking their way through their peers once - but to do it three times in very quick succession I would expect would create some anxiety/ tension/ embarrassment in anyone. Yet Alex seemed unmoved.

The fact that I observed no change in Alex's usual rather vacant expression does not mean that nothing was going on inside on an emotional level.

Has he learnt to remain passive to avoid the anger of adults?

Has he learnt that to show any emotion or express a need or want gets him nowhere so there is no point to it? Did he actually feel angry with himself or Mrs. D. about what was happening?

Is he so concerned about fetching the correct book that that thought fills his mind and he is genuinely unaware of the irritation his actions are causing?

Is the social world of school so confusing to him that he can only cope with one action or focus at a time?

Alex does not seem comfortable making choices; this was apparent from the stress I inadvertently caused him when querying how he would start a story. This does not mean he does not have views. But he seems to have particularly little confidence in expressing them.

However, as alluded to above, Alex more than almost any other pupil demonstrated the greatest change in identity over the time I knew him. Initially he seemed to set himself apart from the social setting of the classroom and therefore his peers and teacher's judgements of him – possibly an example of Cooley's selective interest. Could it have been because the only judgement that mattered to him at that time was from someone outside school: his father? His mother? I can only speculate. However, later on in the academic year he showed evidence of responding to others in school. He seemed to increasingly engage with his teacher and other's sustained efforts to persuade him of the value they placed on his opinions and contributions, suggesting that his inner dialogue (Mead's I and me) was being affected by others negotiating with him. Did this lead to an appreciation of a change of status (Kemper) from what he had supposed to be the case, leading to a more positive emotional response to events?

The final vignette is from the Year 3 class in the other research school.

4.10 "Are you sure it was a Magpie butterfly, Ann?"

This was the most sustained incidence of embarrassment resulting from a teacher question in front of the class I had seen to date. It is taken from field notes made after a visit to the second research school on Thursday, 14th October 1999. The full account written that day appears as Appendix 7.

> *At the end of the morning a large group of seven children (the maths top set) were stood by the wall. They were in front of the remainder of the class to present their work on using reference books to find out about butterflies. Ann (who'd had most trouble with the maths earlier) referred to a Magpie butterfly. Sara thought she'd made a mistake, asked her whether she was sure about the name and on no reply from Ann, sent Ann to fetch the book she'd been using so that Sara could see the source material. Ann looked embarrassed and became increasingly red faced as she picked her way through her peers (sitting on the floor facing the wall thus creating an audience for the seven) to reach her desk with the book. She was right in what she had written and therefore had read out and Sara told the class that Ann had been correct before the class were dismissed for lunch.*

4.11 Identity profile for Ann

One of the children most interested in my regular appearances in the classroom - always greets me with a smile if she has to remain seated: a hug or other touching gesture (i.e. on my arm) if she can get near, perhaps as we all lead into the room.

No obvious close friend, but generally friendly and seems liked by others well enough. I suspect she is tolerated by some on her table, the brightest seven or eight in the class. She is a diligent child but the work doesn't come easily to her. She is usually only successful after observing others or by being helped.

She likes to please everybody - peers, teachers/ helpers. Bright, sunny disposition on the surface but is prone to looking confused in private. I have caught her looking muddled when Sara has rattled out a list of instructions. Ann will look or stand around until she can follow someone. On one occasion she asked me what to do but wouldn't go to Sara when, being too busy observing elsewhere, I hadn't heard the instructions either!

In general, she rarely puts her hand up to answer questions or even queries such as who has returned slips about Parent's Evening. Rather gives the impression of being vague and not quite with it much of the time. However, I have seen her very alert and keen to answer Sara. It would seem though that she couldn't generate or sustain this attitude for long.

She doesn't like a lot of noise around her and doesn't participate in any messing around (i.e.: flicking rubbers) although she will chatter away if not checked. Stands around a lot on the playground usually with no one in particular. May frequently be near the gate entrance area, hence tends to be quick to spot my arrival (as does Rob); jumps around and usually clings or stays near, chatting, until I go in.

4.12 The teacher, Sara, and the context of the incident with Ann

After a whole class introduction to 'Shape', Sara had been working with other groups earlier in the morning and had not seen Ann working either on maths in her group or on the reference books after break. For maths, Ann's group had been left with me affording me an opportunity to get to know them. Immediately after the session I had told Sara briefly that Ann had difficulties with the work so that when she looked at the pupils' workbooks later, she would be aware that Ann's work reflected considerable assistance from me. Although in the top group, Ann was by far the least capable in the maths Shape work on her table. My comment would have reinforced any existing thoughts in Sara's mind regarding Ann being less than capable in her work?

After break, I don't think Sara saw Ann working on the reference books. Sara worked exclusively with another literacy group and I moved around seeing / checking on progress with the other four groups. I had therefore seen Ann working and knew that she appeared to have been copying verbatim from a large book, but I had not got close enough to see exactly what the type of butterfly she'd chosen. As she had been working with the one group leaving the remainder to work independently, Sara by adhering to the literacy guidelines had therefore no real knowledge of the work completed by children other than those in her group that day.

4.13 Reflections on the incident with Ann

> One is on treacherous and empirically invalid grounds if he thinks that any form of joint action can be sliced off from its historical linkage, as if its makeup and character arose out of the air through spontaneous generation instead of growing out of what went before (Blumer, 1969, p.20)

When Sara queried Ann, I felt fairly confident that Ann would have been correct - I even imagined I remembered doing magpie butterflies in previous work with a class years earlier - but did not call across to Sara to express my opinion. On reflecting as to why, I think that had either Sara or Ann looked to me, I would have spoken but as Sara immediately moved the lesson on, and Ann put her head down as she went towards her desk, I could not make eye contact with either and did not feel sufficiently certain to make a specific point and stop the class - the moment passed.

Why did Ann not answer Sara and say that she knew she was right? Lack of confidence? Was she drawing on memories of other incidents and did she therefore make the decision not to make a fuss? The child had drawn a picture of the actual butterfly in question and yet still allowed herself to be embarrassed like that. Why did none of the rest of the group support her? They must have seen what she'd been doing - there was enough chat and fuss over who used which books and so on - but Ann tends to be slightly alone - perhaps no peer had noticed after all or no one was prepared to challenge the teacher on behalf of another, or on behalf of Ann anyway.

Why did Sara question Ann about her work? As intimated earlier, my comment on Ann's difficulties with earlier work that morning may have undermined Sara's confidence in her. Also, the fact that Sara had seen none of the work prior to the group giving this public performance of it, may have allowed more than usual uncertainty in her mind. Prior errors of Ann in relation to work earlier in the term may also have caused Sara to be quick to doubt her on this occasion. Was she perhaps not allowing for the fact that Ann was developing and changing in terms of her learner identity and could be right?

The implication is that direct teacher questions of a child do not arise in a vacuum but are likely to have a context and history (Blumer, 1969, as referenced above). The identity of the child and the mood of the teacher at the time may also have an impact.

For example, I doubt that Sara would similarly queried Geoff, Alicia or Alec, three others in the same group as Ann. They, unlike Ann, exude confidence and are generally more sharp-witted and willing to converse with the teacher. Had they been so questioned, each would have been likely to say that they were correct and would probably have gone for the book to prove it - thus actually using what was the embarrassed moment for Ann to one of achievement, a change of status to one of increased power (Kemper) for them. For Anne though it was definitely a public loss of status and probably led to feelings of sadness, embarrassment and possibly shame.

What of my presence and possible impact of that? It was on this same visit that I wrote: "Assembly time with the class in the Hall gave Sara and I a chance to chat. She said she is a bit more tight with the class when I'm there in these early days but otherwise she gave me to understand I was a great help." She told me this prior to this incident.

Was Sara feeling a little tense questioning Ann with me there? As has been written of outside observers, their: " physical presence would provide an added feature, which might itself affect the ... classroom" (Jackson, 1968, p.88). However, neither Sara nor Ann looked to me in their exchange. I'm inclined to think that I made no *real* difference at the time. I had however spoken to Sara about Ann's maths work. Had I not been present that day, Sara would have taken responsibility for the top maths group herself and therefore would presumably have seen Ann's difficulties for herself. Did the fact that another teacher/ person said it actually raise the profile of Ann in Sara's mind – and raise it negatively? Did it confirm that Ann isn't as good at maths as originally thought when Sara grouped the class the second week in September - a month earlier? Did this then undermine her confidence in the girl so that she also doubted her work on butterflies?

4.14 Conclusions

These incidents happened in the first weeks of the research and taught me much which then informed the future direction of the work

Despite losing the third school I realised that I was still over reaching myself and unable to keep the records I wanted as diligently as I wished. For the new spring term, I had to decide between whether it mattered more to me to keep the whole of the Year 3 and Year 4 children on board or lose one year group in order to keep working in as much detail as I had been doing when I was planning to add working with the camcorder in school too. I reluctantly decided to stop working with the Year 3 class and change the way I wrote pupil and field notes. This would give me additional time to work with the camera and start the individual and paired pupil interviews.

But the value of the vignettes or incidents related above was enormous. They taught me to watch for the small split second look or reaction and stop looking around at the whole class as when a teacher. When teaching, you have to be watching out for all the children. Being in school primarily as researcher now I had the luxury, when observing something, of being able to focus, watch and consider all the implications to the exclusion of the rest of the children.

It taught me too to look beyond the obvious and expected. No one in the school was two-dimensional. All had an identity that they were seeking to protect and therefore reasons for why each reacted as they did. Being largely freed from needing to concern myself with the academic aspect of the children being in school allowed me to look into and consider this more closely.

I also learnt to increasingly trust myself and not be so overly concerned about the paper work. I probably hadn't got the balance quite right in those early weeks and was writing too much, sometimes to the exclusion of further reading and thinking about the work. I subsequently aimed to achieve a better balance and once the camcorder

was in school in the New Year, this became easier again as it recorded events so removing some of the fear I had of missing things.

Thus the work the following term was very different, working with just one class, experimenting with the camcorder and such. However, although I had witnessed events that seemed to have an impact on pupil and even teacher identity, leading to an emotional response each time that might include anxiety, what was beginning to concern me was whether anxiety existed as a common experience in times of whole class teacher questioning.

Chapter 5
Incidents leading to emotional responses in the pupils

5.1 Introduction

In the very early days of the observation, I noted various incidents in whole class situations – mostly when the teacher was asking questions - which seemed to lead to an emotional response for the child (ren) involved. From those observations I offer the following single event vignettes from the point of view of the child. I also offer suggest how these relate to the symbolic interactionist principles outlined in chapter 1.

5.2 Events

I have sought to group these broadly according to the main impact or coping strategy noted but of course interactions tend to overlap, be complex and frequently involve a number of resulting conclusions.

5.2.1 Events that may lead to a change of status

When you put your hand up to offer an answer to a teacher question you are chosen to respond.

The most common result is when the correct or a correct enough answer is given. You may look pleased, embarrassed but pleased, may flush and look around to peers, may continue to focus on the teacher looking to answer again soon, may look non committal, may look down and sit back. Whatever the result, some change of status, however small has almost certainly taken place (Kemper, 2000).

As Jackson notes: "After a student has made a contribution ... the teacher is less likely to call on him again, at least for a brief period of time" (Jackson, 1968, p.14). Because you knew you were safe for a while, you may take the opportunity to relax for a few minutes.

However, you can give an incorrect answer to the question posed. There will often be a moment of hesitation whilst the teacher considers how to respond. Anxiety is often

then apparent both in the teacher and you – and not just you who is answering but nearby friends as well. Often, peers will offer an encouraging or never mind sort of look to friends, empathic role taking (Shott). Others take the opportunity to have a go, also through facial expressions, or hiss a comment, usually hidden from the teacher. Often she will be looking for an acceptable way to soften the blow. Commonly, teachers will use the strategy of thanking you for your efforts / attempt – and then move on to pose the question again or in simpler terms.

You may be feeling left out of a discussion, initiate a comment and then
forget what you wanted to say.

This happened to Priya who looked bothered that several on her table had contributed to a conversation with the teacher that she hadn't. She put up her hand and asked if she could say something. The teacher said yes but half way through, Priya forgot her point and /or more probably became confused. She stopped speaking. Many were listening and watching and she then looked down, embarrassed. This seems to be an example of a child perceiving a potential loss of status (Kemper, 2000) through nonparticipation which they sought to address, on this occasion, unsuccessfully.

You may be asked to come out of your seat to do something you don't think you really
want to do in front of the class.

Lucy was a reluctant actress for something the teacher wanted to demonstrate, although she got into it and did a good performance in the end. Initially, she had looked disgruntled and wary and walked up to the front in a manner that seemed to suggest that this was beneath her. It would seem that Lucy's sense of her own identity required her nonparticipation to be 'cool'; however, the power of the teacher (Kemper, 2000) was such that she was required to participate. Lucy's coping mechanism was such that she then took on the role expected and by undertaking it well, maintained her own status (potentially damaged by having to do as asked), and probably even enhanced it in the eyes of her peers, teacher and perhaps even herself.

The teacher may ask a question for which you put your hand up to answer. However,
on saying your name to reply, the teacher immediately asks a new, follow on question.

You feel perplexed momentarily and may regroup and answer, attempt an answer and stop, or remain silent.

This happened to Roger, who looked down, frowned and then looked up into the teacher's face and answered the second question. There was clearly anxiety, not only for the child, but I suspect for others too as they responded with empathic role taking (Shott,1979). I have personally felt it whilst waiting with bated breath to see if the child can accommodate the shift in subject.

Interestingly, a child with a strong learner identity may argue against the shift in parameters and win the right to make their original contribution. This can change the embarrassment into cause for celebration, a change of status leading to pride (Kemper, 2000).

You can be day dreaming, perhaps fiddling with something in front of you on your desk and the teacher says your name and then asks a rhetorical question such as " What are you doing?" or " What were we saying? ". You are brought back to reality, probably without a full awareness of what has just gone before.

Again this is an example of a loss of awareness of their social setting. This has happened to Katrina, Patrick, Baz and used to happen to Caroline (who left the school at Christmas) a lot of the time. The child tends, to varying degrees, to look startled. They then usually look at the teacher and then, as awareness of the current circumstances returns, the face usually reddens. They rarely give a verbal response, their coping mechanism being to not prolong the exchange.

They wait instead for a further comment from the teacher, often lightly sarcastic, such as " Will you try to stay awake please?" Commonly they may then look around their table and on making eye contact with a peer, make a face (such as a raised eyebrow, purse of the lips etc – suggesting whoops, I got caught). This is their attempt to renegotiate the loss of status (Kemper, 2000) that may have been felt.

The teacher, as a result of a complaint made about you by another pupil, may question you.

For example, Lucy complained to the teacher that Kate wouldn't share her things with her. Kate flushed when the teacher asked her why she wouldn't share her colouring pencils with Lucy. Initially she did not answer. The teacher had to ask a second question to get a verbal response. By now it probably felt as if everyone was looking at Kate.

The classroom ethics instilled had been that nice pupils share and help each other. Kate was therefore put in the category of being mean. This was definitely a risk to status (Kemper, 2000) and Kate's initial coping mechanism was to minimise it by remaining silent. The inner dialogue (Mead, 1934) must have been one of conflict, at least at first, with Kate deciding in herself that she did not want to be inscribed with the label of meanness, hence her later sharing pencils with peers.

A message may come to the teacher and she may ask you to then go to the Head or another teacher. This is often unexpected and you are likely to look startled and query the reason.

It may not be for bad behaviour although it sometimes was. It happened to Lee when his little sister, new to the Reception class got very upset and her own teacher thought Lee could help calm her so sent asking if he could be spared for a few minutes. Lee's sister was very vocal and everyone could hear her screaming and crying. He looked quite embarrassed on his (eventual!) return. However, after the initial embarrassment, I suggest there was a change of status for the better as Lee seemed pleased at the powerful effect he was able to have on his sister in calming her

5.2.2 Negotiation of the social setting

On just saying or doing something wrong, you may turn to a practiced mannerism to cover your embarrassment.

For example, Marc will chew his cuff. This has the effect of covering his face, which may be reddening a little. Others (Kate and girls in particular) may cover their faces

with their hands for a moment or two. Some (Patrick) may put their face down on the table – again just for a moment or so. Here the pupils are not so much using spoken language to affect their social setting (Mead 1934) but are using body language to limit the potential emotional response to what has happened.

There can be anxiety about being heard. On answering a question, you may be asked to speak up and repeat your answer.

There are two problems here. One, the pupil may still have no clue as to whether they are right. Secondly, some are quiet by nature and dislike raising their voices indoors. They talk of having indoor and outdoor voices. Either way, they tend to look quite red faced as they repeat their answer. Some may even refuse, saying, " It doesn't matter". The teacher may press them or move on to a less reluctant pupil. They are here using language to try to manage their social setting (Mead, 1934) as they perceive a potential loss of status (Kemper, 2000).

A degree of anxiety is clearly present in many of the teacher – pupil interactions when an ordinary question has been posed. Often you offer an answer but preface it with " Is it...?" or " Do you mean...?" You look to clarify before committing to a possible wrong or half wrong answer.

This is so common that I have noted virtually every child doing it at some point although not necessarily in a whole class context. Sometimes the teacher will come back with an " I'm asking you – is that your answer?" type of reply, which forces the child to either withdraw or commit to an answer. This seems to be the children again using language to negotiate their social setting (Mead 1934)

5.2.3 Evidence of the use of the looking glass self and Blumer's 'meanings'

If you do not regularly contribute in class discussions but offer an answer, which is accepted as correct, the teacher may make a fuss of praising you in front of everyone, which often leaves you looking embarrassed.

This started happening to Alex who changed and became markedly more outgoing as the year progressed. He seems able now to listen and engage with the work, at least at the start of lessons, and will occasionally offer an answer as a result. He has been embarrassed twice that I've seen, looks away and tends to switch off. On another occasion though he smiled (very unusually) and apparently enjoyed the fun and fuss!

Some discussion of Alex's changing role has been offered in the previous chapter. It seems that events such as above did eventually affect him, leading to his registering and then responding to other's perceptions of his learner identity as Blumer (1969) and Cooley (1922 in 1967) discuss.

You may be over excited about answering a question the teacher has posed, enthusiastically wave your hand in the air and then not be asked.

This most commonly happens in response to the initial, starter question posed as the teacher starts the work. Alternatively, it also tends to happen when the discussion is more light-hearted or has been in progress for some time. I have observed that some children, after their disappointment, seem suddenly aware that they may have looked less than 'cool' in their enthusiasm and then seem embarrassed on becoming suddenly conscious again of their peers around them. Others can actually become quite annoyed, express that in their facial expression and take it out on the pupil who was chosen. This sort of incident suggests that pupils can step outside the social setting, but on remembering it, have an inner dialogue that will lead to their responding according to the meanings they attach to their peers perceptions of the incident and therefore themselves.

5.2.4 Shame in the classroom

The teacher may ask a question of you even though others have their hands up because she thinks that you could answer this now. Usually all those with hands up will look at you, possibly hoping you'll say nothing so that they have an opportunity to obtain the status of answering correctly. Perhaps there is additional status in answering something someone else cannot?

This may lead to some shame (Scheff, 1988) as well as embarrassment as the children told me they would be well aware of easy questions. This scenario tends to happen to the least able / special needs pupils: Alex, Caty, Jane, Warren, Elizabeth as well as others.

You can offer an answer to a question and on hearing it, the teacher can just repeat it and perhaps say "Okay" or something equally noncommittal. You know that in some way the answer is flawed and look crestfallen/ embarrassed/ confused.

I believe that children who seem to make errors in public in this way experience a degree of shame (Scheff, 1988) – especially if they are considered by others and know themselves to be academically capable – as in the case of Emily. On one occasion when this happened to her, Paul looked across and smiled – an example of empathic role taking. However, she took his look to be a smile *at* her rather than in sympathy thus misinterpreting the meaning attached to the action (Blumer, 1969). She shrugged her shoulders, and tilted her head defiantly, all the time keeping eye contact until Paul looked away. Ironically, I expect both missed the correct answer because of their exchange.

You can be embarrassed because you haven't done something or brought something to school. The teacher has a class list and will go through it name by name querying "Why not?"

This tends to happen at the start of the day in front of everyone and tends to happen to the same children over and over. Perhaps they forget to get notes home from school signed by a parent. They forget to bring money for a trip until day-by-day they are being chastised for it. It may or may not be the child's fault – either way though it is they who are the ones being embarrassed and perhaps made to feel ashamed for their or their parents' forgetfulness (Scheff, 1988).

In a discussion period with hands being raised by your peers it is not uncommon for the teacher to ignore the offers and ask you, with your hand down, to answer the question. On these occasions the tone of the teacher's voice may indicate displeasure.

Perhaps you did not appear to be listening. The tension is tangible as everyone waits to see if you can answer.

This is very similar in impact to the event described immediately above. This happened frequently to Ray. His manner of coping was that he usually moved his head to enable him to make eye contact, look ashamed or subdued / chastened but not to attempt an answer. The teacher moved on.

Incidents happen on the playground with dinner staff or other teachers on duty. To inform the class teacher, the period immediately after the break often sees the other adult coming to the classroom to discuss it. Often you as the offender are stood near the teacher(s) whilst your peers come in and start to listen to what has happened and what the adults are going to do about it!

For a very serious incident, the teacher may talk to the child in the classroom alone and the class is made to wait outside. The embarrassment for the child may then be magnified as all the other pupils get rather excited and want to know why they have to wait, who is involved etc. Those who may have seen some or the entire incident may loudly whisper apocryphal stories about what happened.

This happened to Paul when he was found with a cigarette lighter. He was so distraught that I'm unsure as to whether he was embarrassed at the time. I think he thought he might be expelled and this overrode other concerns. It was perhaps the most obvious example of Scheff's shame that I encountered. Any embarrassment possibly came later or the next day after what surely must have been a sense of guilt and shame.

5.3 Summary

Although I have grouped the incidents loosely according to what they seemed to illustrate, with hindsight, I could have undertaken this observation much more systematically, and noted the frequency of each incident as well as any further patterns emerging. I could also have offered evidence other than my own observation of what was happening had I ventured to discuss it with the pupils. This could have

been undertaken through a form of participant observation, looking to talk about each incident quite soon after it happened. Unfortunately, still being very new to research and observation work at the time - and very hesitant, it didn't occur to me to do this until it was too late.

However, I suggest that the examples given above do nonetheless illustrate that the classroom is full of possibilities when it comes to events that lead to pupil negotiation with spoken language as well as using silence and body language, change of status, shame and evidence of pupils attaching meanings to other's apparent responses to them . Overall, the events all led to some level of emotional response and most did occur as a result of teacher questioning in a lesson.

So, to move the work on and introduce the topic of teacher questioning to the children I created some imaginary pupils for the children to discuss with me so that I could begin to hear what they had to say about the issue themselves.

Chapter 6
Use of imaginary pupils: Chris and Sam

6.1 Introduction

On 18th February 2000, I took an English lesson on an imaginary pupil I called Chris with myself in role of teacher researcher.

I introduced stories, which revolved around times of whole class teacher questioning. Chris hadn't been listening and didn't immediately know how to respond to the teacher when she asked Chris a question.

I arranged with Helen that I would do a follow up to the Chris story with Sam; this was on the first afternoon back after the half term break, in effect on the next teaching day.

I won't be discussing the children's responses in any detail at this point in the work. Instead it will be examined in chapter 9 when I present the children's individual interview data.

6.2 Initial work on questioning with the Year 4 class – the English lesson on Chris

I began the lesson by reading a story I'd written about a pupil called Chris. I ensured that they understood that Chris could be either gender but otherwise allowed no discussion at this stage.

The story read:

> It was just an ordinary school day. Chris walked to the playground with a friend from down the road and they talked together until they heard the bell ring, the signal that it was time to go in.

> Chris still felt a bit sleepy and hardly noticed the teacher going through the register and the school lunch menu as they did every morning.

> The teacher asked the class to gather around on the desks and carpet so that all the class could see the big book with the Dick King Smith story propped up on

the white board. They'd been reading it together all week and Chris was quite interested in finding out what was going to happen next.

They'd been reading and talking about the story for a while when suddenly, Chris realised that the teacher had asked a question.

" Chris, could you tell us what you think the author meant?" asked the teacher. Chris felt...

The children in Year 4 were then invited by me to brainstorm possibilities as to what Chris might have felt and then what Chris could / would do to extract him/ herself from the situation. The children were also questioned about the likely reaction (s) of Chris's peers.

This was a whole class session using the blackboard, placing pupils' answers on the board to help them in the follow up writing task. For this there were worksheets with a copy of the text of the story with space for the pupils to write their version of a possible end for the story. Separate worksheets had been prepared for pupils with special needs. That worksheet is given as Appendix 8. I give the non SEN children's written answers to how Chris felt as Appendix 9 with the SEN pupil's answers following.

Early finishers imagined and illustrated Chris's face as it may have looked when questioned. About half way through the lesson I stopped the pupils and invited some who had completed the task to read their stories out. This was a very popular activity and I therefore made a list of further pupils who asked for an opportunity to read their stories too.

During the last ten minutes of the lesson – the plenary – I recapped and we had further stories read out by as many pupils as I could allow in the remaining time before Assembly.

The following is the main discussion had between the children and myself after I finished reading the story at the start of the lesson.

(The camcorder couldn't see all the room so (?) is used wherever I am uncertain of the identity of the pupil talking on the tape).

JA	How was Chris feeling?
Melanie	He was feeling shocked
Julia	He was feeling worried
Debbie	He or she could feel butterflies in his tummy

I asked for other descriptions for how Chris might have felt:

Lydia	nervous
(?)	embarrassed
Emily	shy
Jessica?	ashamed
(?)	perplexed
JA	Good one - is that a good use of that word? (general *nods from class*) Well remembered from the narrative poem last week.

We continued:

Lucy	Like an ant, really small
Lee	scared
Suzanne	struck by lightning
JA	What sort of words are these?
Jane	adjectives - a lot of them are
(?)	describing words
(?)	feelings
JA	They all describe feelings, good - and that isn't always easy. It's hard to describe feelings. These are all negative
Rachel	They're all not nice

Moving on:

JA	Does Chris feel anything good about this situation? The teacher has asked a question. Chris doesn't have a clue. What happens next?
Priya	Chris could be honest and say something like.. I don't know
Marc	Chris could pretend to be thinking
JA	These are great ideas - I'm impressed
Suzanne	Chris could say, "Oh, I forgot".
Baz	He needs to go somewhere
Tom	He could just say nothing and hope the teacher goes away
JA	I don't think he'd get away with it but he could try!
Boy?	He could look around the classroom and the first thing he sees - he might say that
JA	He looks around for inspiration - where could this come from?
Jane	One of his friends
Caty	He or she could say "I don't know" and then they'll go to the Head and get shouted at
JA	That would come later in the story - could we just hold on to that one (idea)?
(?)	It might be that this happens all the time and the teacher's had enough"
Alison	Could ask the teacher to ask someone else
JA	Does this happen in school?
(?)	We say "Pass"
Lee	Chris might whisper to a friend for the answer
Kelly	He could have a guess and get it right

Moving on to question them about likely peer responses:

JA	What could happen next? What about people around Chris?
Suzanne	They might laugh at him
Lee	Some people might laugh and it might be like....
Kelly	He could say um..., he could that, um....
Debbie	He could just ask what the question was
Steve	He might say that he heard the question but he hadn't and his nose got longer and longer.. (like Pinocchio).
Suzanne	They might call him names when he got into the playground
Rachel	Could be skitted
Priya	He could go into the book, the story, to find the answer
JA	Wow! A real flight of imagination here
Priya	He'd have to stop time first
JA	Yes, of course!

The children began the task on the sheet after this.

The reading by pupils of their own stories was particularly valuable since the tone of voice used indicated much of the meaning not apparent just reading their texts. For example, Rachel wrote that out on the playground, people said to Chris " You got out of that one well, didn't you?" I took it as a positive statement but she read it with heavy sarcasm demonstrating that I had misunderstood her meaning when I had just read and marked her story earlier!

6.4 The Sam lesson - 28th February 2000

On this occasion I used a character called Sam who, on my questioning the Year 4 class, they were quick to see could stand for either sex, Samantha or Samuel.

The camcorder was set up on a table outside the room this time. Unfortunately, soon after the lesson began, a peripatetic helper sat at the same table and heard a child read, creating problems with my sound recording of the lesson. Again, as in the writing about the lesson re: Chris, the symbol (?) is used to indicate when I am uncertain who actually answered. Some of the text has had to be paraphrased where statements were unheard due to the background noise and there are far more (?) because of the helper's voice covering the pupils' on the camcorder soundtrack.

6.5 The Sam story

The text I had written this time was as follows:

> Mum dropped Sam off at school as she did every day. Sam was pleased to arrive early and have time to play outside before the bell.
>
> After hanging up coats in the cloakroom, everyone rushed along with Sam to their classroom at the end of the corridor. It was a sunny day and they were all talking about looking forward to the Games and Art lessons that afternoon.
>
> The first lesson was maths. They had been learning about grams and kilograms and the teacher began the lesson by asking everyone questions about weights. Sam's hand went up to answer some of the questions but the teacher kept asking other people. Then, when she'd finished asking the next question, she said Sam's name.

Sam hesitated, and then gave a reply. The teacher smiled and said, "Well done Sam!"

Finishing the story, I asked the class what Sam may have felt. Answers were again put on the board.

In order, the answers came:

(?)	pleased
(Carrie)	relieved
(?)	exhausted
(?)	happy
(Roger)	sigh of relief
(Nicola)	worry that the teacher may ask a follow up question

Rachel interrupted here to suggest what all the words had in common. She was remembering in the discussion re: the Chris story that all the feelings given by the class could be grouped as negative.

We then continued with pupils offering more ideas re: Sam's feelings:

(?)	relieved (a repeat, but by a different pupil)
(?)	proud
(Emily)	exhausted and tired
(?)	joyful
(Tom)	brave
(Jessica)	important
(Marc)	...........?
(Rachel)	excited

Kate had her hand up but when asked it was just to say that Jed had his jumper on inside out and back to front. Jed left the room to sort it out amidst much giggling and sniggering from others - had he done it as attention seeking? I had noticed but had ignored it. We continued:

(?)	special
(?)	shocked that he was chosen (possibly Melanie or Jane - their corner of the room)

I stopped the discussion there as time was running short. I moved the lesson on saying:

JA   So that's how Sam may have felt; what about the children on his or her table - the people around him?

(Lydia)   disappointed - *she gave a lengthy explanation about what she meant but this didn't get picked up on the tape.*
(?)   quite happy
(Roger)   jealous
(Jessica)   glad

I interjected here with "I think that we're getting the fact that it depends on whether Sam is a friend". There were some muttered agreements here and then we carried on:

(Priya)   ....?
(Rachel)   a mixture of feelings

I commented that we can often feel a mixture of feelings and asked the class if that happens in their experience? Some gave me some nods of agreement and someone said that you could feel both glad and some envy. I took one more hand up - it was Lee:

(Lee)   a bit mad not they were not chosen

JA   Right, last one. After the lesson, what might people say to you or Sam when you've answered a question?

(Emily)   *(paraphrase)* that someone might come up and say *(to Sam)* that the teacher wasn't pointing at you but to someone else ... and not be nice about it

(?)   ... and start skitting Sam

(Rachel)   Oh, you always get chosen! You shouldn't put your hand up and let someone else have a go.

(Kate)   That's the first thing you've done right

I queried whether this would be meant in a nice way or not. The answer came from Kate, "Not".

(Lee or Baz)   You think you're so clever

(Susan)   Smart guy aren't you - *not said kindly*

(Roger)   ....

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Helen came into class just as I was finishing the discussion. I explained the work sheets I wanted the pupils to complete and she and I handed them out.

Helen supported the children when we got to the individual element of the work on worksheets and I heard her speaking to Roger, personalising the story and asking him what he felt when she asked questions. I worked with the academically least capable/ SEN pupils, also keeping an eye on the rest from this fairly central table.

The sheets had the text and then, rather than have the children finish a story, had the following questions, with more space allowed for answers than is indicated here. A copy of the actual worksheets used are given as Appendix 10 and 11.

The questions were:

> Sam felt?
> The other children around Sam felt?
> Later, after the lesson, some of them said?
> Can you think about how you yourself usually feel when it is a time of questioning in class? Please will you try to describe your feelings?

The tape shows many of them getting down to their answers quickly, suggestive perhaps that the issue was of interest/ relevance?

I was surprised that in the class discussion about how Sam would have felt, a number of answers were less than wholly positive. Some were indeed quite negative although there were the expected answers of happy, excited etc. too.

Not one scenario suggested verbally by Year 4 of Sam and peers after the lesson offered a positive statement of congratulation to him / her. Some written answers were however more affirmative in that respect.

Almost three months later, I conducted a final lesson involving the characters Sam and Chris. (23 May 2000). The class teacher Helen was not present this time.

<u>6.6 Sam and Chris lesson</u>

It had been a wet day so some of the children's behaviour was adversely affected because they had to stay in all day. Paul, Suzanne and Jed in particular were not having the best of days. We only ended up with about 20 minutes together for this work.

The worksheet is reproduced here with the space omitted that was originally left for children's answers. The actual worksheet may be read as Appendix 12.

We began by reading the sheet together.

<u>6.7 Sam and Chris in the Science lesson</u>

Chris and Sam had really enjoyed their lunchtime. It was a warm, sunny day so it had been lovely to be out on the school field.

One of the dinner ladies blew a whistle and the classes lined up. Chris and Sam's teacher came and collected the class and led them back into their classroom. As she did the register, Sam remembered that it was Science that afternoon

Sam usually liked these lessons. Today they were supposed to be doing more work on Pond life. Chris also remembered that it was Science. Chris wasn't so keen on the subject.

To start the lesson the teacher talked to the class altogether, reminding them about what they had done last week. Then she started asking questions about the work.

She asked if anyone could tell her at least three things that might live in a pond. Sam had some ideas and put a hand up. Chris also had some ideas but didn't move.

Could you give some reasons why Chris did not put up a hand to answer the question?

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The teacher asked Sam to answer and Sam gave her two answers but couldn't remember a third thing. The teacher thanked Sam but moved on to ask if anyone else could give at least three things that might live in a pond.

Sam felt sad.

What does feeling sad mean?

Why do you think Sam felt sad?

After a whole class discussion, the children wrote their answers to the questions in heavy type. Caty, another pupil having a trying day, refused to write and I gave her an errand to do instead. Warren and Jane were absent.

Twenty-nine pupils gave written answers.

Thirteen participated in the whole class discussion by raising their hands to offer responses; many several times.

6.8 Could you give some reasons why Chris did not put up a hand to answer the question?

Whole class discussion yielded:

     afraid that he /she might have got it wrong
     shy
     dislike of the subject
     silly and can't be bothered
     most of the girls are more competent / confident (*and if Chris was a boy the*
     implication seemed to be that he'd be intimidated)
     knows the answer but just doesn't want to say
     maybe doesn't know the answer
     jealous of Sam

9 pupils participated – 4 boys, 4 girls and one unidentified

Written answers(given in full as Appendix 13):

     He / she didn't know the answer
     Did not like science
     Might be shy
     Might be embarrassed if answered and got it wrong - "He might think he will
     get it rong"

They might have had a fight and said girls are cofdent (competent) than boys
but he said yes
He might be jellis (jealous) to answer the question
Sam knew the answer
Because Sam already said the answer
Because he was scared!
Nervous
Lazy, sad, silly
Too frightened

6. 9 What does feeling sad mean?

Whole class discussion yielded:

upset
don't feel happy
unhappy
down
hurt
miserable

8 pupils participated – 4 boys, 4 girls. Two girls and one boy spoke here for the first time. The others had all contributed to the initial discussion

Written answers:

Upset
Hurt
In pain
When you are unhappy
Not happy
Down, cold, upset, unhappy
Upset, hurt, sad, mad, narky
Miserable, lonely
Feel down, ashamed, your heart is cold
When you cry
Feeling that you want to cry
.. not happy and feel little
It means someone is leaving you out and you are sad

6.10 Why do you think Sam felt sad?

Whole class discussion:

he might have just known two answers
a variation on this and the fact he couldn't think of three answers
wanted to get it right
the heart is cold when you are down

3 pupils participated, 2 boys and 1 girl twice – the boys had spoken earlier

Written answers included many variations on the fact he / she only gave two answers, then also:

> Might have felt jealous
> Because Sam had answered a lot of questions but he did not know the answer to this
> Because he / she might have wanted to get the answer right
> Because he didn't put his hand up
> I think he doesn't like answering questions
> Because the teacher didn't put it on the board
> She is not happy
> Because somebody had to wait and somebody told the answer
> Because he knew the other people knew
> Because the teacher might shout at you

6.11 Summary

As stated at the outset of this chapter, I discuss the children's responses later in this work but I want to record here that I was both surprised at the number of negative reactions – and intrigued about why the children responded as they did.

Ever since the time that Socrates first exemplified their use, questions have seemed promising devices ...

(Dillon, 1988, p.1)

Chapter 7

Questioning

7.1 Introduction

With the advent of both the literacy and the numeracy initiatives, the perception of teacher colleagues as well as my own experience suggested that there was a general increase in teacher questioning in the whole class context from the late nineties.

When I offered some observations on children's responses to teacher questioning earlier, I explained that I had seen pupils asked by name even if they had not indicated (for example, through raising their hand) an inclination to answer. Also, given that questions often require a single correct answer, I also saw teachers aiming to adjust the questions according to their perceptions of children's ability to answer. Unfortunately, interviews and discussion with pupils revealed that the children tended to be acutely aware of the level of difficulty of the questions asked; being asked an easy question embarrassed children. In addition, the importance of being correct could then be greater as pupils told me of how much worse it is to make an error with an easy question than in a subject, such as science when one boy told me of a question he remembered in one lesson that "No one knew". I understood the implication to be that it therefore didn't matter if they had a guess at the answer.

Both observation as well as talking to the pupils about these and other types of questioning suggested anxiety was often generated. However, was it actually the person in the role of teacher that pupils were most worried about - or somebody else?

7.2 Outline

Having outlined the relevant literature on questioning earlier in Chapter 1, the greater part of this chapter presents integrated data from two teacher interviews on questioning in parallel with what the NNS and NLS state. This is followed by data

from a lesson conducted with pupils from Year 4 that offers some glimpses into the children's understanding of classroom questioning. I end with conclusions on the place of questioning in the primary classroom today, a theme that is revisited in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Teacher – asks – a – question – pupils – answer

(Hammersley, 1977, p.57)

7.3 Teacher questioning in lessons

Even early impressions from my observation work in the two schools identified that the lessons with the greatest concentration of teacher questioning specific to the subject (as well as matters of control) were within the numeracy and literacy sessions.

During Art and Games periods I had observed there to be the least teacher questioning - but during these lessons there was an *increase* in pupil questioning of the teacher. This generally took the form of eliciting specific information relating to the art or craft task. In these times, when the lesson moved on into individual, pair or group work, both the teacher and myself as participant observer continued to be questioned by the children. These pupil questions often related to the work to hand initially but often later were personal, for example querying when I next planned to come in to school, whether I like fireworks etc., i.e. Galton's 'small talk' (Galton, 1980, p.89).

7.4 Teacher intentions and NNS and NLS guidelines on questioning in the primary classroom.

Even work such as Galton's carried out as recently as 1996 – 97 is of course before the changes wrought in the primary classroom through the introduction of the NLS and NNS. Teachers such as Kath, Helen and Sara, using questioning as part of their teaching strategy, now have to adapt to include the guidelines laid out in these initiatives in their own teaching of English and maths. I wanted to ask the teachers in my study what they both thought they were aiming to achieve in terms of questioning of pupils, particularly in terms of the new strategies.

It is not my intention to present a personal evaluation or judgement of the initial impact of the NLS or NNS as such. The British Labour government, who, when they came to power in 1997 prioritised literacy and numeracy, asked a team at the University of Toronto, headed up by Michael Fullan, to monitor the implementation of the strategies. Early findings were that, " with some reservations" it was an " impressive success" (Fullan and Earl, 2002, p.2). Later in 2002 however, after that year's targets were not met, the government announced that the literacy and numeracy strategies would be "combined under the umbrella primary strategy", launched in autumn 2003 (Ward, TES, 2003). The original principles of the strategies were not to be changed; more specific planning and enrichment materials have been sent out to schools as well as information to enhance teachers' own knowledge. There has been some relaxing of what was seen by some as the rigidity of the initial strategy outlines but overall, the strategies are much as when they were originally launched.

I therefore considered that a constructive means by which I might present some of the aims, objectives and approaches of the two teachers' questioning in the classroom, would be to do so in the light of what the NLS and NNS documentation and training material required of Kath and Helen in relation to whole class teacher questioning of pupils at the time. In addition, since Kath has since taken on a regional consultancy role in relation to the strategies, it is reasonable to assert that she is particularly well placed to discuss the strategies in detail.

I interviewed Kath and Helen separately using the same set of questions for both. These interviews occurred in the last months of the research by which time I had been out of Sara's class for some time. I therefore did not interview Sara.

For the two interviews I aimed for a conversational atmosphere. Although I had a set of written questions (see Appendix 14 for details) I felt it important to have a structure for the dialogues that would allow flexibility. I hoped this would enable both teachers to expand on their replies or even take the discussion off on a related tangent – which is what sometimes happened.

What I present below is an edited version of the key points they both made in their respective interviews, relating responses where seemed appropriate to relevant aspects

of the NLS and NNS documentation. I also include any insights and observations of my own made over the months I was with the class that seem pertinent or confirm what the teachers have said. Finally I suggest some overall conclusions in the light of these and the teachers own remarks and comments. It is worth noting at the outset, that with both women, their answers tended to reflect modesty and understatement. I hope that is put into context by reporting some comments made by Ofsted inspectors after their February inspection of the school. Of Helen, of whom it was recorded that her lessons were very good, it was also said that her: " ...questioning skills were good, with questions well targeted at different pupils of different attainment". Of Kath, her teaching was described as " excellent quality". Questioning throughout the school was described overall as very good and excellent, a reason given being the standards Kath herself set.

7.5 NLS and NNS Documentation

The NLS and NNS literature and training materials for teachers contain much that is common to both and is repeated. I have therefore focused on the later Numeracy documentation which, as well as being more recent and which therefore might be expected to reflect the most current thinking, seems also to best expound the overall strategies, aims and objectives in primary classroom questioning and teaching practice.

Being so recent a development in British primary classrooms, I have included a fairly comprehensive description of what has been laid down in the strategy guidelines. Although current teachers will be familiar with it, I am conscious that anyone who has been away from class teaching for a few years is likely to be less conversant with the detail and its relevance to whole class teaching and questioning.

In the document the "NNS – Framework for teaching mathematics" the framework is introduced and key objectives and yearly teaching programmes and planning grids are given. At the start in the Introduction (page 2) it states that:

"Over the past few years an accumulation of inspection, research and test evidence has pointed to a need to improve standards of literacy and numeracy". Questioning by teachers is implicated in this as Kath's following remarks demonstrate.

Kath told me in reference to the Ofsted inspection of her school in February 2000 that:

> *We're talking ...in the Nursery at the moment because the Ofsted said that the language wasn't being stretched sufficiently. So we're discussing why that isn't happening, and it is because the majority of the questions were closed and not giving them* (pupils) *time to develop their answers and give extended sentences.*

So, from the outset, it is clear that questioning remains a key aspect of primary teaching.

Above and in subsequent references, I have highlighted some comments in bold and italic print. This is to point up the statements about increased whole class teaching as well as teacher questioning which I will both refer to further in the text and later in the conclusions.

7.6 A Numeracy / Literacy style lesson

The schools I worked in for this research had essentially given over each morning to literacy and numeracy lessons.

The document states that: "The National Numeracy Strategy will complement the Literacy Strategy (so that) from September 1999, schools will provide a structured daily mathematics lesson of 45 minutes to one hour for all pupils of primary age. Teachers will teach the whole class together for a high proportion of the time, and oral and mental work will feature strongly in each lesson".

Broadly speaking, a typical lesson is outlined as a 45 to 60 minute session with:

> Oral work and mental calculation (about 5 to 10 minutes) whole-class work to rehearse, sharpen and develop mental and oral skills". More detail given about this part of the lesson includes the "chanting as a whole class and counting round the class ... the rapid recall of number facts in varied ways

It is also stated that in "this first part of the lesson you (the *teacher*) need to", amongst other things:

> *get off to a clear start and maintain a *brisk* pace;
> *prepare a good range of *open and closed questions* to ask the class;
> *ensure that *all children* can see you easily and *can and do* take part;
> **target individuals*, pairs or small groups with particular questions;
> *use pupils' responses to make an informal *assessment* of their progress;
> (end of p.13)

> The main teaching activity (about 30 to 40 minutes) is teaching input and pupil activities work as a whole class, in groups, in pairs or as individuals.

> A plenary to round off the lesson (about 10 to 15 minutes) work with the whole class to (paraphrase) rectify misconceptions and question pupils about work done. (p.15).

7.7 Documentation: The NNS Mathematical Vocabulary booklet

One of the documents that identifies the expectations of the NLS and NNS in terms of questioning most succinctly, is the DfEE document 'The National Numeracy Strategy', *Mathematical Vocabulary* booklet (1999) for teachers, parents and classroom assistants.

This booklet discusses how to work with children in class to:

> sort out any ambiguities or misconceptions your pupils may have through a range of open and closed questions (page 3).

Thus errors are expected to be picked up and corrected through questions.

Helen and I discussed this aspect of classroom life. She felt it was an issue of how errors are tackled:

> *It's how it's done, so that they (pupils) learn from their error and feel they can answer a question again, and also have learnt and got the right answer.*

She felt it important to be as positive as possible about what the NNS terms ambiguities, misconceptions and what she and I tended to term errors, explaining that she will:

"...often try and say, 'Well that's a good idea, but it wasn't the one I was looking for.'" She went on to say that:

> *"I think I very rarely say no. Sometimes I do, but I generally try with the idea that it won't discourage them from answering again. Or if it's close I might say, 'Such and such has just said such and such; can anybody help them out with that?' or that kind of thing, so that it's pupil trying to correct pupil and not teacher correcting pupil."*

Given that, she then said of pupil errors that:

> *"The situation has to be addressed – you can't just say' yes' when it's wrong".*

I asked Kath if she ever said "No that's not the right answer."?

Kath replied that:

> *"No... Always try and be positive and say 'Yes, well you're nearly there, let's see if we can help you out here or, can you just say that in a different way'. I would never say 'No.'"*

7.7.1 Questions

The document states that questions are "crucial in helping them (pupils) to understand mathematical ideas and use mathematical terms correctly" (page 4,under the title "The skill of questioning"). For the teachers though, questioning is about much more than understanding of subject content. Helen told me that for her, times of questioning are occasions where she is trying to achieve many things. For example she said that:

> *"Sometimes I'm asking questions to jog their memories about what we did last time, as a kick-start to what you're moving on to... Some of it is to discern understanding; some of it is to reinforce understanding... If a child is not listening anymore I will say, 'Such and such what do you think about that?' and that's a way of drawing them back into the lesson again."*

Kath said that for her it is a time:

> *" ... for getting someone's attention, when somebody's obviously day-dreaming, to bring them back to reality."*

The document states that questions are differentiated between "those that ask the listener to recall and apply facts" and "those that require a higher level of thinking". The adult working with the pupils is encouraged to "use the full range of question

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types" with the expectation that they will then "find that children begin to give more complex answers in which they explain their thinking" (page 4).

Interestingly, although I observed both teachers using a full range of question types I saw little evidence of complex answers from the children. Where I did occasionally see them offer more involved explanations than short one word or single sentence answers, it tended to be the same few children each time.

7.7.2 Open and closed questions

The document differentiates between open and closed questions and says that: "open questions give more children a chance to respond and they often provide a greater challenge for higher attaining pupils, who can be asked to think of alternative answers" (page 5).

I asked the teachers about their use of open and closed questions. Helen said that she tried:

> "...to use a mixture of both. With the maths it depends how much preparation I've put into the lesson – whether I've sat down and written everything down – I often do it off the top of my head – so I try to use a mixture of both - open questions let them think more for themselves."

She went on to say that:

> I think that closed questions can still be useful... I think that closed questions do have a value... because you do need to gain knowledge (by which I understood her to mean an understanding of the facts the pupils knew).

Of the same question, Kath said that:

> I think closed questions are better for just checking memory and facts ...whereas open make them think and be reflective.

7.8 Documentation:

Going back to the "NNS – Framework for teaching mathematics" (p.11) the document includes in its four key principles that there should be:

~ direct teaching and interactive oral work with the whole class and groups;

~ an emphasis on mental calculation;

Helen had noted that since the advent of the Numeracy strategy:

> *...because of the mental starter, I ask more questions., I think I ask more maths questions now than I used to, specifically because of the mental starter...*

Giving further detail on what is meant by "the focus on direct teaching" the document states:

> *During each lesson you should aim to spend as much time as possible in direct teaching and questioning of the whole class, <u>a group of pupils</u> (my emphasis), or individuals. High-quality direct teaching is oral, interactive and lively. It is not achieved by ... lecturing the class....*

Overwhelmingly, I would sum up the teaching I observed with the Year 4 class to be of the former lively not latter lecturing type.

With reference to pupils working in groups, Kath saw those occasions as providing particular:

> *...opportunities...at that time when they're working in a group, when you think there is more time, more opportunity for them to evolve their thoughts in the lesson. Some times in a whole class situation you do really feel you have to move on.*

The videotapes provided for in service training on Inset days demonstrated teachers choosing children both with hands up as well as those who did not. When asking about how the teachers ask pupils to contribute, Helen said that she is looking for pupils to put up their hands and in order that each has an opportunity to offer answers she would:

> *...try to make sure I've got questions that are suitable for the lower ability to answer, hopefully something that will stretch out my higher ability, but most questions are going to the ones in the middle – the majority.*

Kath told me how she uses questions and her choice of pupil to ask to ensure that:

> *...they are not left out. And of course, be it right or wrong, I do use it for strategy, for getting someone's attention, when somebody's obviously daydreaming, to bring them back to reality. So different abilities are very*

much in mind, and obviously I'm phrasing the question …(appropriately to the perception of the child's ability).

Kath said that a key reason behind her questioning of pupils was to allow them to:

> *… share, to share their ideas really, and hopefully I really want others, who haven't got their hand up to learn from those who do.*

However, Kath also pointed out that:

> *…you know when it's time to move on basically, and when to stop, and when someone starts to fidget you know you've asked too many (questions), and you've got to be aware of that haven't you, all the time, or it kills the lesson.*

Relating to this last point, I asked both teachers how they decide just how much time they allow pupils to think through answers.

Helen said:

> *Some, like Warren put their hand up and then ponder the question – it's knowing them; some like Lucy want to dominate and so you have to cut them off. With other children you want to draw them out. It all depends on the child. It also depends on what my objective is as well – whether I want it quick and sharp or to go into depth.*

For Kath this question of appropriate pace balanced against other considerations seemed to be an issue that particularly concerned her. She said that:

> *I'm terrible for keeping pace, and it's balancing pace against recap…I'm always aware of it, but obviously you should give the child time to think it through, but the reality of it is when everyone else starts fidgeting, while somebody is formulating a sentence, you know how (it is)…*

She left the sentence in the air but then continued to say that it was: …

> *something I've been reading recently, about the take five; give them five seconds. It was a gender issue, because boys don't put their hands up as much. To be very much aware of always asking girls, you must give a bit longer because boys - apparently their cognitive -, often do take longer.*

Both teachers had mentioned boys who they felt needed to have more time allowed in which to answer. Helen had referred to Warren. Kath now referred to Roger, a very bright child academically. I referred to an occasion with her and Roger, saying:

JA   *... you allowed quite a long time for Roger, didn't you? You asked him something earlier on in the lesson and then gave him time. Was that also then because you know he's of a high ability?*

K   *Yes, it was. I knew it would be there somewhere ... He's the perfect example of someone who takes ages to formulate his thoughts, and articulate.*

7.8.1 Assessment

Helen was conscious that the questioning time with the class was a crucial time of assessment. She said that:

> *Talking to children and asking them questions, you're assessing them and their understanding, and so I will be making judgments about pupils, whether consciously or not. When I'm writing reports ...I'll be thinking about who is verbal in class and who isn't; who comes out with really good instances, that sort of thing. So it's a form of assessment.*

Kath similarly said that when asking questions of children:

> *I'm aiming to assess really first of all, who knows what...*

Helen was conscious too that linked with assessing, receiving correct answers enabled:

> *...it's a way of reinforcing self-esteem of pupils – "Well done, you've remembered that from last week.", if it's a recap, or "You've worked that out and found a good strategy for that", or "You've spotted two adverbs there." It's reinforcing self-esteem.*

7.8.2 The Plenary – a key time of teacher questioning

Helen used the Plenary much as the NNS outlined. She told me that the:

> *Plenary should not be show and tell – it's to clarify learning objectives. Much more focused question time, e.g. can such and such read us an opening*

(from story line) and someone else tell us why it was a good opening ... So you have got increased questioning going on in the classroom as a result of the Plenary.

She went on to say that to her the Plenary is:

> *...to clarify the lesson, which is why you can't have five or six learning objectives in one lesson, or questioning in the Plenary would not be so effective ... to me you have a clear objective which you question on at the beginning, teach and question on at the end in the Plenary.*

7.9 The teachers and their perceptions of the change resulting from the advent of the NNS and NLS

I asked both teachers about their impressions of how the introduction of both strategies had affected their classroom teaching generally. In answer to my specific query as to whether the NLS and NNS means that there is less spare time to talk to the class on issues that matter to the pupils, Helen answered that:

> *Yes there probably is. And because those hours are so tight – you have twenty minutes for this, 20 minutes for that, there is no time to talk*

She went on to say that:

> *They (the pupils) like Circle time[4]. They like an opportunity to be able to speak.*

Kath on the changes the NLS and NNS have brought said that:

> *...with the maths strategy really, you've got to think of different paces throughout the lessons, so your mental start is really the questioning. Questions are different, the closed questions, because you want to keep the pace, whereas in the plenary at the end, they're probably more open-ended, because you want them to be reflective. And with the English, particularly with the plenary again, open ended questions to help them to develop and to think. So I think it's made us think a little bit more about the type of questions we ask.*

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[4] Circle time focuses on pupil's discussion skills and is intended to cover topics common to the experience of all in the group. For example, one I observed was 'What is a good friend?'. Everyone is invited to take a turn; the children are encouraged to listen to each other and respect different opinions and ideas as well as " respond with reflection of feeling" (Hall, 1994, p 134).

7.10 Some concluding thoughts

Kath aimed to take the Year 4 class for a lesson a week so I observed a number of her lessons as well as Helen's and had become familiar with both their teaching styles. I was therefore not surprised to have them tell me that they approached their questioning of pupils similarly. Hence both avoided using 'No' in response to pupil error in lessons where possible; both were clear on their use of open and closed questions and the purposes that could be served by each; both were conscious of the time they allowed for pupils to answer; both overall were also conscious that the NNS and NLS have highlighted questioning – Helen saying that she felt that she used questions more than before; Kath saying that the emphasis on questioning has "...*made us think a little bit more about the type of questions we ask*".

It might be supposed from Helen's comment about not always planning her questions that her lesson preparation was incomplete. Having regularly seen her detailed lesson plans in her Planner,[5] I know that this was not the case, her objectives and hopes for each lesson being clearly identified and written down alongside her preferred means of achieving her aims. What she did however was to build in the flexibility in her mental starter work in particular so that if through the questioning, for example, it became obvious from the pupil responses that something had not generally been understood,[6] she could accommodate this and shift the emphasis as necessary.

If this gives some insight into teaching and especially teacher questions in the primary classroom today, what then of those on the receiving end of it, the pupils themselves? To begin to answer this, I will now present some excerpts from a short lesson on questioning. Much more detailed data from the children is then presented later in chapter 9.

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[5] A planner that was seen weekly by Kath.

[6] At the start of the Autumn (1999) term, this was crucial to her long term planning when through questioning of the children, she regularly found that work in maths she had assumed had been covered in Year 3, had not, or if it had, was not generally remembered and understood.

<u>7.11 A class lesson on questioning</u>

During the weeks I was interviewing the Year 4 children individually (from February to Easter 2000), I also taught the class. By teaching a prescribed literacy lesson on questions and question marks I had the opportunity to discuss something of what questioning might mean to them. I was intrigued by the fact that on the whole, the class didn't seem particularly interested in questions per se. Several possible reasons came to mind. Perhaps it was because we were talking in the context of a lesson and they knew that some written work would be required of them later; perhaps more likely was that they made no real connection between my talking about questions in this class context and the discussions we'd been having one to one or in pairs about the feelings generated by teacher questioning.

The lesson was nevertheless illuminating. After doing some necessary grammar work on the actual mark written / used at the end of sentences, as well as the words used for the start of questions, the lesson continued with my saying:

JA   I've been talking to a lot of you with the camcorder about teacher questions. This is a teacher question time – this is me asking you questions about questions and question marks. What is a question?

Paul   Something you ask someone.

Emily   Something used at the end of a story to get a response.

Suz   Something that needs an answer.

JA   To get an answer, if I ask something, I expect an answer – or do I?

Lucy   If you don't know something you'll ask a question.

JA   Well done. You use questions to get information. Sometimes teachers ask questions to find out what you know. Anything else about questions? Do questions always need an answer?

Class   (Mixed response of nods and shakes of head and murmurs, "Yes" and "No")

JA   Think carefully.

Lee   No.

JA   What sort of questions might not need an answer?

Rach   Sometimes in a story the author asks a question at the end, but there's no answer.

JA   Yes. The sort of question she's talking about is a rhetorical question... So questions might not always need an answer. I might say something that sounds like a question but might not expect an answer, like, "Oh Patrick! (tone of voice suggests he's doing something inappropriate) What does that mean? Am I expecting him to tell me something?

Lee   No, but in his brain he'll be going "Oh no".

Some smiles and laughter

JA   A teacher might sometimes say something like "Kate, what do you think you are doing?" Does that question need an answer? It is a question and she could say something - and she isn't doing anything in case you're wondering- but what sort of response would I want from a question like that?

Girl?   Nothing really ...

JA   Nothing really. If she was being naughty I'd expect her to stop doing whatever she was doing.

Deb   If she spoke back to you, it's as if she was being cheeky.

JA   So teachers sometimes ask questions when they don't expect a reply.

When I moved on from the actual teaching required of the lesson, quite a number of pupils offered and shared thoughts regarding rhetorical questions and demonstrated an understanding that questions may not always require an answer - but may be used for purposes other than eliciting information, such as controlling behaviour in the class (teacher power as referred to by Kemper, 2000). The answers came from pupils across the ability groups of the class and were not restricted to the most able children.

Both the girl who was out of camera shot and is unknown as well as Debbie showed that they understood that to answer a certain type of question could be inappropriate – "being cheeky". Lee showed that although a child may not answer, they could fully understand the subtle nuances of a question being said a certain way and feel " Oh no!" – presumably reflecting a sense of being caught out and reprimanded. Rachel, in her response, referred to written questions being rhetorical and appreciated that something could be left in the air and "unanswered". Her train of thought may have been triggered by Emily's answer to my first query " What is a question?" when she was quick to identify that you might find one at the *end* of a story.

7.12 Discussion

In this closing section, I want to draw attention to the fact that the teachers and the NNS and NLS documentation and training materials suggest that questioning is the bedrock of good teaching. Some of the literature reinforces that this is the common view when it states: " the classic concept of learning is that it occurs when the teacher asks the questions and the student answers them" (Morgan and Saxton, 1991, p.75).

However, Dillon says that:

> teacher questions are more surely known to be useful for covering the subject
> - matter to be learned, for controlling social and verbal behaviour while
> *apparently* learning (my italics), and for testing what has been learned. They
> are less certainly known to enhance the cognitive, affective, and expressive
> processes of students in the classroom (Dillon, 1990, p.15).

He then states in later writing that:

> I explicitly recommend against questioning by the teacher. Teacher questions
> will foil discussion processes, turning the class into some other group talk
> much like recitation. Teacher questions do not stimulate student thinking and
> they do not encourage participation. They depress student thought and talk.
> (Dillon, 1994, p.78).

7.13 Conclusions

Before I outline my own position in the light of what has gone before, I'd like to
quote some of what Galton says at length. In writing about the variety of purposes
behind a teacher asking a question, he says a number of what I consider to be key
points:

> The pupil ... has to work out what kind of question they are being asked. Is it
> the kind where a speculative answer will be praised or where a wrong answer
> will be seized upon as evidence of inattention? This sort of dilemma offers
> another excuse for pupils to adopt a strategy of avoidance - they leave
> someone else to make the initial responses until the purposes behind the
> teacher's questions becomes clear (Galton, 1994, p.62).

> If the teacher continually exercises power, particularly when conflicts occur
> over matters of behaviour, pupils will conform either out of fear of
> embarrassment or fear that they will lose status and therefore self esteem. This
> strategy of avoidance requires them to be dependent upon the teacher for clues
> about what constitutes acceptable behaviour and this dependency transmits
> itself to their work (Galton, 1994, p.64).

This is echoed by what the PACE project found more recently when the authors stated
that, "The first concern of children in the confines of the school is to ensure that they
are not vulnerable to teacher power - being told off, embarrassed, bored or having to
do work again" (Pollard et al, 2000, p. 284)

The PACE project also concluded that, " two main consequential risks of failing to comply with teacher expectations were identified. First teacher anger or public humiliation might be incurred, with a risk to self esteem; second, children might be asked to do work again" (Pollard et al, 2000, p.286).

These statements highlight my own position on teacher questioning.
With the majority of my career to date having been spent working as a primary teacher, I cannot conceive of a classroom without teacher questions. I still believe them to be valuable on many levels. However, before I read Holt I had not thought deeply about any really negative impact my questioning could have on the pupils learning. In comparison with some colleagues I had worked with, I thought myself to be a particularly kind and fair teacher, adjusting my questions to the children's ability; someone who generally avoided the stark statement that an answer was wrong, like both Helen and Kath. I valued both open and closed questions, used them for assessment, considered my pace in using them - and so on. I was probably a typical product of the Initial Teacher Training prevalent in the eighties. We were taught about the effective use of teacher questions but only in positive terms. Later, my early thoughts regarding the literacy strategy was that what it said about questioning seemed reasonable; my main concern about it was more about the possible loss of creativity in English lessons.

Now however I feel I had taken an overly simplistic view of what was happening during whole class teacher questioning. Pupils' avoidance strategies are more prevalent than I had previously realized and I see now that whereas I would have probably presumed this was because of inattention or lack of revision for tests etc. - in other words the student's fault - it may at least equally be because they are uncertain of the teacher intention behind the question and fear embarrassment, as Galton and Pollard refer to above.

I was not particularly surprised by the children's understanding of the various uses of questions as written about in 7.11 above; these children, just midway through their second year in junior school and therefore aged between 8 –9 years, demonstrated a very good grasp of the range of what teacher questions may be used for, over and

above the eliciting of information, which my experience in primary teaching led me to expect. However this simple lesson did not begin to delve into what they might feel about questioning. As I saw it, it was simply a useful introductory piece of work alongside my asking them about Chris and Sam and their own individual feelings. But it was around this time that I began to feel increasingly uneasy about how teacher questions were being used and increasingly uncertain that they were achieving anything like the positive learning objectives that were being suggested in the NLS and NNS.

Was it possible that virtually *all* teacher / pupil interactions could be significant in the possible generation of anxiety. Galton describes " the widespread strategy ... of trying to avoid answering the question until they (the pupils) are certain of the answer required" (Galton, 1994, p.53). I recalled a conversation I had with two sisters I know socially and know to be of a confident and cheerful disposition. They were talking to me as part of a group.

(Jane is the older by two years and was Year 5, her sister Mary Year3):

JA   What if you feel, 'I'm *sure* I know that answer', do you pop your hand up and go for it or do you still feel......... (interrupted by children wanting to reply)
Jane   I think about it first, before I do it.
JA   You think about it.... you're not there straight away, you're a bit unsure....
Jane   Hmm (agreeing)
Mary   If it's like a times table question and I, like, count hard and I find the answer...
JA   Yes
Mary   To make sure, um.... I do it again before I put my hand up...
JA   Right, so you double check yourself before...
Mary   (interrupting) Yeah.
JA   ... before you put your hand up, so you're not confident...

Why should children not be confident about interacting in the classroom? Why, as Holt puts it do "intelligent children act unintelligently at school" (Holt, 1982, p.92)? He gives his own conclusion in his next sentence. He says " the simple answer is 'Because they're scared'" or, as I am putting it in this study, fear embarrassment or anxiety. It seemed pertinent therefore to next look more closely at what these feelings may mean.

But that same Nature has the deep cunning which hides itself under the appearance of openness, so that simple people think they can see through her quite well, and all the while she is secretly preparing a refutation of their confident prophesies.

(The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot, 1860, p.28)

Chapter 8
Case Study: JULIA

8.1 First impressions and background

Julia had made very little impact on me when I first began to visit the class. Within the first two visits in September 1999, I had learnt all 32 pupil names and started writing profiles for each of them, commenting on events or characteristics that seemed pertinent. The initial entry for Julia was one of the shortest I wrote at that time and reads:

Quietish, keeps head down.

The one pupil whose profile remained entirely empty for the first few visits turned out to be Julia's best friend, Melanie. She had been away on holiday in America during the first two weeks of the autumn term and was unwell, presumably jetlagged, on her return, keeping her off school for a further few days. It has since seemed likely to me that it was Melanie's absence that was responsible for Julia being as subdued as she was at that time for it subsequently became obvious that Julia was quite a self-contained, vivacious, bright child; alert and focused much of the time, the sort one would write of on their end of year report that they were an asset to the class.

Julia began the school year with one surname but after some months had it changed to another. The school seemed unclear about exactly what had happened but obviously Julia's home life was not entirely settled – or hadn't been. The change may have been a means of affirming some adjustment that had already occurred. In June she went away for a holiday with her real dad. In July, Julia, an only child, told Helen that there was now a baby in the family too. This was her first sibling.

Helen and I were uncertain of the new baby's parentage. It was not something I discussed with Julia. This was not because I didn't think it important or relevant. I was just always extremely conscious, possibly overly conscious with hindsight, that I was doing the research entirely because I had the goodwill of both the school and the parents and was not prepared to do anything such as might appear to prying and could jeopardise that. Since the initial letter seeking permission of the parents to talk with their children only referred to school issues (already referred to as Appendix 5), I didn't go beyond that. Should the school and /or children themselves tell me things however, I did of course note it!

Julia was in the majority in her class in that she seemed to live with a variation on the 'two married parent and siblings' family arrangement at home. Helen commented that an unusually high proportion of the class had no siblings at all and many lived with one parent or one natural parent with one step-parent.

8.2 Why Julia?

From before I went into Year 4 I had it in mind that I might like to undertake pupil case studies. In the letter home to the parents I mentioned it as a possibility. There were however many pupils whom it could have been valuable to have studied in greater depth. In the event Julia in effect chose herself by seeking my help when she was unhappy after an incident in class.

This conversation with Julia occurred at a time when I was beginning to wonder if the study of anxiety during teacher questioning was relevant. Early visits to the class suggested that essentially the pupils were fine and coping well with whatever pressures they may have felt under. When Julia spoke to me about her unhappiness over peers commenting and looking at her, it was clear that she was attaching meanings to her peers' responses (Blumer, 1969) to her that had led to feelings of embarrassment, and even a measure of anger at what she perceived to be the unfairness of it. She seemed to feel a loss of status (Kemper, 2000) because they perceived her as having answered a question incorrectly and her coping mechanism was to ask for my help.

It led directly to the first proper interview I undertook with any of the pupils. Although the resulting conversation *(documented in full towards the end of this chapter)* was, from the researcher point of view, far from ideal, it nevertheless then led to vocabulary being introduced to the class that was the basis for further whole class discussion. It also tended to give Julia and Melanie a more leading role in the subsequent class discussions than I suspect they would otherwise have taken. As a threesome, we had already broached some of the issues I now sought to discuss with the whole class and I think this led to their more ready participation than might have otherwise have occurred. It in effect must have helped them reconstruct their identities so that they perceived themselves now as ones that could lead in whole class debate, something that would have been unlikely before.

On starting this study I also came with a specific interest in pupils who occupied the middle ground of a class. The exceptionally bright, the most confident and vocal, the most challenging in terms of behaviour as well as the specific special needs pupils I felt tended to be heard already. But what of the majority of the class who essentially just got on with what was required, neither shining especially brightly nor creating any real problems or headaches for the staff? Julia fell within this group and therefore again was of particular interest to me

8.3 The identity of Julia

Often in the past when still teaching full time, parents might say to me something like: "She / he's not like that at home!" It can be that the child is quieter in class than the family are used to, more helpful, more / less willing to participate in group/ class / family events or whatever. It can be so dramatic as to cause a parent to say that they just don't recognise their child from my description.

Teaching for some six years within the same school I also noted how, perhaps in discussion in the staff room, you could be led to believe that some children undergo and entire identity change from one school year to the next. The obvious but nevertheless important point that I'm trying to highlight is that children, as probably most of us, can and often will appear very differently to different audiences. The issue

it raises pertinent to this study is the issue of how far we can really say we know a child?

As already mentioned, when I first started writing about Julia my impression was that she was quiet and kept her head down. I have suggested that in fact the circumstances that Julia found herself in, that of being without her best friend for the early weeks of the term, led her to behave differently than normal – more subdued and less confidently than I subsequently saw when Melanie was in close proximity.

From that, I would nevertheless still have expected Julia to be among some of the most nervous pupils when the Ofsted inspectors came into the school, in early February 2000. Helen and I agreed that it would be inappropriate to have the camcorder in class that week so I have no video footage of the event but I vividly remember being astonished at Julia's composure when an inspector visited the class.

The inspector in question, a rather severe looking gentleman, who certainly unnerved others, sat less than two metres from Julia for the early part of his visit whilst everyone was seated answering teacher questions in a whole class set up. I did not observe Julia look at him once. Instead, she sat very upright, often raising her hand to offer an answer, keeping her gaze on Helen or down on her desk in front of her. On the one occasion she was invited to respond she answered clearly and correctly. She seemed the picture of composure. Yet Melanie was nowhere near, the girls (amongst others) having had their seating in class altered that week.

Ann Filer and Andrew Pollard in their longitudinal tracking of pupils generated a wealth of data concerning how teachers knew same children in different ways. Writing of one pupil in particular, William, they describe how his identity was "experienced and interpreted differently by different teachers"(Filer and Pollard, 2000, p.11).

There are many reasons for why this should be the case, not least the different classroom contexts created by each teacher.

I believe that although I only saw Julia's Year 4 class on average twice a week, in some respects I got to know a lot of them more clearly than Helen, their class teacher. Although she spent more hours with them, only a tiny proportion of her time could be spent one to one. Also, the curriculum and academic concerns would generally be the agenda behind each encounter, enabling her to gain a much clearer picture of the academic capabilities of each pupil than I ever did, but less about how they felt, their interests, friends and day-to-day concerns. It was a matter of regret to her, that time to *really* listen to their stories and news had been largely squeezed out of the daily timetable by the NLS and NNS.

With each type of adult in their life, a child chooses, consciously or not, how far to allow that person to know them and their genuine interests and concerns. Some are more important than others – Cooley's (1922 in 1967) selective interest. Julia no doubt appeared one way to Helen; another with me; another with her parents and yet another with her peers. Perhaps only Melanie knew all about her and perhaps even that is debatable. I would argue that a lot has to do with what the child perceives you will do with that information. Much time seems to be spent staying out of trouble and playing the game of school so that they are accepted within the different worlds in which they have to live. Whatever they allow you to know presumably must not jeopardise these different worlds.

On one video clip of film, both Helen and Julia are in front of the camera towards the end of a lesson. Julia has come up to ask something and shows Helen her work. Helen is trying to do a number of things at once and is fairly short in her reply, which is negative. There is no eye contact. She turns away from Julia but Julia needs to follow her to get her work back. As she follows, she makes a face behind Helen's back. It would appear that it was a means of expressing her immediate annoyance at being thwarted. It was not directed towards another pupil looking to share her annoyance – she makes no eye contact with anyone else. Nor is it for the camera, and therefore indirectly, my benefit. Neither Julia nor Helen shows any awareness of the camera's presence at that moment. The face disappears almost immediately and Julia recomposes her features into a neutral expression as Helen turns back to her and concludes the encounter at which Julia returns to her seat. This end sequence is surely Julia maintaining "face" as Goffman discusses people find necessary to stand guard

"over the flow of events" (Goffman, 1967, p.9), but the earlier expression was for herself only. Did that illustrate Julia having an inner dialogue (Mead, 1934) between her I and me, negotiating her learner identity?

I was surprised to see Julia react in this way as the impression I had gained by then was that Julia was a very well behaved pupil if less quiet than originally thought. Yet perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised – perhaps it was just the other side of the same coin, that aspect of her identity which was apparently so confidently composed when an inspector sat close to her or if not *entirely* composed, wasn't going to show it! An example perhaps of pride in herself and again a case of her maintaining the identity she had created. I concluded that these insights into Julia's attitude to the social setting that were not to her liking suggest a stronger, more developed and resilient identity than I had originally guessed existed.

Perhaps it also illustrates that, as far as we can know any pupil it is the ones that apparently toe the line, work hard and appear to comply with classroom rules that we may know the least well.

8.4 Julia and her peers

Throughout Year 4, Julia was particularly fortunate in her best friend Melanie. Mel tended to operate rather like a kindly big sister to Julia, looking out for her and backing her but not smothering or dominating her. Julia therefore had support but room to grow and be herself. The interview between myself and Julia at which Mel was present *(presented later in this case study)* will demonstrate how this very healthy relationship operated.

Nether girl seemed interested in the dominant group of girls in the class. Whereas a number of girls behaved like satellites to Suzanne and Priya as the prime movers of the main group, Mel and Julia tended to go off together much of the time.

They both seemed ambivalent towards most of the boys. Noticeably, they related to me as another female expecting my agreement when they made some disparaging comment about the silly boys. Most of the year they shared a table with Warren and

were near several boys who were indeed very silly a lot of the time. Some of it though was simply the boys' sense of humour which tended to seem immature I expect in comparison with some of their own quite subtle humour.

Neither girl was into the Pokemon craze that swept through the school. Nor were they into the alien in egg type toys, dolls / trolls or lights / fluffy topped pens etc that most of their peers enjoyed bringing to school that year. However, both liked to enjoy themselves. On the many Mufti days when perhaps as for World Book day, the children were invited to dress up as a favourite character, both were enthusiastic. Julia would dress up in a very girlie costume, often quite demure, looking pretty with her hair done etc. Mel would be more adventurous, once so disguised that when she came up to me and with muffled voice asked if I liked her outfit (a skeleton) I really had no idea that it was Mel behind the rather gruesome mask – which the girls thought hilarious.

Essentially Julia and Melanie had a strong friendship that seemed to need no one else. From observations they both seemed well liked enough, not singled out for any unpleasantness from the other girls, unlike one or two others.

8.5 Julia's academic ability

Julia readily understood teaching and learning concepts. As the year progressed, she was quick to see how to do work and applied herself fairly diligently to the tasks Helen set, rarely needing much assistance. Melanie though often needed support. Working very intensely with her one day, I became aware of just how acutely difficult she found some work, especially maths.

The difference in the girls' academic ability was behind Helen's decision to move them apart, regrouping all the class according to their academic ability. However, it didn't appear to cause any friction between them. I once heard them regret the move but neither passed any further comment and they seemed to accept that the teacher had the power to chose where to seat them.

I very much doubt that in Year 4 Julia actually came very close to demonstrating her true academic ability. As the year progressed I became aware that she was probably doing the minimum required. This may have been what the PACE project saw with some pupils, stating that they were generally risk adverse. " Our pupils supported by their peer culture appeared to have learnt to hold back - to avoid being seen as swot or teacher's pet" (Pollard et al, 2000, p.290). Although increasingly, I noted her keenly offering to answer questions in whole class teacher questioning, the written work, although neat and accurate, didn't seem to live up to the promise of the verbal responses.

8.6 Julia in class

Julia does not appear on all the video footage taken of class lessons. Sometimes she was absent through ill health or was away on holiday in term time. Sometimes the film did not have her in as only 14 – 15 pupils could be in shot on any given occasion.

A key piece of film I have of Julia working in the class was taken just before the school finished for their February Half Term break. It seems to show Julia working fairly typically although the lesson itself was unusual. What was atypical was that she and Melanie seemed to have fallen out over something.

Because it was just after the Ofsted inspection and everyone, not least the pupils were very tired, it was deliberately designed to be a useful but very informal lesson. Therefore, although it was maths, it did not have the usual ten-minute mental maths start. The work was tables practice where, as the children worked out their answers, they coloured a shape, the idea being that if they coloured the shapes correctly eventually an overall picture should emerge of an athlete, clown, crab or bee. The work was potentially differentiated but children were given a choice as to which sheet they felt capable of tackling that day rather than myself, as teacher on this occasion, making the choice for them.

It was the lesson after morning break and as the children arrived back in from the playground I was asking them to go and sit in their maths places. The camera was set up in the library corner which meant that Julia, when sitting in her maths position,

was right on the edge of the screen. Julia was actually the first to come in to class and she went and sat in her English place ready to start, with crossed arms, sitting up straight etc. A moment later she must have realised that I was asking every one to sit differently so she moves tables and again sits up straight with her arms crossed.

A couple of times Julia flicks her hair back from her face but otherwise is still, talking to no one as others arrive, not even Melanie. There is some minor problem as one boy refuses to move and another tells him to. Julia watches fairly impassively as I come over and sort the boys into their correct places. Julia starts to look more relaxed and can be seen exchanging the occasional comment with Carrie beside her. I speak to Melanie; there is no reaction from Julia.

As I address the class from the black board area at the front, Julia sits looking to the front apparently making good eye contact. At my first question, several put their hands up to answer including Julia after a moments thought in which she put her hand to her mouth, looked around and then put her hand up. It was a closed question. I ask Julia to answer and she does, correctly. My tone is bright, lively and brisk. I briefly congratulate Julia and move on. Julia's reaction is to look around, flick her hair again and turn back to looking to the front from where I am still currently addressing the class. However, her concentration then wavers – she looks at the table, adjusts her seat than leans on her arm but then looks back to me at the front.

Later in the same session Julia is chosen again to answer a question and again answers correctly. She continues to put her hand up regularly, varying which arm she uses. She gives every impression of seeming keen, focused and involved in what is going on. She often has her hand up even if I am no longer asking direct questions and even if no one else in shot *(and possibly no one else in the room)* does. As I continue the question and answer session, Julia only looks away from me to the other pupils when I speak to another girl who shares Julia's name. Julia remains seated even when some one nearby half stands to gain my attention. Her hand is sometimes resting on her head now.

Lydia on the table behind Julia sometimes exchanges words with her – all looks neutral enough but it has to be remembered that it was Lydia who managed to have

both a physical and verbal fight with Lucy on another occasion that was only seen by the camera – not by any of the adults in the room at the time!

Why does Julia keep her hand up? The fact that some children will keep their hands up even if there is no current question to answer intrigues me. Sometimes it is that they have a query but often if asked, they will seem flustered and say "Oh nothing" and put the hand down. It may be in order to be the first to be there when a question is asked in which case it suggests a confident attitude; they are banking on being able to answer any question I pose? Is it just a strategy to maintain the learner identity they wish to put over in front of the class, maintaining their status as a person who knows things?

Having explained the work, I ask who is feeling brave and would like to tackle a challenging sheet. Some raise their hands, including Julia and as I go round giving out the sheets; she is the second pupil to receive one. Now that I am not addressing the class there is some chitchat and sorting of pencils ready for the work and Lydia taps Carrie (sitting beside Julia) on the shoulder; that causes both her and Julia to turn around.

I want to clarify something and stop the class to issue instructions. Some pupils are given reward points for stopping quickly; not Julia. She was not actually talking as far as can be seen but continues to look down at the work sheet; perfectly appropriate behaviour and possibly demonstrating she tends to be above such things? There have been other occasions where she has also seemed somewhat aloof. Her attitude towards the Ofsted inspector *(discussed earlier)* could be interpreted as such.

There is another brief question and answer time where again Julia appears to be the first to answer. She is the first of the fourteen pupils in shot to put her hand up. She is correct. She turns away. She may be listening as I go on to mildly remonstrate about the noise level generally[7].

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[7] I am interested to note that by this time I had already realised from the visits to school over the previous months that children generally ARE listening even when they have no eye contact with you as the teacher. This I can see has actually affected my teaching style as I am obviously unperturbed by the fact that Julia and some others are not appearing to be hearing me – as I have learnt now that they almost certainly are! However, it does matter which pupil it is behaving in this way and I am also using

Julia looks increasingly at ease and cheerful as the lesson progresses. I suspect from the way she entered the classroom after break that there had been an incident where she and someone – probably Melanie, had had a disagreement. That would account for the unusual sight of Melanie with her head on the desk at times during the start of this lesson, looking unwell or possibly subdued due to a problem with her peers? The video picks up my asking her if she is all right but not her reply. However, I am obviously satisfied, as I take no further action. Having seen so much of the girls over the months I know that this is not how they normally appear so something was amiss.

Increasingly as the lesson continues and the pupils are essentially working independently, the video picks up several occasions where Julia and Melanie speak to each other. The first are such brief exchanges that they are probably related to borrowing colouring pencils or similar. Julia is rummaging in her pencil case at one point but with pupils and myself often moving in front of the camera lens it is impossible to say whether things were exchanged, passed across between the two girls. Julia stays in her seat throughout until quite late in the lesson when she comes to the bin to sharpen a pencil. Melanie is on her feet more often as the lesson continues. As Julia returns to her seat, she pauses to speak to Lydia. She stands and speaks for a moment; Melanie arrives beside her, then both sit down again. There doesn't *appear* to be any problem, however...

For quite some time I go nowhere near the girls, spending much of my time with the special needs group at the front of class, out of shot. When I do go across to check progress, everything seems fine and I move away quite quickly. Julia doesn't even look up although she looks around when someone goes to speak to Melanie behind her soon afterwards. Later it is clear that Julia is speaking to others on her table but all the exchanges are fairly brief – comment rather than full conversation.

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my 'knowledge' of what has proved to be the case in the past to inform my decision whether or not to address those pupils directly and draw them back in. Some not appearing to listen will indeed not have been and will be the ones to ask what they are to do immediately after instructions have already been issued!

As part of the plenary session, I give the opportunity to have pupils ask each other questions based on the work they have done that morning. Julia doesn't offer to ask any questions and isn't asked by myself to contribute to this part of the lesson although it is a popular enough activity and many others do. Some answers are wrong unlike in the earlier question and answer session.

There are numerous exchanges between the children and myself as I draw the lesson to a close and prepare them and the classroom for lunchtime. Julia is not involved at all. I suspect she has decided that she has done enough to maintain face – maintaining, as Goffman puts it, the expressive order (Goffman, 1967, p.9) and the perception of herself as an effective pupil. To do more would risk being seen as a teacher's pet or swot.

The groups of children on the different tables are invited to clear them and the best is sent to line up for lunch first. Julia's table is last to go but since it is almost wholly out of shot, I can't be sure why now and I didn't note it in field notes. It obviously didn't seem significant. Julia goes out as I speak to a boy I have asked to stay in order to discuss his behaviour.

8.7 Comment

The lesson was typical in that Julia was often engaged in safe straightforward subject knowledge based verbal work at the start. However, she later disengaged, shutting off to some extent once she had the worksheet to look at. She often did this with Helen too, hence my contention that she has "learnt to hold back", looking to do the job, get it done quickly and no more (Pollard et al, 2000, p290).

The more adventurous, unusual verbal work at the end of the lesson saw Julia taking no part at all. She watches but shows no sign of wishing to engage in what several others seemed to find fun.

Engaging and then disengaging from her peers, although it wouldn't usually be Melanie, was also fairly typical. It could be construed as a certain moodiness. The not needing, self-sufficiency of remaining seated is also interesting. Is it one way that

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Julia is negotiating her place within the class? Has she interpreted meanings of her peers' responses to her as meaning that she is safe in the role she has chosen to adopt? With so much apparently going on at home, does it also, as I suggested with Alex, mean that on the whole, the people in school are not of selective interest to her.

8.8 Interview with Julia and Melanie

Earlier that same month I had instigated an interview with Julia and Melanie.

In the minutes just prior to morning break, I had gone across to Julia and Melanie whilst they were finishing working together and asked them if they would do me a favour and stay in for a few minutes of their break time and talk to me about questions they'd had in class. I made it clear that I was particularly interested in Julia's recent experience when for a while I'd been team teaching in the classroom with Helen.

At the end of January, there had been a misunderstanding, in Julia's view, over an answer she gave. She had called me over at the time to discuss it. I felt it likely that she wanted me to tell off people who had looked at her and told her she'd given an incorrect answer. We had talked for a few moments but since it was in the middle of the lesson, it was inappropriate, in my view, to discuss it further at that time. I had the impression that Julia was both annoyed / angry at what had happened with her peers as well as upset. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, had she felt she had lost status with her nearby peers?

Unfortunately it had not proved possible to discuss the incident on camera immediately afterwards and for many reasons, the first opportunity came a fortnight later.

I left the room to finish setting up the camcorder equipment and to allow Helen to draw the lesson to a conclusion. Unbeknown to me, Julia became quite tearful and when I next saw her, was crying. I asked why she was upset and she explained that she thought I was going to shout at her and tell her off! Melanie interjected and said she hadn't thought so and it was okay. This was an interesting emotional response,

suggesting that much more was linked to this event that might seemed apparent at the outset.

The interview took place in the corridor, immediately outside the classroom. Alison and others tended to hover, the novelty of the set up at that time presumably intriguing them. They were shooed away. I then explained that it was the complete opposite of what Julia had thought and that I had asked them to be the some of the first interviewees because I thought they'd be particularly sensible and helpful.

It bothered me that the child would think I would be about to shout at her for no apparent reason. At this time no pupil in Year 4 had ever seen me shout or even raise my voice. It was an interesting misreading of my judgement of her, which had perhaps led to her feeling guilty and hence the emotional reaction. It highlights that children can attach the wrong meanings to other's actions (Blumer, 1969).

The girls were sat together and I asked their permission to video the conversation. The opening question referred to the science lesson, a fortnight before, in which Julia had called me over:

JA   (*to Julia*) - I want to remind you of the other week when you asked me to come over because you had answered a question in science, all about the jelly and the chocolate and....

Jul   ..I got mixed up

JA   and..

Jul   I got it mixed up

JA   You got mixed up and you got a bit upset about it didn't you - *(Julia nods)* - and I wanted to ask you how you felt and if you could remember that time and why you got upset because you said a couple of things to me about it *(she nods again)* and - can you remember that time?

Jul   *(nods)*

JA   .. and can you remember, can you tell me about it?

Jul   .. I got mixed up with something in Year two and everyone just started pulling faces at me and saying it's wrong, it's wrong. *(This is exactly what she told me at the time)*.

JA   Right, and who was pulling faces and saying it's wrong, it's wrong - I'm not going to talk to these people about it I promise; we don't discuss this.

Jul   Well, Lydia was doing it 'cos she was the first one to do it 'cos she shouted out "You got the answer wrong".

JA   Was Lydia on your table then? *(the children move around and have different seating arrangements depending on the subject)*

Jul   *(nods)* - Mmn .

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(brief break to ask some children to leave the corridor - Mel starts to discuss with Julia who else was involved in this looking):

Mel   ..and Alison and Lucy ... *(discussion of who exactly was involved)*

JA   *(I turn back and am aware of their discussion and say to Melanie)*.. 'cos you were sat beside her weren't you? (to *Julia*).. you said to me seven people, didn't you..?

Jul   *(smiles quite broadly here)*

JA   I was amazed that you counted seven people just like that! So you felt a lot of people looked at you and it, how did it make you feel Julia?

Jul   *(thinks for a moment, glancing down)* - Really sad.

JA   It made you feel really sad... Um, were you angry? *(a leading question but at the time she had seemed annoyed and I understood she wanted the children involved punished)*

Jul   (purses *lips, thinking*).. a bit.

JA   A bit; you were sad and then a bit angry - and did you feel it was sorted out? I don't know that it was, was it?

Jul   *(looks around, thoughtful)* No *(shakes head)*.

JA   Not really.. *(interrupted by Head looking for Helen)*.. it wasn't a very happy time was it? *(again I already knew she was unhappy; essentially I was looking to demonstrate understanding)* Had you put your hand up to tell the teacher what you thought the answer was or had she asked you?

Jul   I put my hand up

JA   You put your hand up and got confused and you gave an answer that you didn't really mean to give and all these people looked at you and made faces - would you say that happens a lot? *(could have been better phrased!)*

Jul   Yeah (nods)

JA   Yes, so you can think of other times when you've answered a question and people have looked at you.

Jul   *(nods)*

Mel   It's mostly Lydia that does that 'cos when we were doing the test (referring *to maths test earlier that morning)* Julia went *(puts hand up to mouth acting out Julia's gesture)* 'Oh no, I put a cross in the wrong box' - and she rubbed it out and Lydia went... *(Melanie acts out an unpleasant facial expression)*.

JA   Oh dear, so it tends to be the same people doing it does it?
      (Both girls nod)
      Would you count Lydia as a friend?

Jul   No

JA   No, so Mel doesn't do it to you...

Jul   No

JA   .. because you're friends - Now, can I take you back to this morning because you weren't paying attention for a minute were you and Miss Smith *(Helen)* called your name and asked you to take ninety away from a hundred didn't she and - I saw that - and you were fiddling, you weren't really listening were you *(Julia puts her hand to her mouth, is smiling and also blushing slightly - at the memory or because she is discussing it?)*.. so how did that make you feel when she called your name and asked you?

Mel   Shocked, I think *(gestures to indicate over to Julia)*.

Jul   Shocked.

Mel	..because she went like that, she went *(mimes Julia hiding something behind her hand).*
JA	*(to Melanie)* Well.. because you were part of it, she was playing with you wasn't she?
Mel	I was looking.. I was looking to see something and, um, *(giggles)* and she went like that *(hides her face away to the side)* - then she was surprised as well I think *mimics a startled expression).*
Jul	I was looking in my book *(this is said over Melanie)*
Mel	I think she was surprised as well 'cos, um..
JA	So you were a bit surprised as well as shocked, so what did you do? *(Julia looks unsure).* Did you just sit there? Did you have anything going on in your mind *(made a couple of suggestions here)?*
Jul	I just started sitting up and listening *(she actually sits herself up straighter now too)*
JA	You just started sitting up and listening - and what happened then - did she ask you again?
Jul	No.
JA	No, she moved onto someone else. *(This was accurate - I had witnessed the incident)*
Mel	*(looking at Julia)* Yeah.
JA	And then how did you feel?
Jul	*(giggles / amused)*
Mel	She felt, well, um
JA	*(to Julia of Melanie)* - She knows how you felt - she's a kind friend isn't she!
Mel	She was going around saying, um, she went *(makes a puzzled face).*
Jul	I didn't hear the question 'cos I was too busy talking and..
Mel	… and then she got the answer and she went and *(becomes indistinct, but I used it as a closing comment).*

8.9 Comment and reflections

This interview was considerably affected by the fact that Julia was upset and weepy just before the three of us sat down to talk. I felt it was to Julia's credit and partly through Melanie's encouragement that she went ahead and talked to me on camera. However as I had not expected her reaction I was compensating for her misery by being overly bright and cheery.

I also led Julia more than I tended to in later pupil interviews unless they, like Julia, seemed ill at ease or upset. The leading here was perhaps not quite as it seems though given that Julia and I had already discussed the main incident with Lydia prior to this filmed dialogue. On the whole I was reflecting back to the child what she had told me on the earlier occasion.

It would be unusual for Julia to feel she was in trouble. From the girls' description it could be assumed that it was a fairly rowdy lesson she was talking in when Helen was teaching – yet on the contrary, it was quiet and the talking was actually just hushed whispering with Melanie. It happened a considerable time into the whole class questioning - I suspect that both girls were getting fidgety and bored.

Watching Julia later in the week of the Ofsted inspection, the week after this interview, I noticed her looking to Lydia on occasions when the class was being questioned. Twice when she herself answered questions, she looked at Lydia immediately afterwards. Lydia on both occasions smiled or otherwise looked friendly and Julia smiled / looked pleased. Melanie was not sitting with either girl at the time as both incidents were in maths and the girls have been set on different tables this term. Lydia's approval therefore seems to be particularly looked for when Melanie, Julia's closest friend, is not around. Her standing with Julia obviously changes according to who else is present – and perhaps too as a result of recent events. This indicates just how volatile the social setting of the classroom can be, ever changing as the pupils are continually constructing and changing their roles.

8.10 Summary / Conclusions

The focus on Julia highlights some interesting issues relating to the impact of peers on pupils. Firstly, it would seem that the absence of an ally made a difference to her behaviour hence confirming thinking on the significance of significant peers. When Melanie was absent at the start of the year, Julia's behaviour gave what I have since come to believe was the erroneous impression that she was a quiet child. She rarely spoke out in class and I have no memory or data suggesting she ever volunteered to answer a teacher question at that time. She was less confident of herself and her coping mechanism it would seem was to keep her head down. As well as Melanie's absence, this could also of course have been due to external factors including her home situation, or the fact that she was in with a new teacher. Some pupils can take a considerable time to adjust to a new Year group even when they have stayed within the same school.

When Melanie was back in school but absent from Julia's table it would appear that Julia could sometimes at least look around to her for reassurance. Failing to look to Melanie or on being unsuccessful at catching her eye, Julia would look to others, even Lydia despite her earlier contention that they were not friends. If Julia is typical and behaving normally it would appear that every interaction with the teacher in front of the class potentially affects a child's status with their peers (Kemper, 2000).

Secondly, Julia seemed to use her developed separateness / aloofness to protect or insulate herself from possible unpleasant situations. It was one of her coping mechanisms but did not necessarily reflect her actual feelings (Mead, 1934). The way she often worked could also be construed as isolating herself, ensuring she got the work done so protecting herself from any risk in the form of potential displeasure from the teacher. This was only possible because she was both clever enough and paid attention sufficiently diligently to know what was required. Having to go up to Helen on the occasion she made a face behind her back was, as far as I know, an unusual occurrence. Not getting exactly what she wanted obviously displeased her. Perhaps she had behaved similarly behind my back when I didn't give her what I think she expected after complaining to me about her peers in the science lesson! Whatever, her behaviour suggests that the classroom is a place of potential stress and that avoidance behaviour can be employed as a means of minimising the risk to her identity.

Like many, Julia's misbehaviour was undertaken surreptitiously. This may seem too apparent to bother mentioning but in fact some children do make a point of very obviously behaving badly for various reasons. However, the face was made secretly behind the teachers back and on the occasion when she and Melanie were talking whilst Helen was teaching; it was all very whispered and discreet. It suggests a recognition of the teacher's power that has been accepted but gave her a way to respond emotionally. There were many, many other occasions with other children too when incidents occurred unseen by either the teacher or myself and were only picked up by the camcorder. Thus normal pupil behaviour seems to involve the ongoing structuring of their own world of child concerns and interests throughout the day wherever they can get away with it. As teachers we were aware of some of it of course; but only since I've watched the camcorder footage and put myself in a different role of participant observer freed from the usual teacherly concerns have I

really felt I've begun to see anything like the full extent of it. Thus it would seem that it is only when the pupils lose some control of their world that they involve the teacher as an outside powerful figure to intervene. Hence Julia asking me to intercede with Lydia - in addition to the numerous incidents that happen both within and outside the classroom when children look to find an adult to listen and redress the balance of peer relationships.

That peer reaction matters now seems very evident. Hence Julia's reaction to the response of Lydia and those around her when she got mixed up and said the wrong answer in the science lesson in January. She couldn't just brush it off. She had lost status in her eyes and needed to readdress the balance. She called for help by requesting my listening to her side of the story with, as I understood it, the expectation that something would be done to the pupils concerned. Two weeks later, in the interview alongside Melanie, it was obvious that the incident was still very clear in her mind, as were the emotions that had accompanied it.

But how much does Julia play the game in order to maintain the status quo of her world? As the year progressed, video footage I took showed that, on the whole, Julia offered answers fairly readily at the start of lessons but was generally more reluctant to offer answers in what tended to be the more demanding questioning times at the end. As with my maths lesson outlined earlier, there were more pupil errors in the final minutes in the plenary than had occurred at the start. Julia took no part. Has she learnt that the easier questions are usually at the start of any lesson, the teacher looking to recap or warm things up with briskly paced quick fire questions that someone of Julia's ability found relatively straightforward? How much did she know that by making herself noticed and heard early on, she was likely to escape being asked anything directly later?

Julia had told me about peer reaction that upset her. Ongoing studying of video footage with Julia in shows her regularly looking to Melanie or others for some form of acknowledgement and recognition.

Through saying enough at appropriate times Julia largely protected herself from being put in the position of perhaps not knowing an answer. She also protected herself from

any potential skitting *(as Roger discusses in my interview with him and Pat later)* as a result of looking too clever if she answered the more challenging questions that the pupils have stated elsewhere they tended to be perfectly aware of.

The video footage also shows Julia regularly employing various avoidance strategies such as avoiding eye contact, disappearing from the eye line behind a pupil nearer to the teacher, playing nonchalantly with something on her desk – ideally a worksheet or text book; presumably whenever she didn't want to offer an answer. Hence it can be seen that Julia is in effect controlling her social and working environment very successfully at least much of the time.

But from the teacher's point of view I have to question how this affects her learning. If a bright girl like Julia feels the need to play safe as suggested, she may not be stretching herself academically. If the written work she produces is also just created in order to satisfy the teacher's basic requirements, she may be limiting herself again. If times of teacher questioning require a fairly sophisticated stratagem of deciding when to join in and when to seek to evade, is too much thinking being given to that, to the detriment of the lesson objectives the teacher is seeking to achieve? These are things that will be returned to in chapter 10.

Postscript

> To Mrs. Anderson
> I really enjoyed
> having you in
> our class.
> Thank you very
> much
> from Julia

So wrote Julia on a card to me near the end of her time in Year 4 on July 19th 2000. It would seem that despite inadvertently causing her to cry and probably not backing her up, as she would have liked with Lydia and the others, Julia and I did manage to create and then sustain a good working relationship throughout Year 4 that on visiting her later in Year 5 seemed to have remained intact.

There is ... surprisingly little guidance available on qualitative interviewing of children

(Grieg and Taylor, 1999, p.131)

Chapter 9

The interviews with the Year 4 children

The focus of this chapter is what the rest of Year 4 pupils told me about their experience of whole class teacher questioning.

After a brief introduction, the chapter outlines the organisation of the interviews and is followed with a discussion of some of the problems of talking with children

The method of recording the interviews was an integral part of the work and I therefore discuss that issue in this chapter too.

I then describe each of the questions I put to the children and discuss their replies. I finish by offering some conclusions and the follow up discussion with Roger and Patrick.

9.1 Introduction

Although I had been working with primary children for many years I was quite nervous about the interviewing of them for this research. This was despite having gained a qualification in interviewing and much experience when out of teaching, working in the business world. Because of my experience there, I was no stranger to interviewing - but I realised that interviewing children and talking with them for this research required my assuming great sensitivity and, being the only adult in the conversation, unlike my previous experience of interviewing, sole responsibility.

One of the first things I had learnt both through my training and practice was the importance of *really* listening to the interviewee. It was also vital to see each of them as individuals. The opening sentence above, referring to what the class told me is therefore of course overly simplistic. The class could not be interviewed as such. It

comprised thirty-two, very different young people, each with their own character, attitude to school, identity and past experiences.

And because every one of them is an individual, what they said in their interviews - and left unsaid - needed reflecting on in the light of my knowledge of them gained through my ongoing work with them as participant observer and occasional class teacher.

9.2 The organisation of the interviews

At the start of the year, I spoke to the class with Helen, their class teacher present. I explained what I wanted to do and that I would be asking each of them if I could interview them about teacher questioning.

As discussed earlier, I answered any questions they had at that time. In general I had the impression that they were happy with the arrangements suggested. Most made it clear that they would readily agree to speak to me one to one - and many even seemed quite excited at the prospect.

From early February to April 2000, I then made more detailed arrangements with each of the children in turn, organising suitable times and days for their interviews that were then conducted over that ten-week period.

It was a pleasant experience to be undertaking an activity that so many of the children seemed excited and interested in. As much as anyone may generalise about a class, this group of pupils tended to be lively and interested, keen to have new experiences and try things. An occasion that demonstrated this to me was when I agreed to take them as supply teacher for a special school wide art day. We as a class were given the task of examining the work of Picasso.

When the long awaited day came, the children *all* tackled paper folding and delicate scissor feathering; experimented with new uses of colour by using a restricted palette as well as colouring and designing on wood blocks. The ingenuity and enthusiasm with which they tackled it offers an explanation for why many of this same group of

children was keen to be interviewed. There was nothing dull or inhibited about the majority of the characters that made up this particular class!

9.3 The interviews and the problems that could occur

There are many matters that need to be considered when interviewing. I intend mentioning and discussing the most important here with others being raised later in the text if they relate to other subjects, such as the use of the camcorder.

Whatever the role adopted, when conversing with children it cannot be presumed that there is a shared understanding of terms. Epstein found that the term researcher appeared to have no meaning for at least one child who had queried her presence in her research school (Epstein, 1998, p.34). Nespor states that he also found the pupils were "puzzled by my use of the term research" (Nespor, p.375) and that they possibly understood it as an extension of research processes they are already familiar with from class work.

Recognising that others have encountered problems over language I aimed from the start to keep a general check on the children's understanding of vocabulary I used, but especially during the interview process. This involved checking not only that the terms I used were understood but that what the children said back to me I also understood appropriately. This I tried to achieve by saying things back to them or repeating what they'd told me: respondent validation. By leaving a second or two afterwards, I usually found that the interviewee nodded, verbally agreed or corrected me.

On a deeper level, I was aware that I had to try to see beyond the obvious meanings of language used by the pupils to try to grasp the complexity of what they might actually mean, their own definitions, and how it might relate to their feelings (Mead, 1934).

Sometimes it may be that I was leading the children. I tried to be sensitive to the difficulties that gave me in terms of the integrity of the data but overall my priority was that I was accurately understanding the children, respected their views and feelings and overall did not cause them to be unnecessarily uncomfortable.

Not only may children understand our vocabulary differently but also they are also likely to have a different agenda to the researcher. For example, Nespor in asking them about school "assumed ... school defined from my standpoint" (op. cit. p.375). The children however used it as an opportunity to discuss school problems in the hope that by doing so, Nespor could influence their circumstances for good (op. cit. p.375 - 7). I didn't find this a problem as such but there were occasions where, as a result of my asking questions, the child raised issues. An example is Suzanne who I mention in more detail later.

One of the other problems of interviewing children is the very fact that you are an adult and they are a minor. It is not the meeting of equals in terms of power and responsibility because the onus is on you to protect and care for them. I found therefore that I could not always operate as a detached researcher when interviewing because, as stated earlier, a key ethical consideration was always to look to put the children's interests first.

The main problem I had in relation to this was the concern that I could be causing the interviewees anxiety, ironic when it was the main subject of my research. Some interviews are therefore much less probing than had the interviewee been an adult. An example of this is the interview with Warren, again mentioned in more detail later.

A problem linked to my concern to avoid unnecessary stress on the interviewees and thus keep the proceedings as informal as possible, was that I could make mistakes and for example forget to ask a question. It was one of the hazards of having no aide memoir as you might more reasonably have with you when talking to adults.

However, to not be seen note - taking had been a decision I took early on when first visiting the school. The only time I broke my own rule was in the earliest visits when I was trying to draw up a class plan of seating to help me more quickly learn names. As I was still visiting a Year 3 class in another school, I was experiencing difficulty with remembering the children in those weeks. When I surreptitiously jotted some names on paper looking in at Year 4 from the corridor, it caused an astonishing amount of what I read as concern in the faces of the pupils nearest me. Knowing that

pupils are "aware of public forms of evaluation" and that although for some they were a source of affirmation, for others they are a "source of anxiety" (Pollard et al, 2000, p.287) it is likely that they imagined I was somehow evaluating them and was thus to be avoided.

My worry for the childrens' development and well-being could often cause me to be torn between them and the work. One example of this was when Lucy kept making arrangements with me to conduct her interview only to have her choose to go off with friends to play. This happened several times as dates /time arrangements were made and broken. Fortunately my perseverance paid off and I eventually got the interview.

I had understood the problem as both a teacher and researcher. Lucy was having a traumatic time with her peers. There had been a lot of what I would term verbal bullying (from both parties) and Lucy was often ostracised and left alone. Her peer relationships were very fragile. I was therefore reluctant to encourage her away from any possible valuable friendship - building time if she wanted to go out at break times after all. In any case, I could hardly insist that she talked to me. I had none of the power of the classic teacher role to insist on her co-operation. However, as researcher, I was keen to see her early on around the time that I had also spoken to her sometime friends to avoid too much possible rehearsing of answers. That this nevertheless happened I document later.

When it came to the actual interviews, if I detected any hesitation or unease, I offered to arrange for the child to have one of their friends present. To a small number I offered this anyway, if I knew them to be shy or reticent, believing this would be more likely to facilitate the most open interview possible.

I was aware of course that talking to the children with others present could lead to problems of privacy and confidentiality as well as the possibility of their feeling the need to conform to others' viewpoints. Knowing this, and by this stage knowing the children reasonably well, I felt I would be aware if it did happen and take it into account.

I considered that the benefits of allowing some paired interviews outweighed these potential problems. I was most concerned for children who could be prone to feeling nervousness or unease – anxiety - if I insisted on their talking to me alone. In the case of these, the friend being present would enable me to deflect attention from the interviewee and initiate or maintain a comfortable setting for the child. Sometimes too, a peer friend would be able to confirm something, offer another perspective, or otherwise help draw out the actual interviewee.

An example of this was Paul. Although usually eager to please, Paul could be unresponsive at times. I feared this was one such occasion as I began my interview with him and Emily when I asked them both:

JA   How do you feel when you're answering questions?
Paul   Nothing really.

Emily though immediately chipped in with her own answer to my question. This seemed to prompt Paul to consider and then express something of his own feelings after all. Thus we have the interview continuing with Emily speaking, closely followed by Paul, talking about his nervousness:

Em   I feel all shy and "Oh no, not me".
Paul   When it's something hard I feel nervous.

I had still said nothing more since the initial query. Emily's input had prevented my immediately going on to the following question. This I almost certainly would have done had I been with just the one child, perhaps robbing Paul of the opportunity to think further and respond after all. However, I am equally sure that had I tried to interview other, different pupils with others present, it could have had the opposite effect. This had to be a subjective call and it is quite difficult to be explicit about how I made these decisions. Already, by the time of these interviews, with the considerable amount of time I'd been able to spend with the class, it could feel as though I were simply using instinct. However, if I break down the process, I was actually using a number of cues to guide me.

There is no doubt that I approached each child with certain expectations after watching and working with them so often in class. So my first cue was my perception of the child's identity – how outgoing and confident they seemed in general - especially when answering questions in class.

Secondly there was the relationship I'd been able to build. Some children were more interested in me than others and had afforded me the opportunity to get to know them through their choice of spending time with me. This would be before and after school, at breaks, lunchtime and spare moments in class where they might strike up a conversation or ask me over to tell me some of their news. This tended to be the girls more than the boys, but then I had noticed that they were more willing to stand around chatting in general where, to make a sweeping generalisation, the boys *tended* to go off at every opportunity to play more active games. No doubt the fact that I am female and didn't tend to go off to join in the playground games of football and so on also played a part in this. As a result of these relationships, some quite shy pupils were nevertheless happy to talk to me one to one.

Where there were strong friendship ties, I tended to ask those children together, as a pair or triplet, but then still ask if I might speak to them individually. If they agreed, because the interviews were relatively short, their friends tended to be happy to either wait around nearby or I might ask them to undertake a small job such as giving out of books in preparation for the next lesson, tidying the bookshelves, watering plants etc. If they started to hover too closely, I would stop my questioning and ask them to go further away, making something of a show of doing the interview privately and in an adult manner. I was always looking to strike the balance of being professional but keeping the activity light enough to be enjoyable for the participants – always looking above all to avoid it becoming stressful or scary for the children.

As mentioned earlier, this looking to avoid creating any anxiety sometimes caused me to lead a child within the interview. An example would be when I was talking to Melanie and I questioned her perception of a peer's reaction.

JA   Do you think she was really thinking that?
M   I just think that, because I don't think she was really saying that.

JA   But it felt to you as if she was.

M   *(Nods)*.

This was often done to recreate a more conversational tone in the interview and often came after there'd been a number of quite direct, impersonal queries. Perhaps I believed I was reading some discomfort in the interviewee's demeanour or expression at which point I'd be looking to make a more friendly contact again. It often accompanied body language from myself designed to be again perceived as a friendly gesture – perhaps leaning forward or a wry grin type of facial expression that suggested some empathy and understanding of what had been expressed.

Once again this was difficult to judge and I don't know that I was always correct or despite my best efforts, always did the best in each interview. It seemed to me that the wiser course of action was to look to safeguard the relationship - even if the interview at times might have wavered from the ideal.

I was also conscious that I didn't have the luxury of much time with each child. I couldn't therefore spend too much time talking about irrelevancies. With many children I was using some of their precious free time from morning break or lunch; some I saw in PE lesson time in the empty classroom (*whilst the others were outside on the field/ hall with Helen*) if they weren't participating on that occasion - but they were the minority.

Even so, I found the academic year was fast disappearing and I was still not through the interviews. My research design had been overly optimistic regarding time available to me in the school. Helen, aware of my problem, and knowing who I still wanted to see then found small parcels of time when she could spare that child for a few minutes during the day. Although I only saw a few this way, it was enormously helpful in enabling me to complete the interviews before the Easter holidays.

Apart from keeping me to my own research plan for the year, this was also important so that some of the children did not feel left out or marginalised by being left too long before being interviewed themselves. I had underestimated the considerable interest the interviews generated and rapidly had children asking me if they could be next to be interviewed and so on. Some gave me the impression that they were starting to feel left out and I had to be diplomatic and ask some to be patient. I would joke about

keeping the best 'till last and so on. Any I believed were nevertheless unhappy at being later in the schedule, I would look to see sooner rather than later.

9.4 Interview environment

We generally met in the children's classroom or nearby. Once a corridor corner was used. Occasionally I was able to use the Radio room opposite the Year 4 classroom, which, unlike the majority of rooms, had a door, ostensibly allowing more privacy. In practice, other pupils from around the school collecting or returning items that were stored there frequently interrupted us. However, each of these venues had the advantage, as I saw it, of being familiar through being close to the pupils' usual working area. I was hoping that using such places would therefore not contribute to any stress created through the unfamiliar interview process I was conducting. Grieg and Taylor (1999) confirm that such considerations are valuable in reducing anxiety.

When interviewing the children, I also ensured there was no physical barrier between us. The class did not see their class teacher sitting behind a desk. In fact she rarely sat down and if she went to her desk she tended to lean over it to jot something down and then move away. For registration, she tended to sit on a stool, somewhat higher than the pupils' chairs but with the desk behind her. Essentially she used it as a base or shelf on which to direct pupils to place their work or such.

I ensured therefore that where possible, I had no desk or table between the interviewees and myself. I also chose to sit on a lower pupil / child chair to deliberately bring me closer to the child's level. I tended to sit forward, again drawing myself closer to the child's space without, or so I hoped, invading it. This had the added advantage too of meaning I could speak quite quietly, unlike for example when I was addressing the whole class or even a group on a table. In a school which was essentially an open plan scenario, you could never tell who was within earshot, so this was helpful. I tended too to sit at an angle to the child. This I trusted would ensure my posture was in no way confrontational.

9.5 Recording the interviews

Such a seating arrangement allowed the camera to be directly opposite the child. It would be positioned some metre or so away, at the child's level when sat. This, I had learnt, enabled me to get the best in terms of both sound and picture quality. Unfortunately, another disadvantage of it being a semi open plan school was that external noise could be a considerable problem at times in relation to the recording - and what might begin as a quiet interview talking together with no one else around would often suddenly be interrupted by another class lining up nearby, KS1 (infants) going out to play or other unforeseen disruptions which played havoc with the soundtrack

I usually continued regardless in an effort to maintain the flow of the conversation. However, as a result of background noise, some of the interviewees are extremely difficult or even impossible to hear on tape. Where it actually proved too problematic to make out their words when transcribing at home later, or should I have omitted a question at the time, I took a small hand held tape recorder to school and used it to speak to the children whose interviews had been so affected at a later date.

Although the camcorder was set up relatively close to and in front of the child being interviewed, as already described, I sat to one side. This meant that to talk to me, giving eye contact, the child would have to look away from the camera. This was again intended to help minimise any stress that might be felt as a result of the proximity of the camcorder.

In fact, looking through all the interviews on tape, it was rare to see a child look into the lens often. Usually they only looked if I was behind it adjusting the position or starting the tape. If they did look, as in the case of Nicola, who went cross eyed for the benefit of the camera several times before settling to listen and talk about my queries, - it was generally to wave or smile – some form of display of humour although of course I recognise that that in itself could be construed as a coping mechanism in a stressful situation. *(In Nicola's case, it almost certainly was – please see further comment on this in the section on Question 1 later in this chapter)*

On the whole, I timetabled the interviews according to both the need to see children who were particularly keen to be interviewed, early in the schedule; and my own perception that I'd be wise to see strong friendship groups within the same day if possible, to minimise their discussing of answers together. Lucy confirmed that this went on when she and I chatted at the end of my interview with her:

JA   ...the others probably told you what I was asking did they?
L   Hmm *(nods)*.

It was a leading question but worded deliberately as I was fairly certain from the vocabulary she had been using and the fact that some of her replies were defensive, as if anticipating my next query, that questions had been discussed with her friends verbatim. Ideally I would have seen Lucy earlier but *she* had postponed the event several times. Knowing it had been discussed and she'd had time to prepare answers, I weighed what she told me accordingly.

Lucy and the apparent changes she underwent through this particular academic year are documented more fully later. However, it needs mentioning at this point that by now she had become really quite manipulative of both her peers and even the adults in her life. Despite this, I doubt she had a conscious agenda as such – her behaviour didn't seem to have been planned to that extent – it tended to be reactive; but she was one pupil who certainly enjoyed being the centre of attention and liked that aspect of the interview process. I thus weighed her answers in that they probably tended to be more dramatically presented than they might have been otherwise had she not known what I was asking pupils. I doubted that she would have been echoing her peers who had already spoken to me – if anything, Lucy at this time would have been more likely to say the opposite of answers others may have given. As before, this was a judgement I made based on my work as participant observer and a number of conversations with Lucy both in and outside the classroom.

From the way I presented the work I wished to do with the pupils, I would have been surprised if any had thought in advance about coming with an agenda in order to have my ear to hear their grievances. The impression I had was that only a few of the

children, such as Lucy had considered the subjects I raised in the interview beforehand. However, there were occasions where in the course of the interview, the child and I were able to discuss issues that seemed important to them as well as being of interest to me. But overall, I got the impression that teacher questioning was just an accepted if sometimes uncomfortable part of the package that was school life- not previously thought about separately by the pupils at all.

9.6 What I asked in the interviews

I deliberated for a considerable time over what to put to the children in these interviews. Of course I had my research aims and questions that I was seeking to answer. In addition, I felt that to have a structure which I could explain to each child would be important so that they knew exactly what was expected. If it were too open such as my saying " I'd just like to chat to you about school" with my agenda being more hidden, I feared it could seem daunting. This could have had the effect of causing them to shut down and tell me little, if anything.

9.7 The questions

As mentioned earlier, the four questions used were worded differently for each child but were all looking to query:

How it felt when the teacher asked the pupil a question

Pupil's perception of peer reaction when they answered teacher questions

Whether the person of the teacher mattered to the pupil being asked questions?

Whether the subject being taught affected their feelings to being questioned.

Despite being the opening query, question one often became a more detailed conversation than the other three. This was because, to answer it, the pupils had to differentiate between times when they had answered the whole class teacher question correctly as well as otherwise. I also often took the opportunity to ask about general feelings about teacher questioning times in the context of this question too.

9.8 Preamble conversation and the unspoken elements of the interviews themselves

Although time was short, there was always a little preamble chatting. The children had a tendency to shift in their chairs and move them so I would often quickly check in the camcorder viewfinder that they were still in shot. With the camera being relatively close (for reasons of sound as mentioned earlier), there was little room for error in terms of positioning.

During this fine tuning of the mechanistic element of the interview process, I would be talking to the children, watching their body language and looking for signs that might help me ascertain how they seemed to feel about the interview. When we were set to begin, I always explained the procedure again and thanked them for their time. I would have checked that they were happy to be interviewed when arranging a time to for this recorded interview to take place - but usually asked again whether they were still happy to participate. This may seem unnecessarily fussy but I was ever conscious that I was usually taking the children's own time. Many still gave me the impression that this was an exciting event and left me in little doubt that they were keen to speak to me in front of the camera. For others though, this might not be the case and I felt better for according them this as a measure of respect, as I would had I been talking to adults.

It's difficult to explain now exactly why I interviewed each child as I did. With some interviews it could perhaps seem as if our conversation was just very superficial. Certainly I rarely challenged any except those few I felt fairly certain could cope and even enjoy it. For these decisions I was again drawing on what by now had amounted to dozens of hours of contact time over the months I had been going in to the school.

Certainly more was going on than might be apparent from looking at the interview tapes. In addition to looking to read the child, I was making a number of very rapid decisions on many levels, both conscious (and unconscious I suspect), to attempt to capitalise on the trusting relationship I had sought to create and thus obtain the fullest, most truthful and honest responses from the children. This I used to gauge when to push for more detailed answers – or otherwise.

I was also alert to tuning into anything underlying the child's responses so that I was not only recording their spoken replies but also coming to some appreciation of the circumstances that led them to say what they did. Suzanne, talking with her close friend Priya, was an example of this several faceted level of authenticity.

We were talking about the difficulties teachers have with time *(completing lesson objectives in the hour allocated, etc.)*. Around the time of the interviews, Helen was experiencing regular battles of wits with Suzanne who was frustrated when Helen couldn't listen to her as often as she (Suzanne) wanted.

Suzanne suddenly expressed annoyance to me about when Helen did not listen to her as fully as she wished or choose her every time she put her hand up. As implied earlier, other researchers such as Nespor had similarly found that children would look to her as a researcher in their midst, to air their problems:

> ...along with answering my questions, the kids frequently complained, without any questions or encouragement on my part, about mistreatment by teachers and other grievances (Nespor 1998, p.375)

An academically very able girl, it would have been easy to dismiss Suzanne's attitude towards Helen as just one of those things. In fact, as I made the decision to allow the interview to veer away from my agenda, off into an exploration of why she felt like this, it transpired that as an only child she was used to <u>always</u> being listened to by adults outside school.

For a moment I didn't take this claim seriously. Neither did Priya seem to; as a girl with several older siblings, she was probably not used to such exclusive treatment. But it soon dawned on me that however extraordinary it seemed, Suzanne really didn't seem to appreciate the different rules that had to operate when participating in a group of over thirty others. Perhaps because she sat near the front and would be told off if she was given to regularly turning around to see her peers, she really hadn't realised how many others could have their hand up and offer a teacher the dilemma of choosing just one hand. Helen was aware of Suzanne's feelings and told me in my interview with her:

I want to hear what they've got to say but it isn't always appropriate. I think sometimes some of them, like Suzanne, feel aggrieved that you haven't given them much time but you have to balance that with them being too demanding – unfairly so to the other children.

Jackson confirms that this is a common problem. He states: " Not everyone who wants to speak can be heard … not all of their (pupils) requests can be granted" (Jackson, 1968, p.15)

The conversation I had with Suzanne and Priya afforded me the opportunity, once Suzanne had raised the issue, of discussing with them the different constraints and limitations the teacher has to work within. There is a brief pause in the interview tape where I can almost see myself make a decision and change hats or role from friendly researcher to friendly teacher as I shifted the conversation focus and looked to talk to the girls differently. I attempted to draw them, albeit temporarily, into the *adult* view of the school classroom to further discuss what had been raised.

They coped well and interestingly, Priya, a very mature young lady for her age, backed me when there was disagreement between Suzanne and myself. The interview then became a lengthy but more mature discussion of the problems. I wondered at the time if I had made the right or best decision. However, it seemed to result in Suzanne's better understanding of her role as pupil amongst many. It was an example perhaps of putting the pupil and even teacher's concerns before that of the research in the strictest sense of things – and yet I felt I gained much more general understanding as a researcher than had I stuck rigidly to my four questions. It was an example too, I suggest of Suzanne reinterpreting Helen's meanings that she had previously interpreted as negative towards her. Priya took over some of the explaining about how everyone sometimes had to wait for others or just accept they weren't chosen. The videotape captures an expression, something in Suzanne's face, which could be in effect Suzanne redefining the situation as she listened to Priya's different interpretation of events.

That some newly constructed role had occurred within Suzanne was apparent when soon after the interview Helen mentioned that she was finding Suzanne easier. But

how had such a misunderstanding somehow been allowed to continue? Another example perhaps of the lack of time available to teachers to talk about everyday classroom etiquette with their pupils? Yet Suzanne I would say, had more than her fair share of additional teacher attention as Helen regularly battled with this strong willed child who often argued in front of the class and was rarely afraid to show her displeasure. For example, on one occasion, the camcorder caught a whole minute or so of explanation when Helen took some time out within a session of whole class teacher questioning to explain to Suzanne that excellence was a real word and was an appropriate response given by another pupil when Suzanne argued that it should have been excellent and that the word excellence didn't exist.

Jane, a quiet girl generally chatted very readily with me when I arrived at school. Yet she found it extraordinarily difficult to say anything in our interview. Somehow her personal and learner identity did not mesh so that she could talk as readily with me in a new context.

I asked her why she didn't offer answers in class:

JA   You don't put your hand up very much?
J   *(Shakes head).*
JA   Why is that?
J   Because sometimes I'm a bit shy.

Jane, I think, would have to be categorised as quiet or shy despite her friendly attitude and many friends. Encouragingly, later in the year, on a class visit to the local Parish church, I noticed Jane going up to the guide to query something. I wasn't surprised that she hadn't asked her question in one of the occasions of whole class questioning instigated by the guide, but suspect that once she may not have sought the adult out to ask at all. It was very pleasing to see what I took to be some personal development and growing social maturity – and shows again that the interviews could only ever be a snapshot at any one time; the children were ever changing and developing their roles over time, something symbolic interactionism recognizes more readily than some other paradigms.

Long silent pauses before a reply in the cases of some children had to be read as astutely as I knew how; always looking to prevent the pause continuing so long that

the child began to feel embarrassed - but not jumping in so quickly that the thinking process they were engaged in was short circuited. Emily prevented my doing so with Paul *(as described earlier)* but if in doubt I tended to say something and move things on or conclude the interview. My thinking in doing that was that the potential harm of acute embarrassment would be greater than that caused by doing what they would be more familiar with, the typically teacher thing of not allowing enough time to think.

Where possible, when starting the interview, I personalised the questions to incidents or occasions that I'd observed concerning each pupil. This I hoped would enable our conversation to be more than a discussion about teacher questions in the abstract. I would therefore use names and occasions, humorously if possible - anything I felt would make the experience a pleasant one for the children and help them relax and relate to the topic under discussion.

I chatted as much as I could given the limitations of time, in order to aim to minimise any stress and seem as approachable as possible. I didn't feel I could play the role of peer friend but was looking to minimise the fact that in my late thirties, I was a similar age to many of their parents. I didn't want to be the parent type figure – nor always school teacher. (Much) older sister would perhaps best sum up the relationship I was looking to initiate at this stage - clearly running the event but with genuine interest and concern for their opinions and thoughts. Roles ever changed though and different hats were worn depending on the responses I was given - as with the example of the interview with Suzanne and Priya mentioned earlier.

Thus this was especially true when I was talking to some of the most emotionally and socially mature children who would perhaps raise issues in the context of my questions that I hadn't anticipated. Again, rather than stick rigidly to my agenda and therefore belittling what they were expressing, which was obviously important to them, I would allow the interview to go off at a tangent as far as time allowed – not least because I was fascinated by the opportunity it afforded me to glimpse the classroom more clearly from their point of view.

Looking back, it is surprising to me now that in a number of the interviews, I did not ask all four questions of every child. Sometimes, I knew I was omitting something

and did so deliberately making a decision that I was not happy in pursuing the interview with a child at that time. Sometimes I just did not fully pursue all four queries because the child seemed uncomfortable. This was the case with Warren who initially caught me off guard by behaving as though he were extremely uncomfortable with my talking to him in our interview:

JA (*after reference to an occasion earlier*) What were your feelings when you put your hand up to answer a question?
W   (*Silence, then*) ... Don't know really.
JA Well, she (Helen) said "Well done." How did you feel about that?
W   Happy.
JA Have you ever had to answer a question when you don't know the answer?
W   (*Nods*).
JA How do you feel then?
W   (*Silence*).
JA Do you feel lots of things, could you tell me? Are there lots of answers to that?
W   (*small shrug*)
JA Think of one that happened this week where you weren't sure and didn't answer.
W   (*Long silence and then*) Don't know.
JA That's okay. What do you think people on your table thought?
W   (*Shakes head*).
JA Does it make any difference who is teaching you?
W   (*Shakes head*).

Warren was not behaving particularly out of character with me – he tended to respond to questions reluctantly or slowly for his class teacher too, if at all, as the following extract from the interview I had with Helen indicates:

> *Some, like Warren put their hand up and then ponder the question – it's knowing them; some like Lucy want to dominate and so you have to cut them off. With other children you want to draw them out. It all depends on the child.*

However, I felt that the interview was generating too much stress to be good for our ongoing researcher – pupil relationship. Warren was taking too much time to even decide to shake his head in response to my queries and I wasn't prepared to continue since it was obvious that I would most likely get more of the same. Fortunately, no other interview was as awkward as this one.

In other interviews however I did not always obtain answers simply because I did not pursue the questions. There were a number of reasons other than, as with Warren feeling concerned that the child was becoming unacceptably stressed. Each perhaps highlights some of the difficulties that may be encountered when interviewing children.

9.9 Coding the interviews

One of the primary research aims of the work was to attempt to uncover whether pupil anxiety during times of teacher questioning, if it existed at all, was widespread. To that end I considered it useful to quantify what the pupils told me in their interviews. This enabled me to see some patterns and indeed whether reported anxiety occurred just occasionally or was indeed a frequently felt reaction to whole class teacher questioning for many children. This was done by hand grouping words that related to an emotional response according to whether it seemed to be largely negative or positive. I then counted and collated the findings as outlined later in the next section.

9.10 Treatment of the data

At the end of all the interviews, each one was transcribed as best I could so that I had a computer copy of the words spoken. A few interviews however had so much background noise and / or it was so difficult to hear the child's voice that I just kept the original paper copy transcript and would return to the tape when I wanted to check the child's responses, for example for illustrating a point in this thesis. This proved beneficial as I usually found I could appreciate a little more of what was said each time I listened and watched the video. It also avoided the risk of having an incorrect interpretation of the words in print as though it were accurate and the possibility of overlooking the fact that an interview transcript was flawed.

The next stage was to do a pencil and paper summary of the results to obtain an overall idea of what the children as a whole had said in response to the four main questions I had put to them.

Prior to taking an introductory course in NUD.IST, my expectation was that I would use the NUD.IST program to analyse the data further. However, on discussion with the NUD.IST trainer and others more familiar with the programme than myself, it was proposed that with my having a relatively small number of interviews and each one being relatively short, I should handle the data differently, advice I took.

I returned to the recorded interviews, and coded them by hand, watching again and again as each child told me about their experiences and answered my specific questions. Having many of the pupils' words already on computer was helpful – but only to a point. I found that by returning to the tapes themselves, I was ever reminded of each child's tone of voice, body language and expressions thus enabling me to make what I believed were the most accurate judgements about what the children were possibly saying behind merely judging them on their use of language (Mead,1934).

What the children said could only give me some idea of their feelings on any particular occasion. I tried to arrange the interviews for occasions that were everyday, keen to look to examine something of children's regular, normal school experience of teacher questioning but it would seem likely that if a child had just had a particularly celebrated time in whole class teacher questioning they would be likely to feel better about the event than if I happened to catch them on a day when they felt they let themselves down.

9.11 Results: Question 1 – When you are wrong

When I asked about feelings under teacher questioning, most children made the distinction between whether they had answered *(to their mind at least)* satisfactorily or otherwise. Sometimes this was led by myself; for example if they seemed to be taking a while to answer, I might prompt them by recalling an occasion of when I had observed them answering a question correctly. However helpful I hoped this would be though, it could be that the child didn't appear to remember – even an occasion earlier that morning. For example, Roger's answer, when I asked him:

JA   Did Miss Smith ask you a question this morning? *(knowing that she had)*

R I think she asked me one? *(with a puzzled expression!)*.

So, even that strategy, designed to help, had to be used with caution!

Overwhelmingly, and not unexpectedly, the children told me of a mixture of feelings when answering teacher questions in front of the class. Twenty five of them talked of negative feelings when they believed they had made an error or were wrong. These typically included the same words or phrases being used over and over again by different pupils including:

> being nervous
> *(feeling)* a bit silly
> disappointed
> embarrassed
> worried
> shocked *(used this time by Kate not Mel and Julia as quoted before)*
> scared
> butterflies in the tummy
> confused
> miserable
> upset

One (Lydia) even described a waking dream/ nightmare like prospect where she imagined that because she had got something wrong she was scared that she might be sent to the Head teacher, Kath. When questioned more closely about this she admitted that she had never known this happen to anyone as far as she knew; she told me that she liked both Helen and Kath and thought them fair - yet it was still a fear that she expressed in a very animated fashion.

Some, like Lydia, seemed to find it relatively easy to give me some idea of their feelings. Several fell back on vocabulary used in whole class during the lessons when I'd introduced the characters Sam and Chris. Many though surprised me with their ability to articulate and reflect on quite painful memories.

Being so young, the children had inevitably less experience to draw on to express themselves than adults – and some indeed found it impossible to find words. But most seemed so willing to try I felt I did gain some idea of their feelings under different circumstances. This was in no small part due to the fact that they were so expressive

in their facial expressions and gestures. If what we actually <u>say</u> is a very small part of our communication with each other, with tone of voice and body language being a powerful means of expression, I felt confident that I came to reasonable understandings of what the children were trying to express by my watching them closely and looking to, as Mead (1934) expressed it, examine below the apparent meanings of language . However, despite their apparent willingness to be open with me, I also needed to be aware of their efforts to maintain face (Goffman, 1967).

By far the most commonly used term the children used was that they felt sad. I attempted to unpack this word, which from the way the children used the term seemed to include a number of different negative emotions - but the pupils found it hard to say any more about what they meant by it. Some clearly felt it was self-explanatory! What was perhaps most telling though was that its use tended to accompany a facial expression or shrug which seemed to indicate a certain acceptance of an unhappy scenario. Tom was typical of many when he told me he could feel sad when he was wrong about an answer; Carrie also spoke of being sad if she wasn't chosen to answer. Perhaps therefore the term sad for these children was most akin to a form of disappointment.

A particularly interesting use of the term 'sad' was by Steve. He showed that he not only felt sad personally because he was confused("I didn't know what to do"), but could feel sad for others to such a degree that he would attempt to help them. Another example of empathic emotion, I suggest. In the following extract of our conversation, he was telling me:

S   Once in maths I didn't understand what we had to do, and then Miss Smith
        asked me, and I didn't know what needed doing.
JA   What happened?
S   Miss Smith said, "It's okay", and she passed on to someone else.
JA   How did you feel?
S   Sad, because I didn't know what to do.

Later in the same interview I asked Steve:

JA   What do you think when other people answer questions? If someone gets it
        wrong, do you feel anything for them?
S   Yes, I feel sad, so, like, I put my hand up.

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He went on to explain that this was an attempt to be helpful and, as I understood him, possibly deflect attention from the error and protect the pupil from further embarrassment.

9.12 Being right

Otherwise the children commonly described feelings of happiness and pride in themselves when they answered questions correctly - or to their satisfaction. An example of their enhancing their status perhaps (Kemper, 2000). Other terms they used were:

> feeling confident
> pleased
> nice
> comfortable,
> good
> all warm inside
> fine
> okay

The terms fine and okay struck me as being surprisingly bland statements. Although on the surface of things they are by no means negative pronouncements, the facial expression that tended to accompany the use of these terms also tended to be somewhat featureless. This was in stark contrast to the others who when using the words happy or proud generally looked animated - cheerful and understandably pleased with themselves. I felt there was more going on than met the eye or was being spoken.

Four children fell into this okay / fine category. From my observations of them I would have said they often seemed far from fine or okay. I do not suggest that any of these children were lying as such, nor did I have any reason to suppose they were trying to mislead me. So why did they appear to be unmoved by their experience of teacher questioning?

One example is Caty. Our interview began as follows:

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JA	Sometimes you answer a question in class. How do you feel?
C	Fine.
JA	What if you get an answer wrong; does it make a difference?
C	No.

Similarly, Alex who had displayed signs of tension in class during times of teacher questioning, responded when asked about answering teacher questions with:

A	*(Silence).*
JA	Do you feel sad … or happy … or somewhere in between?
A	Normal.
JA	Does it matter whether you know the answer or not?
A	*(Shakes head).*

But then Alex seemed to be withdrawn from normal classroom interaction for much of the time – certainly through the early months of the school academic year.
This is in contrast with the majority who tended to express far more variation in feelings. Those who were happy or proud when correct, tended to be all miserable if wrong – much more dramatic differences of feelings.

Although these were only four of the 32 pupils in the class, I didn't want to ignore this finding and felt that some examination of their circumstances might give some clue as to why they responded in their interviews as they did.

One of the four, Matthew, was living with the fact that his mother was terminally ill. Whereas at the start of the school year when this was not known, I had found him often giggly as well as bright and alert to his surroundings, it didn't seem unreasonable to me with all that he was coping with now if he was disinterested for parts of our interview on teacher questioning.

Alex, Carrie and Caty were either Special Educational Needs pupils (Alex and Caty) or arguably bordering on being so registered; all therefore found their schoolwork particularly challenging.

Caty had emotional and behavioural problems, which, for example, showed in her regular calling out and temper tantrums – an inability to generally behave appropriately and acceptably in the classroom setting.

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Carrie, a quiet girl with a permanently disabled arm and hearing problems, often demonstrated poor self-esteem and confidence. Each of these three I was convinced I had seen exhibiting signs of anxiety at times of teacher questioning which belied the casual "I'm not bothered" attitude they now seemed to be putting across. I would therefore suggest that for these or for whatever reasons, perhaps because of Cooley's selective interest again, my just not being important enough to them, these children found it hard to express that they could find teacher questioning quite difficult and stressful.

Of the remaining seven, three spoke of always being nervous, whether right or not. Two of the three, Melanie and Nicola, surprised me with this admission for I had got to know them outside the classroom / lessons as fun loving, quite confident young ladies. This highlighted for me again just how competent the children could be at hiding their discomfiture, an example perhaps of shame being hidden as Scheff and Block Lewis highlight (1988).

Kelly, a self confessed shy pupil, was always on edge (and usually looked it!) when it was teacher-questioning time in a lesson. When I asked her:

JA   I just wondered what you feel like when the teacher asks questions.
K   Mmm … nervous.

In contrast, neither Melanie or Nicola generally *looked* nervous – in fact Nicola with her zany humour (*who went cross eyed for the benefit of the camera several times before settling to listen and talk about my queries*) could appear quite the reverse. In Melanie's case, I wondered if it was connected to her having set very high standards for herself. The early part of her interview with me could be interpreted as reflecting this:

JA   How do you feel when you're answering questions – like you did this
        morning?
M   Well I knew what the question was, but I just got mixed up with it all, because
        I didn't tell it properly.
JA   So you didn't put over exactly what you meant to say?
M   No.

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JA	What did she (the *class teacher, Helen*) say?
M	Yes, that's right.
JA	How did you feel about that?
M	Um ...*(Silence)*.
JA	It's hard to put into words isn't it? Can you think of any?
M	*(Pause)* ... Silly.
JA	Even though she'd said it was okay?
M	A bit, like, uncertain.

The reason for Nicola's unease could be more complicated. Hers was a long chatty interview, typical of Nicola with her bubbly identity and eagerness to please. However, as the following extract I think demonstrates (from the middle of our conversation about questioning), she is tense for much of the teacher questioning part of a lesson:

JA	... even when you answer a question correctly, you still feel worried?
N	Yes, 'cos I feel like I'm going "Oh no, what's the answer?"
JA	So there's still tension even when you get the answer right.
N	Yes. I'm like this, "Please make me get the answer right.

Nicola seems to be saying she isn't sure that she is right – even if she had the correct answer. This I had observed with others too. Even straightforward questions with obviously (?) correct answers (for example, some numeracy times tables work) could still be answered with an inflection in the voice that suggested a query – an uncertainty that it was the right answer. I felt this deserved some further consideration and will raise the issue again in the conclusions of this chapter.

9.13 The classroom set up

With the second question, I was looking to examine the pupil's consciousness of their peers when, in a whole class teaching scenario, they (*the pupil*) answered a teacher question. One practical matter relating to this was how well the children had eye contact or could otherwise see / be aware of each other – and a key element in that was the arrangement of the classroom furniture, as described earlier in chapter 2. On the whole, to recap, the children had sight of a number of others as they were grouped on tables of four / six or eight normally. The important point is that they were not in rows, only able to see a few peers – nor generally in a circle as this arrangement was usually only used for art or circle time.

When asked about peer reaction, only one child spoke <u>only</u> about positive peer reactions. That was Paul who said:

P   They say it to me when I get it right, ... they say, "Well done" or *(put his thumbs up)*

This however was copying almost exactly what Emily had said just moments earlier when I had continued the interview with the two of them with the question:

JA   What is the reaction of people around you when you answer a question?
E   Sometimes they go *(puts thumbs up)* or sometimes they say "Well done" at playtime.

Later in the interview however, Paul also said that pupils might mouth the answer to one another, which he also saw in helpful, positive terms:

P   Sometimes if I'm asked a question ... I look around me and see people... *(pretends to mouth an answer)*.
JA   So people help you?
P   Yes.
JA   Do you think the teacher notices?
P   No *(amused)*.

I asked them both:

JA   Do people ever say anything other than "Well done"?

Paul was silent but Emily responded, saying:

E   Sometimes people say things like "You didn't know the question, you got a friend" *(said in a mocking / taunting manner)*.
JA   Is this the people around you?
E   Yes.

References to negative comments such as Emily's above was the most common response to my question. In fact, eighteen pupils spoke only of negative reactions to their answering teacher questions in class. Five, including Emily, spoke of a mixture

of the negative and positive responses they'd experienced, making 23 pupils in all that gave me negative stories. The remaining 8 either found themselves unable to articulate a reply to my query or appeared ambivalent / neutral about the issue.

Although the Year 5 class I had worked with two years previously had said similar comments to these Year 4 pupils, I still felt some surprise. However, I think there are some important points to make here before I reflect further on these responses in the conclusions.

Firstly, the children's answers, which I have categorised under negative, are giving their own interpretation of meanings (Blumer, 1969) and may not be accurate in terms of what actually happened. However, Emily was just one of several who could readily relate conversations where it is impossible to interpret what was said by a fellow pupil as anything but unkind.

A second example I want to give here was Rachel - who then figured on the other side of the fence as it were, with Melanie. I asked Rachel:

JA	Do people ever say anything to you afterwards *(after she'd answered a question correctly)?*
R	Like what?
JA	Like "Well done, Rachel".
R	*(Nods).* Sometimes. You get nasty things as well, like "You always get picked".

But where others related stories about a look, could it have been wrongly interpreted? Melanie talked of receiving a look *(from the same girl, Rachel, as above)* that she interpreted as negative. She began by saying that:

M	... Rachel kept on looking at me.
JA	How did you understand her looks? What do you think she meant?
M	You could have explained that a bit more.
JA	Do you think she was really thinking that?
M	I just think that, because I don't think she was really saying that.
JA	But it felt to you as if she was?
M	*(Nods).*

I occasionally asked pupils if they'd been on the receiving end of a look or negative peer reaction, whether they would do the same to others. It tended to be denied although I had observed several of them seemingly responding that way.

Nevertheless, returning to the earlier point about children correctly interpreting others' looks, I suspect that to suggest they are wrongly reading negative things into the looks is somewhat underestimating the pupils ability to work effectively in the social setting of the classroom. On the whole, from what was said, the look probably *was* meant unkindly or at least unhelpfully. In any case, the fact that it was interpreted as unkind, upset the child and remained in their memory to tell me, shows that its impact was negative, whatever the intention.

JA   What about the times when you don't get it *(a teacher question)* right?
Lee   You feel, like, all miserable, and if it's definitely wrong everybody laughs at you, and you feel all sad.
JA   *(Incredulous at the "everybody")* They don't really, do they?
Lee   No.
JA   Is it just the people around you, you feel?
Lee   *(Nods).*

We returned to the comment on whole class laughing over a wrong answer. Lee reasserted that they would all laugh over a silly answer.

This was interesting. Lee, a cheery, chatty boy, bright and popular exaggerated the number of pupils who would smile or laugh at him. But was he more accurately expressing *the feeling* of those occasions? Jed, a pupil with special educational needs so very different to Lee in terms of academic ability, echoed what Lee had said. I asked him:

JA   Do you have any feelings about what's going on when the teacher's asking questions to the whole class? How do you feel?
J   Sad.
JA   Why do you feel sad?
J   Because I don't know it, and everyone laughs at me.
JA   Who is everyone - your table?
J   No, everyone in the whole room.
JA   I've never noticed that happening. It might feel like everyone is laughing at you, but sometimes you answer questions *(implying 'correctly')* don't you? How does that make you feel?

J	*(Looks around at children changing for PE across the classroom and makes no reply).*
JA	I've seen you answer questions. Does that make you feel sad?
J	*(Shakes head).*
JA	…or something different?
J	Good.

Jed had been my most reluctant interviewee, at first refusing to speak to me. He'd joined the class at Christmas so had missed the class introduction to my research though I had been able to talk about it with his mother who would often come in at the end of the school day. On talking about his reluctance, Jed made it clear that he associated talking to a teacher (*myself*) with being told off. Once I'd clarified that I wasn't about to tell him off, he'd agreed to talk to me.

Matthew and Tom, interviewed together, said of pupil peers that:

M	Sometimes they laugh …
JA	How do you feel then?
M	Sad.
T	You feel unhappy when they laugh at you.
JA	That happens sometimes?
T	Yes.

Debbie was one of the most able Year 4 girls academically, seemed emotionally mature and is particularly illuminating on this issue of the look that might be given one pupil to another. She also clarifies the way the children were grouped at their tables, showing that they weren't often good friends even though most made the effort to get on with those they sat with.

As with the others, I asked her about peer reaction to her answering a question incorrectly:

JA	Does anyone around you look, or say anything?
D	Yes, they usually look and stare at you.
JA	How does that make you feel?
D	It makes you feel even worse.
JA	What are they meaning?
D	They're looking at you like, "How could you get a question wrong?"
JA	Are these people you would call friends, or just people you sit with?
D	Just people I sit with, but I do talk to them.

JA   But they're not people you would call friends?

D   Not best friends.

Elizabeth said that fellow pupils may not merely look but talked of peers " pulling faces at me". She didn't however wish to elaborate.

Secondly, I think that closer examination of the children's replies to my question, actually suggests that negative peer responses are even more common than my figures as coded above show. For example, with Lucy, whom from what she told me I've coded as ambivalent, was cheery throughout the interview; nothing (unusually) was bothering her that day. From my many visits to the classroom though I knew that there had been numerous occasions when someone had looked at her in a way that she had understood to be putting her down and arguments and rows had ensued. On one occasion there was even a fight – all over a look that she interpreted as a negative judgement of her (Cooley, 1922 in 1967).

I felt that a closer examination of pupils in this category would therefore be useful. Four pupils had given me neutral answers for my first question and I felt it would be constructive to see if there was a pattern and see if any of them were similarly ambivalent about question two.

Carrie who told me she was happy enough about answering questions, was very clearly coded as negative for this question about her peers. When asked about them she said, "they whisper about me".

Matthew, who was "okay" whether he answered teacher questions correctly or not, I also coded as negative for question two for he told me that pupils sometimes "laugh at you" which made him "feel sad".

Alex, who was exceptionally quiet and who had said he just felt "normal" at times of teacher questioning, couldn't find any words to discuss peer reaction in teacher questioning. What I had noted though was that the class was very kind to Alex or left him alone. I didn't see him picked on or laughed at as such – but on the contrary, I did note many pupils, both girls and boys, putting themselves out to help and support him.

Whereas the adults concerned about him did not know what his problems were, it did cause me to reflect on how much some of the children might know. For example Rachel, generally audacious - almost always ready with an answer to any teacher question, referred to Alex in her interview with me, stating that she might hold back for pupils like him *(who she named)* in order to give him time - a chance to answer. Perhaps another case of empathic role taking led to such a response (Shott, 1979).

Caty was the only one who was as nonchalant as with question one, stating of her peers that "they just sit there" and that " they're looking at Miss". Like Lucy though, I knew I could readily recall occasions where Caty had loudly protested about the behaviour of peers who had, she felt, responded badly to her contribution to a lesson. The three girls who, for question one had said they were always nervous under teacher questioning, had to be coded as negative when discussing peer reaction. Mel has already been quoted - but the others said similarly negative things including saying that peers tell them she's wrong (Kelly) and make faces and whisper about her (Nicola).

9.15 Question 3

Question three dealt with whether the children felt differently about teacher questions depending on who was in the role of teacher. Although I was by now at least half expecting the answer to be generally no, I was surprised after the time many took to respond to earlier questions, just how quickly most came back with their "No". Twenty three children originally stated that "No", it didn't matter who was teaching them.

Two then hesitated and changed their minds and said it could make a difference or may do.

Two further pupils I eventually coded as "don't know", as they either couldn't articulate an answer or, as in the case of Nicola who originally said "No", at the end of our interview together told me when I asked:

JA   Does it make any difference which teacher asks questions?

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N   No ... (then) I don't know how I feel.

I felt that the best interpretation of the interview data was therefore to say that 20 pupils were sure that it didn't matter who asked them teacher questions and that 4 were uncertain or didn't know.

The 8 remaining pupils in the class stated that "Yes" it did matter to them. The reasons these children gave for saying that the teacher mattered varied. Perhaps the most unexpected reason was from Marc, the son of the Head teacher who, came in to the class to take poetry/ literacy lessons regularly. We discussed my question for some time and I understood that he seemed to find that another teacher who taught him for science was difficult to understand because of her accent *(this is referred to in more detail again elsewhere)*. Marc was the only one to refer to accent.

Sometimes it was teacher identity and /or novelty value *(i.e. they only saw them occasionally)* that seemed to affect the children's decision. Teachers were mentioned as well liked which led to their questioning times being particularly enjoyed. Some of these teachers were past teachers and I did wonder if there was a case of rose tinted glasses with one or two pupils!

However, if teachers could be thought of fondly and their questioning periods thus better liked than others, so the opposite was also true. A supply teacher who up to this point had been regularly used by the school, was mentioned by 2 children as disliked; according to Matthew, because "she sometimes shouts at you", the implication being that they feared/ disliked her teacher questioning times for this.

9.16 The importance of the person of the teacher

A common reason for saying that it mattered who was teaching, linked the teacher to the subject. Roger, who felt himself to be weak in English work, associated the Head, Kath with that subject and therefore enjoyed her lessons less. Kate, speaking on another occasion, said the same as Roger, giving a similar reason. Neither gave any

indication that it was personal and I observed no reason to suppose it was anything other than they said.

Lydia, who had said that the teacher mattered, referred to Kath too – but because she so *liked* Kath's poetry lessons. That this was an honest response from a girl sometimes prone to exaggeration I felt was well founded when she then launched into a lengthy explanation about a particular phrase that she'd loved in a recent lesson of Kath's. Similarly, in a separate paired interview with Kate (*who had felt differently*), Katrina echoed Lydia's positive sentiments about Kath.

Elizabeth, one pupil who for this question I had coded as 'maybe', said that the teacher could make a difference depending on what you were going on to do. It seems then that many of these positive answers that seem to suggest that the person of the teacher matters to about a third of pupils in this class, actually, on closer inspection, link the different teachers to lesson subject as the overriding issue.

9.17 Question Four

Question four actually dealt with lesson subject specifically. The children were asked whether in terms of teacher questioning, the subject mattered. After what some had said for question three, I anticipated that for some it could matter a great deal. With the new literacy and numeracy strategies, (*which the children still called English and maths in the interview data*), I was especially interested in what the children felt about those particular subjects.

Twenty two said that yes it did matter what the subject being taught was. Six were quite or fairly sure that it didn't matter to them. Four were unsure or unclear about the possible significance of subject to them.

Maths and English lessons (*I shall adopt these terms for this section as they are the names the children most readily give to the numeracy and literacy lessons*) generated most feelings – both positive and negative. Not surprisingly, broadly speaking, the subjects the children found hard they liked least - and vice versa.

This fourth question generated the most varied responses – and some of the most unexpected for me in that children said that they liked things I would have thought they'd not like and vice versa. It is difficult to adequately express the range of feeling generated so I shall present a selection of some of the answers I had – and then offer my comments afterwards.

Alison was an interesting interviewee. Very keen to be seen to be right at all times when in class, I felt she tended to say the right / expected answer she thought I wanted to hear. Despite, on the face of it giving me a 'not really/ not sure' answer, I actually coded her reply, with which I had the added benefit of the video footage showing me body language and facial expression to go on, as a borderline 'Yes'. For although she states that subject doesn't really matter, she clearly then expresses details that show that the lesson being taught *does* affect her responses in teacher questioning:

JA   …does it matter which subject?
A   Not really. I feel happy about maths and English, - and science sometimes.
        But geography, I don't really know hardly anything about geography.
JA   So if I watched a geography lesson, you wouldn't put your hand up?
A   No. (*then*) I might put my hand up about one or two times.

Talking to Lee and Ray together, they didn't specifically answer my question about subject, but I coded them again as borderline 'Yes' because they both expressed preferences, implying that the lesson subject can affect them in teacher questioning:

JA   What about subjects?
R   Well, I really like maths a lot …
Lee   I like maths.
R   …and art and music and science.
Lee   I like maths most of the subjects really.
JA   Is it easier answering questions in some subjects?
Lee   I suppose maths is easiest.
R   And English is okay.

Caty was similar and by saying that she liked a lesson, I coded her as another 'Yes'.
Our conversation began with my asking:

JA   Are there any question times in any subjects that you prefer to others – *(she*
        seemed to have nothing to say initially, so I started to list subjects to prompt
        her) …what about maths?

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C	*(Shakes head).* Art.
JA	You like art.

Debbie, a particularly levelheaded young lady, unusually amongst her peers, liked the challenges of some lessons; I say unusually because most children had stated that they liked lessons they considered easier. Unlike Alison, Debbie had never seemed to be one looking to please so I have no reason to suppose that she wasn't being honest as usual:

JA	What about subjects, do you put your hand up more in some subjects than others?
D	Mostly in English, but only sometimes in maths, but I like maths better than English.
JA	Are you happier answering question in maths?
D	Well I am happier, but I answer questions more in English than I do in maths.
JA	How come?
D	I don't know.
JA	Are you good at English?
D	*(Nods).*
JA	But you like maths?
D	*(Nods).*
JA	What is it you like?
D	In maths, because you learn your times tables and things, and you learn more things.

Melanie was the only other pupil who echoed these sentiments. When I asked about subjects, she said:

M	I think maths, it makes me learn stuff, but I think that's hard.
JA	What about other subjects?

But Mel didn't answer this, and talked further and specifically about recent maths:

M	... tables and that stuff we done yesterday - we done – multiplying by 10 and 100.

We talked again then about more general maths, concluding with Melanie stating:

M	Sometimes I don't understand and then after she's (Helen) explained and we get on with our work, I have to go and ask her *(which she clearly didn't like to do).*

Obviously, with all the worries she expressed about maths, I had to code her reply as a 'Yes', the lesson mattered.

One of those I coded (reluctantly) as 'No' was Jed. How that part of the actual interview went was:

JA   Does it matter which subject? Do you have a favourite?
J   *(shakes head).*

We went on to talk about the PE lesson he'd just come out of early *(for misbehaving)*, so it wasn't going well for Jed that day - and he wasn't particularly chatty – even after I'd promised him I wasn't going to tell him off. This is where it has to be remembered yet again that the dialogue can only reflect something of what the children felt or were able to express on the day they were interviewed. Another day and a different answer would have been likely from Jed as he was often very vocal about what he liked and didn't like about all aspects of school life!

One pattern that seemed to emerge from the data about subject, was that it generally seemed to matter least to both the brightest and least bright academically. For example, some of the clearest 'No' and 'not really' answers were given by Steve, Rachel, and Priya - amongst the top five students academically and I suggest after watching different teachers working with the class, amongst the ones most readily considered a safe pair of hands in teacher questioning times.

Jed and Kelly were also 'No', yet they struggled with much of the work, Jed also having special educational needs. The exception was Nicola who was more in the middle academically and also said 'No' adding that she liked to try and was okay to answer in any subject. This wasn't what I'd tended to see in video footage of her though.

Apart from English and maths, which tended to be talked about most as lessons provoking the strongest feelings, RE (Religious education / instruction) was also mentioned quite often as being a lesson that worried children. Marc, very capable and bright said on the issue of subject:

JA	Does the subject make a difference?
M	Sometimes, … I don't really understand RE.
JA	What do you do?
M	I try and think. I like English and maths.

Patrick also mentioned RE as a subject he had problems answering questions in:

JA	What about subject – are there some subjects you're happier answering questions in?
P	Maths and English – I like them.
JA	What about PE – in the hall?
P	That's okay.
JA	Any subjects you don't like answering questions in?
P	RE.
JA	What's hard about that?
P	When you talk about things that happened ages and ages ago, and about Jesus, and faith and trust, and things like that, I don't really know what to say.
JA	It's hard to express what you feel? Are you thinking things – just don't know how to say them?
P	Yes.

I had one of the lengthiest dialogues on this topic with Tom and Matthew. Both fairly average students academically, their comments I think say much about them both. When I asked the usual question, Tom answered first:

T	I find it easiest in maths. I'm best at answering.
JA	So what about English, like this morning?
T	I find that a bit harder. I feel like I might not know the answer, even if I've answered the question before.
JA	What about you Matthew?
M	Science.
JA	Is that good or bad?
M	Good.
JA	Are you good at science?
M	I think I am.
JA	Is there a subject you feel least happy with?
M	Maths.
JA	So what do you do in maths question times?
M	I just keep quiet in it.
JA	Sometimes you're asked a question?
M	I just try and to answer it. Do my best.

My observation of both boys over the months was that Matthew was the more able of the two and despite his reservations in maths, did well. For Tom it could be a struggle – I clearly remember him doing a large amount of beautifully written sums which

were all wrong as he'd misunderstood how to calculate them. I felt it showed two things about Tom. First, that he typically didn't like to ask for help and secondly that he was a hard worker. I tried hard to pretend to him that the work wasn't as incorrect as it was, just picking out some sums for him to do again. But Tom was no fool and pressed me to know about the other sums I'd appeared to ignore; and I had to admit that they weren't quite right either. My point in mentioning this is that despite this and other very patchy written work in maths, Tom had good mental calculation skills so still demonstrated a capable learner identity in the subject – certainly at times of teacher questioning anyway. Matthew though was the opposite. When he got down to written work, he tended to readily grasp what was required. But my observations showed that he did, as discussed above, tend to hang back in question times because he saw them as occasions where his status might be under threat..

9.18 Conclusions from the interviews

I would like to start with some overall comments about the interviewing process before moving on to suggesting some more specific conclusions arising from the children's comments.

One inescapable reflection is that after all the interviewing of the children, however much I tried by choosing a familiar place, discreet use of recording as well as my own manner which I aimed to keep very warm and friendly, there was no disguising the fact that the interviews seemed to be an exceptional experience for many of the pupils.

The data therefore presents a less naturalistic view of the children's opinions than might have been the case had they been more used to expressing their opinions to older people.

Recognising the difficulty some children had with the interviews left me wondering how many of the pupils regularly sustained lengthy one to one conversations with any adult in their lives. With some, the fact that I valued their thoughts and opinions and asked follow up questions and discussed issues that they raised seemed to surprise them.

This is in no way a negative reflection on the classroom interactions with their class teacher. Understandably, following what is typically considered good practice and as mentioned in the chapter on questioning, she tended to question around the class, drawing in as many pupils as possible in each question and answer session. Rarely did I observe her returning to the same child to ask a second question; even less often did lengthy one on one interview style interactions take place; and then any longer exchanges would only be with the most academically able and socially mature - those judged as far as possible, <u>certain</u> to be able to handle the conversation.

One exception to this was when I took the class as their official supply teacher one day in the Autumn term in order that Helen might take each child to one side to discuss, one on one, pupil target setting for the year. These exchanges were often longer than my own interviews later in the year – and in fact Helen was unable to complete the task with all thirty-two children in the one day. However despite everything even she found that the children could find it hard to really communicate their feeling and opinions, even to her who they knew so well.

Talking afterwards to the Year 3 teacher, Sara, in the other research school, she said she was envious of Helen's being enabled to do this, telling me that she'd had to manage the same task, she implied much less satisfactorily, just in the usual whole class environment[8].

To return to the topic of lesson subject, it seemed to matter most to what I have termed the middle or average group of pupils; average in terms of academic achievement and ability.

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[8] Helen having sustained one on one interaction between the pupils and herself was only made possible by the school buying in my help and may then according to Sara, not be typical. Yet tasks like that do seem valuable, not only for the pupil target plans but because it further supports the children's speaking and listening skill development, leading to their being better able to articulate in further research such as this. In the main NLS document in which it asks: 'What is literacy?', it states that "it also involves speaking and listening which, although they are not separately identified in the Framework, are an essential part of it" It then continues to say that "good oral work enhances pupils' understanding of language in both oral and written forms and of the way language can be used to communicate… and that the strategy "contributes substantially to the development of Speaking and Listening". So these skills are valued but it would seem that more time and resources needs to be given to teachers if these skills are really to be substantially developed.

Could it be that the most able pupils; those for whom class work is relatively straightforward, are the most secure in their role and position in the class hierarchy? Could it sadly also be the case that those identified with special educational needs/ requiring additional attention, have an acceptance of their role and place too? Does this then mean that the children who may be termed 'average', the majority, have most to risk both in terms of gain and loss of status (Kemper, 2000) - and so more to be anxious about?

And what of the person of the teacher? The majority of children told me that it didn't really matter to them who taught them. Those that did say it mattered, tended to link the teacher with a favourite or unpopular subject, suggesting that in fact it was generally the subject that mattered more.

I would like to suggest some possibilities for the children's views on what could be termed as the relative unimportance of the person of the teacher.

The research school was particularly strong in terms of its management / leadership team and had both drawn up and actively implemented policy documents for all important aspects of teaching. I had observed from the start that there was a marked similarity of teaching style and approach in the classroom, whoever came in to teach the class. Kath as Head encouraged this – including not having Supply teachers back who did not follow the school ethos and style.

Kath encouraged discussion by the staff on aspects of teaching; for example when she and I were talking about the use of questions in the classroom, she said:

> ...it's a difficult thing, and it's something we have had staff discussions on.

Kath was also pleased to see staff sharing and promoting the school policies and aims:

> ...I thought how wonderful it was yesterday, when I actually heard Helen
> passing on all the information to the new teacher who started ... she was
> saying a lot of things that are just very particular to this school... particularly
> as far as language is concerned, and passing that on. And I thought, well
> that's just cracked it, hasn't it really, that's what's got to be done;
> dissemination to every new member of staff.

From what I saw, although the staff was a typically mixed group of characters, their attitude, approach to their work and teaching style with the children was similar. It was also very important in terms of the ethos of the school that teachers did not shout or act unkindly towards the children. I suggest therefore that this could be one reason why these children were perhaps less concerned about the <u>whom</u> of their lessons so much as the <u>what</u> they were being taught and consequently their perception of their ability to do well in that subject. Perhaps unlike some teachers of the past, the children did not need to fear being shouted at or made to look foolish. The PACE project seems to back this up as it concluded that pupils felt that their relationship with their teachers " were generally good" (Pollard et al, 2000, p. 284) with "almost all accepting of teacher authority" overall (op.cit.p.284). They were generally happy and felt enlivened by occasional humour in relationships with their teachers. They were mostly concerned with their social relationships. The overall impression was that the children's prime concern was to get on with their teachers well enough to 'get by'and avoid risk (op cit. p. 285). Would this not therefore lead to a lessening of anxiety over who was doing the teaching?

When on the playground or in the corridor before lessons, it would be mostly about their peers that the children would talk to me; who is coming to their house for tea, who is coming to a party or, very commonly, a sleepover; what they'd done together at the weekend and so on.

Thus it was obvious from the interviews and my own experience of the children and observation of them, that it was the pupil peers who are the people in school who matter most to the children overall. Although they may be fond of particular teachers, and indeed perhaps even like them all well enough, it was their peers with whom they shared real life. Perhaps for them, teachers are just part of the whole school set up which they the pupils had to accept each day and they were generally pleasant enough to the pupils for them not to be overly concerned about potential loss of status with them.

But despite some positive peer support being mentioned, how much more unhelpful and even detrimental peer reaction was raised by the children in the interviews. There

certainly seemed to be more negativity being described and felt than I am happy to accept.

I allow that there will always be the Rachels of this world whose face on the world is such that she *seems* strong and defiant in the face of criticism. She is so bright that it would be rare to see her make an error in a time of teacher questioning. If pupils dared to make a face or comment to Rachel, she always gave every indication that she gave as good as she got. Possibly the same might be said of Lucy, Roger and one or two others. But this doesn't seem to be true of the majority of average children, and that concerns me. However, perhaps the key issue raised in my mind after the interviews related to what Nicola said about being uncertain if an answer she offered was adequate – even if she had a correct answer. I realised that what she was highlighting as being true for her – her tension when offering correct answers, I had also seen in others when I had observed whole class questioning sessions.

It is almost as if these pupils are expecting their answers to somehow be inadequate or flawed, even though they felt confident enough of what they thought to put their hand up and offer an answer. Could it be that there is almost an anticipation that they could somehow be caught out? There had to be some reason for tension even when they should be secure in the knowledge that they had a good answer. If it wasn't merely Nicola's or other children's personalities that led to this tension, was it something about the way teachers question that created this state of affairs?

The following is an exchange between Kath and two children that perhaps starts to suggest what could be happening:

Kath   Can anyone think of a machine that glides in the house?
Child An iron
Kath   An iron. Good girl. I hadn't thought of that one. Can anyone think of another machine that glides? Katie?
Katie Hoover
Kath   A Hoover and that is the one we're going to look at today. She's hit the nail on the head there. She's got the one.

The first child has a correct answer. They could however feel it was an inferior answer because it wasn't the one Kath had in mind. Katie, who happened to come out

with the answer Kath wanted was celebrated more because it helped Kath move the lesson on in the direction she'd planned.

Kath is an excellent teacher and I would find it hard to believe that any teacher reading this hasn't responded the same as her at some time or another. I know I have. But nevertheless, the child who answered "iron" could easily have felt second-rate and deflated? Unfortunately, they were not in shot in the video recording of that lesson to see if anything in their expression suggested how they felt.

Several months before the interviews, I had spent some of my observation time with the class specifically watching pupil reactions in whole class teacher - pupil interactions. At that time, I was just looking to observe what happened rather than considering reasons or offering suggestions as to why. However, in the light of what Nicola had now said, I returned to that data and focused again on two typical classroom interactions I had noted at the time. These were that pupils could:

> 1. Offer an answer to a question and on hearing it, the teacher can just repeat it and perhaps say "Okay" or something equally noncommittal. The child knows that in some way the answer is flawed and looks crestfallen/ embarrassed/ confused.

> 2. A degree of anxiety is clearly present in many teacher - pupil interactions as when an ordinary question has been posed, the child offers an answer but prefaces it with " Is it...?" or " Do you mean...?" They look to clarify before committing to a possible wrong or half wrong answer. _This is so common that I have noted virtually every child doing it at some point_ although not necessarily in a whole class context.

Both these link in to this issue of tension surrounding even correct answers. The first one reminds me of the 'iron' answer – a very good answer, that certainly fulfilled the criteria of the question posed, but flawed because it didn't happen to be the subject of the poem that Kath wanted to move the lesson on to.

The second more directly echoes Nicola's statement about tension. Despite the pupil offering an answer, which, several children have told me rarely happens unless they feel reasonably certain that it is correct, they are prefacing it with " Is it...?" or " Do you mean...?". They still believe that somehow there is the possibility that the answer will be flawed – but for reasons that they apparently cannot guess. Perhaps even more

unsettling is that I had observed that: 'this is so common that I have noted virtually every child doing it at some point'.

That this happens and is common concerns me because it makes me wonder if, for the children, teacher questioning is rather like a game for which they do not have all the rules. They are required to participate unless they employ really quite sophisticated methods of removing themselves, yet even when they risk putting themselves on the spot to offer a correct or passable answer, they instinctively know or have learnt from experience that there is always the risk that their answer may yet be inadequate. The fact that this game is played out in front of peers, who sometimes seem only too ready to ridicule, makes it even worse.

The trouble is, playing a game like this for long is likely to result in frustration, irritation, and exasperation – possibly eventually leading to a conscious or unconscious withdrawal of the pupil's goodwill and continued willingness to participate. Could it be that as primary pupils grow up, this is one of the reasons for some becoming disaffected at school?

It seems reminiscent of Hammersley's examination of a secondary English lesson question when the teacher asked the children what a tall story is (Hammersley, 1977). The question, on the face of it, seemed a simple enough query. It was also a fairly typical teacher question in that the teacher knew the answer but the children it quickly transpired, did not. The teacher therefore, again typically in my experience of observation work, tried through different clues to assist the children to work out what it could be. So the children had to look for signs in the teacher's discourse but these clues/ signs only tended to be revealed as the lesson progressed. Woods (1990) tells of research in which both infants as well as older primary children have been observed looking for clues in the teachers' questions and even their faces in order to better guess what the right answer might be.

Hammersley makes the point that for the children to learn in situations like this, they are entirely dependent on the figure of authority, the teacher. To use the terminology I was employing earlier, they have to conform to the rules of the game the teacher is playing, conform to their choice of how to conduct the questioning time, if they (the

pupils) are to eventually offer a correct answer. Yet much is made of the educational ideal of helping children to become independent learners. A paradox.

9.19 Follow up to the interviews

The interviews with all thirty-two children left me with many other queries in my mind and I longed to explore some of the issues further. Roger, as one of the most able children in the class seemed an ideal candidate to look to explore some of the class answers more fully especially after a particular event after a morning spent at the local Parish church in May 2000 – some weeks after all the individual interviews had been completed

I have included the following extract at the start of this section as it covers my notes on the questioning session between Roger and Helen that is referred to at the start of the subsequent interview:

> Another intriguing exchange occurred, this time between Helen and Roger. On her asking the class to describe another part of the church, Roger put his hand up and offered " The golden eagle of the lectern". Helen queried "golden". Roger countered with the fact that it looked like a golden eagle. It is likely that the two were misconstruing "golden" – Roger referring to the breed of eagle being a golden as opposed to say, a bald headed eagle – Helen almost certainly thinking about colour. Although commonly painted gilt / gold, this particular lectern eagle was plain oak. The discussion between just the two of them actually extended into, I would estimate, at least a full minute, with several lengthy pauses – a very long time in front of the whole class. No one else became involved this time. Roger showed some signs of tension. He blinked more rapidly than usual for him but otherwise held Helen's eye contact steadily.

9.20 Interview with Roger and Pat

The field notes offering the full context of this incident may be read as Appendix 15. Here it seemed more appropriate to just quote part of what was said that is most pertinent to this chapter.

I had asked Roger if I could talk to him again as his was the most dramatic exchange in the brief question and answer session Helen had with the class after our return from church, just prior to lunchtime. I invited him to bring a friend of his choice and he asked if Patrick could join us.

I start the interview by reminding Roger of the discussion had in front of the class when he and Helen discuss the eagle on the lectern in the church. I asked Roger how he felt:

R. I didn't really mind ... (*becomes indistinct momentarily, due to the tape being damaged*)...
 ... I just thought it was a golden eagle.

We talked on and then I asked:

JA. Has anything been said today (*about the eagle*).

Both shake their heads.

We then all talked about the person of the teacher and whether they are nervous of teachers. Essentially they said not. I continued:

JA So it's interesting that the fears are still there.

R. I can still feel a bit nervous even though I know it's not going to happen, but ... you don't know what could be coming ahead of you.

This seems to emphasize the earlier point I made after the whole class interviews that teacher questioning, even if the person of the teacher is perceived as fair and the pupil knows the question being posed, it can still be a little scary for them.

The boys and I talked on and both told me reasons why they thought teachers ask questions - and seemed accepting of them as a way of life. They also told me that even if they make mistakes they thought they could learn from them and they could be a valuable learning tool. This idea I probed but the boys found it difficult to

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articulate further. What did come out clearly again though was the inhibiting effect of embarrassment.

What also inhibited them was if they thought an answer would take long to give:

P.   If you get the question, "Why do we live", it will take like forever, take like, two minutes to answer...

JA.   ... a long time to answer. Are you more or less likely to put your hand up if it's a long answer?

P.   Less likely.

JA.   But you do have some ideas – but you'd be more embarrassed giving ideas in front of everybody? Would you be happier perhaps if for a question like that the teacher was just sitting on a table with you?

P.   (nods) Yep.

R.   Yeah

JA.   (to Patrick) Yes, but in front of a big class? ... No?

P.   Cos sometimes you can get dizzy... sort of ... answering questions in front of everybody.... embarrassed.

JA.   You get dizzy?

We talked on and then:

JA.   So when you were very little, when you first came to school, did you work just on tables (as opposed to whole class)?

They nod agreement. We went on to discuss this and then:

P.   When we were little we gave perhaps three words for an answer and now they seem more than five words.

JA   ... I was asking about whether there are more teacher questions to the whole class now and you said "Yeah" and also that it's more complicated.

R.   ...(long pause) yeah, it's a bit more complicated than that.

JA.   But do you think there are?

R.   Hmmm (agrees).

JA.   If you can remember back to Year 1, 2 and 3 – you think the teacher asks you more questions now you're older?

P.   Yeah. (a whisper)

R   Hmmm.

JA.   And you think that helps your learning? (they nod/ agree). But did you prefer it in small group work?

Patrick starts to relate how they worked on tables in groups in Reception.

The two boys seemed to remember group work in their previous school years with affection although of course I cannot now be certain about exactly what type of group work it was. Without wishing to put words into their mouths, I have the impression that as much as anything it was the fact that the teacher would speak to them in smaller groups rather than in front of the whole class that seemed to be particularly well liked.

I have to admit to not being over fond of group work when I was teaching. To sum up my reasons briefly, I felt it often led to the remainder of the class spending too much time off task and feeling isolated from the teacher, afraid to approach to get help because she/ - he was working with another group. This I saw happen in the Year 3 class in the numeracy hour the previous year. However, from what the boys have said, it does seem that more group work would be beneficial for more sustained questioning of pupils and would possibly lead to them being braver and attempting fuller answers if they didn't have to risk the potential embarrassment of talking in front of all their peers.

Talking to these two boys also showed again that it was really very difficult to talk about teacher questioning per se. Yes, I had asked fairly straightforward questions of the class – and pursued some aspects of those questions in more depth with Pat and Roger. But even Roger, the most capable boy in the class academically, struggled to share more feelings about the topic partly because to say much more may have implied criticism of Helen as his current teacher but also I would suggest, because it was unfamiliar to him to reflect on something which was to his way of thinking, just a way of life? This is supposition but is perhaps backed up by the fact that he also found RE difficult to articulate thoughts about even though he and Pat confirmed that thinking was going on. So, had Roger and his peers been more used to talking about such matters, they may have been able to say far more.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

(T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets *'Little Gidding'* (1942) Part 5, p.59)

Chapter 10

Summary and conclusions

10.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, I outlined the research aims of this work as being centred on wanting to examine pupils' feelings under whole teacher questioning further to some small-scale work I'd undertaken with a Year 5 class.

Specifically, the questions I posed were:

- Does teacher questioning of pupils in front of their peers lead to an emotional response including anxiety, worry and fear as Holt suggested? (Holt 1964, 1982 revised)

- Are associated negative feelings, including embarrassment and shame, leading to the pupils employing coping strategies during times of whole class teacher questioning that could be adversely affecting their learning?

In order to answer these questions, I adopted an approach predominantly focused on the theory and methodology of symbolic interactionism. In this section, I firstly revisit that decision and consider how I could have done things differently.

I also return to the issue of the validity of the work and again ask if I could have adopted different methods of working that might have strengthened the validity of the findings.

I then summarise the analysis of the findings and, through the use of an imagined scenario, sum up what in essence it seemed that the majority of the pupils were describing as being their reality at times of teacher questioning.

From this I return to the original research questions to suggest some overall conclusions before proposing how this work has offered an original contribution to knowledge.

10.2 Symbolic interactionism – a valid paradigm for this study?

Early criticisms of symbolic interactionism tended to focus on the work of Mead, and specifically the varying definitions of self (Meltzer, Petra and Reynolds, 1975a). There are various critics of the paradigm working outside it but Meltzer et al sum up the main arguments from those within the methodology. They contend that there are indeed issues concerning the definition of 'self', and that in addition there are some methodological problems with the paradigm. Of the issue of self, Meltzer et al argue that many symbolic interactionists do have a personal definition of self although there is "no general consensus" (1975a, p. 94).

Criticisms have also centred on the suggestion that symbolic interactionism has neglected affective/ unconscious components of human behaviour including emotions – although on this, Meltzer et al argue that emotions are dealt with though more by the early rather than later symbolic interactionists (Meltzer et al, 1975a). However, as I have shown in chapter 1, more recently scholars have again turned attention to the issue of the emotions as symbolic interactionism as a paradigm has further developed in the last decades. This is perhaps most apparent through the advent of the work on ACT.

In terms of criticism of the methodology, it has been said that symbolic interactionists focus on the most basic technique, participant observation. " a method that does not allow for much systematic exposition" (Meltzer et al, p. 96) being " difficult to spell out … or teach or pass on to one's students. Also, it has been said that it is difficult to report accurately because " typically it takes a long time to complete" (op. cit .p. 96). However, despite these difficulties, participant observation is used because symbolic interactionists believe it " will ultimately provide a far more realistic picture of human conduct" (op. cit .p 96). As outlined earlier, I felt it provided me with my best opportunity to work with the Year 4 children at the time, given my relationship with their teacher and with my only recently having left full time teaching myself.

Rock notes in defence of symbolic interactionism overall that it is humble in its aims, saying that this is a significant principle about it other schools of thought have misunderstood. " It merely tries to cast some light on those tracts of sociation which might yield some tenable knowledge" (Rock, 1979, p.231) but he says, " the modesty of interactionist achievements has encouraged many to grow impatient of the sociology" (op. cit. p. 232). He continues:

> By remaining close to an analysis of the observable, it has accomplished two seemingly opposed results: firstly, it has preserved the puzzling and internally warring character of explanation... it stays muddled. Secondly, it has evolved a number of practical and expedient solutions to the problems that are raised by empirical investigation. The sociology comes into its own in the ethnographic setting (Rock, 1979,p. 234).

Rock concludes that, " the sociology will never be capable of furnishing definitive analyses of human conduct" (Rock, 1979, p.235) but he suggests in conclusion that interactionists should maintain their traditions... persist as ethnographers and detailed analysts suggesting that other sociologists would be " bankrupt without it" (Rock, 1979, p. 235).

Symbolic interactionism may therefore have its limitations, but has much to offer and remains in my view an entirely appropriate theoretical framework for the research questions this work sought to address because it provided a theoretical frame for my thinking and methodology that suited the research questions and in particular the focus on emotions well. There would have been other ways I could have researched but I remain confident that this way of working was at least as valid as any other. I suspect that any problems with validity relating to this study are more due to this researcher's inexperience / naivity at the time of the work, than problems inherent within symbolic interactionism.

10.3 What I could do differently in future work within symbolic interactionism?

A very different way of working would have been for me to use ACT in order to better understand children's feelings, for ACT's predictions about emotions in various situations have been shown to match well the predictions of real people who imagine themselves in those situations. Thus ACT captures valuable aspects of how cultural knowledge about emotionality is accepted in cultural feelings about people and

actions. Since cultural knowledge about emotions is used to evoke and rehearse imagined emotional scenes – and to verbally adjust emotionality in ongoing interactions, ACT can add to understanding people's multifaceted yet subtle interpersonal negotiations about emotions.

Additionally, the ACT model can point to how emotion reflects not only the impression that is produced of someone, but also how the impression compares to the person's identity (Averett and Heise, 1987).

As I understand it, ACT and Interact, the linked software programme, offer researchers new ways to understand the meaning of interpersonal actions and emotional expressions, thus improving understanding of how individual minds link emotions to social scenes and of what people are doing as they construct and control their own and others' emotional experiences.

10.4 Validity and further alternate ways of working

The children in this study seemed to be at least as concerned with the presence of peers as of that of the teacher. Anecdotal evidence from adults talked to about their own experience of being pupils suggested that peers certainly caused as much concern as the teachers for them too. There does seem to me to be an internal validity about this. The typical primary school teacher is with you only one academic year whereas peers could be with you for many, and in some cases, much of your school life. They are of course also with you well beyond the lessons in a classroom; playtimes, after school activities and other occasions such as birthday parties, cubs and brownies, musical activities and sports. Also, as I suggest in the previous chapter, teachers in the nineties are arguably kinder and more concerned to be supportive than might have been the case in the past and therefore pose less of a threat than pupil peers may do.

Effective teachers will create a good learning environment that is as fear free as possible. Again then, should we be surprised if children respond by feeling comfortable and essentially relaxed with the person of the teacher whereas they might still have concern about how they look in front of peers?

Given this question, further work could have researchers asking more direct questions such as asking how the children view the relationship between the researcher and teacher. This could further illuminate this point and strengthen the validity of the conclusion that the person of the teacher is relatively unimportant in terms of creating anxiety. For example, knowing that Helen and I knew each other, did the pupils trust me to keep their confidences in interviews? Did they think I was going to talk to the teacher about anything they said about her had they stated anything negative about her? It was something I could have asked directly.

Perhaps most differently, a future researcher could distance themselves from the teacher and the pupils by observing only and working in classrooms where they were not known. However, with an issue such as emotion and anxiety in particular I remain uncertain as to whether pupils would feel they wanted to share their feelings with a stranger working in that way.

Another form of research could invite the children to keep pupil diaries, perhaps asking them to focus on events and feelings in times of teacher questioning. Parents could in addition be asked their views about their children's experience of teacher questioning, inviting them to discuss it with their children outside the school setting.

There would be many other ways too that the research design could have been framed - and building on the understandings gained through this work, in future work I would seek to adopt more alternate ways of gathering data, ideally using more than one researcher and more schools and classes across the age range.

10.5 Summary of findings and what teacher questioning feels like

I therefore do not claim that this work is without its flaws; far from it. Nevertheless, data was collected and the findings suggest certain things about whole class teacher questioning. As the one observing and talking one to one to the children I believe that despite everything, they were demonstrating and / or saying something about the reality of whole class teacher questioning that should cause some unease.

To summarise by returning to the principles of symbolic interactionism that I specifically sought to identify as outlined in chapter 1, I first come again to Mead. I discussed Mead's focus on language as symbolic symbols and sought to look beneath the apparently obvious meanings of language used by the pupil participants in class and to me – to attempt to convey the complexity of what they might mean, their own definitions, and how it might relate to their feelings. This I did in the various conversations with the children, but especially in the interviews. It was also important in the class lessons with Chris and Sam that meanings behind the vocabulary used were unpacked and shared understandings were reached. Also, how the pupils might be using language to manage and change their social setting was explored in particular in the vignettes of anxiety written about in chapter 5 and I found some evidence of quite sophisticated strategies being employed.

I also sought to identify how the pupils would respond to all classroom participants (child and adult) depending on the meanings they attached to other's actions and to therefore try to interpret such meanings (Blumer) as they may be creating for themselves. Something of the meanings became apparent through observation work which led to some discussion in interviews. It was obvious that sometimes meanings were being misinterpreted often causing quite strong emotional reactions.

Most of the children were seeing each other as in Cooley's looking glass, reflecting back to themselves their peers and others' judgements of them. It is more difficult to know what was the case for those for whom their peers and teachers were not of selective interest. For the majority though, feelings experienced included embarrassment, anxiety and pride but of course the children could be mistaken in their interpretations and the resulting emotions / feelings were not necessarily appropriate.

That there was evidence of an inner dialogue happening between the I and me (Mead) of each child was suggested by some of the chapter 5 vignettes as well as implied through some conversations with some pupils. This though was more difficult to observe and could only really be seen through the resulting change of behaviour, such as in the case of Alex and Suzanne. With Suzanne, I suggest we have an example that this might be negotiated through discussion with the child, as both Priya and myself suggested alternate readings of events.

Many coping strategies or mechanisms (Everett, Pollard et al) were being employed. The most obvious were signs of disengagement and seeking to become invisible: keeping a low profile. These were apparent in the chapter 5 examples given in particular.

Although not a true longitudinal study, nevertheless I was with the main research class for long enough to see some evidence of change in identity over time with the emphasis on emergent, continually constructed, changing and negotiated roles. Examples were again Alex, Julia and Jane, especially obvious through her talk in the church, amongst others.

Where role taking occurred, I saw it as most obvious when it was empathic (Shott) and examples have been noted throughout the earlier chapters.

Evidence of change of status leading to emotions including anxiety (Kemper) were numerous and perhaps behind the main or most common causes of anxiety present in the classroom. Examples were seen in the chapter 5 vignettes with others alluded to in the interviews.

There were also numerous scenes where there was evidence of embarrassment (Goffman) as well as undifferentiated and bypassed shame (Scheff, Block Lewis). Priya and Ann as described in chapter 4, as well as incidents outlined in chapter 5 illustrate that it was a common result of questioning events.

Overall, through the impact of the social setting of the classroom at times of whole class teacher questioning, the learning selves the pupils seem to be constructing for themselves were often sophisticated and complex although sometimes not what I judged accurate. By this I mean that my observation sometimes led me to put a different interpretation on meanings than the pupils.

As a result of the summary of the main findings above, I thought it would be useful to outline next what a time of teacher questioning seems to be like for the average Year

4 pupil. This has been constructed from the interview data as presented in the previous chapters, as well as what I have observed.

I propose that we imagine ourselves 8 / 9 years of age again and put ourselves in their shoes. We may find ourselves remembering our own primary school days too because I suggest that what these pupils are saying will have a certain resonance as I put forward what they have said school is like for them.

As we come in from playtime with our friends, we'll almost certainly separate and go to sit on different tables. We'll probably get on well enough with most of the peers on that table but our best friend (s) will be sitting somewhere else.

We'll have had to think about which subject is timetabled now as that will affect where we sit. If we are an average pupil, it's likely that we'll have one place for maths and another for english. Thinking about the next lesson will now be setting up certain expectations in our minds about how well we'll do and how much we'll choose or be able to participate in the teacher questioning of the class.

As the teacher begins the lesson with the usual whole class questioning, it is likely that we'll be fairly focused but may be feeling tense. Although a couple of pupils said that they enjoy the challenge of lessons they find hard, if we are an average child, we'll be less positive about it, probably just looking to get through this part of the lesson without losing face in front of the others.

As an average pupil, we will attempt some answers by raising our hand. Usually, others will be asked to answer and that may create feelings of disappointment or even sadness in us. From time to time though, we will be asked to answer a question in front of the class.

As the teacher says our name, pupils roundabout will look over and at us. We are now the focus of attention. Some may make a face. One or two may be encouraging. We won't look directly at the others. We'll look at the teacher and answer with some trepidation perhaps because, even though we're fairly certain our answer is a good or correct response, it may in some way be flawed.

If the answer was not quite what the teacher wanted, the teacher doesn't say we're wrong, but we may feel rather let down anyway. We'll probably look down and feel that the pupils around us are looking at us again and perhaps even saying things or making more faces at us.

If however the answer was correct, and the teacher seems really pleased with it, we'll feel satisfied, at least momentarily - although there is always the risk that someone else will now give a better answer. Those around us may be pleased for us but more likely we'll be aware of any that think we shouldn't have answered and may speak of us negatively.

And so the teacher questioning session continues until we are set an individual learning task or work in groups.

How did I arrive at this particular view of going to a lesson? Because virtually every child I questioned admitted to experiencing some sense of being ill at ease during times of whole class teacher questioning. They implied or said that the response of the teacher is fairly unimportant. The reaction of peers, especially significant peers in relation to that child, mattered more. They also said that although the subject of the lesson is also *relatively* unimportant, all subjects seemed to carry some risk.

If the child I spoke to was particularly capable or amongst the least able academically, the risk of losing face in front of peers remained similar - although the reason for it may differ. But for the average child, the risks were perhaps greatest. As was shown in Chapter 9, the average child – by far the majority of the pupils spoken to – seemed to feel most anxious. In this study gender did not arise as an issue of any real significance. I suggest that all the children experienced varying degrees of anxiety about the possibility of losing face / being skitted by peers. The learning identity they had created to date, attitude to school in general and their status within the class were three key areas that seemed to emerge as being important factors in how much this mattered to each of them.

10. 6 The problem with questioning in front of an audience

As Covington and Beery put it (1976, p.6), in a society like ours, "a primary determinant of one's status is the ability to perform". They go on to state that children as young as five " …can already identify the brightest and dullest among their peers" (op. cit. p.6). Thus personal identity, especially in terms of learning, is threatened by a failure to perform, especially in front of an audience of peers. And there is little doubt that children aged from 7- 9 as the children in Years 3 and 4 who were worked with for this research, know all about it! When teachers ask children to do things in front of their peers, there is the possibility of success but also the risk of failure and loss of face or status.

Earlier in this thesis I outlined just three of many incidents I had witnessed where children – the examples given were Priya, Alex and Ann - were asked to do something by teachers that put that pupil's status at risk. Even more commonly, teachers ask children questions in ordinary everyday lessons that can be answered correctly or otherwise in front of the children's peers. But again there is the continual risk of changed status for the children concerned. Because answering questions in class is about more than merely "correctly responding to a teacher's question" (Jackson, 1968, p.23). Being commended for a correct answer sees the pupil " being praised, albeit indirectly, for knowing something, for having done what the teacher told him to do, for being a good listener, a co-operative group member, and so on" (Jackson, 1968, p.24). And so to some extent the opposite must also be true.

> all too often, research tries to find out if people are 'anxious', then studies relationships between the trait and other traits or performances; but as educators we should be more concerned as to what people do when feeling anxious (Sutherland, 1983, p61).

Even being conservative about the results, this study suggests that in terms of the research questions, there does seem to be evidence that teacher questioning of pupils in front of their peers leads to an emotional response that may include anxiety, worry and fear as Holt suggested (Holt 1964, 1982 revised) and that associated negative feelings, including embarrassment and shame are leading to the pupils employing coping strategies during times of whole class teacher questioning that could adversely affecting their learning. To me as an educationalist who believes that good learning is facilitated by effective classroom interaction, especially that found during times of well crafted teacher questioning, it was disturbing that such a number of pupils indicated that their means of coping was by choosing not to venture out of their comfort zone more than necessary. Thus they allowed fear to virtually silence them in some whole class encounters.

Therefore, yes it must matter. Children vary in their rate of development and maturity but even at Year 4 are likely to have fewer capabilities for keeping a rational perspective on events than adults. Hence, anxiety and /or embarrassment may seem far more devastating to them than the mere uncomfortable feeling it may more usually be for adults. It is not pleasant for anyone at any age, but an adult is likely to have more means at their disposal to cope.

Am I overstating the case? Even the most mature pupils such as Priya proved to need help from adults. For example at the Fayre, she ran out of her own resources when dealing with the Year 6 girls over change and had to ask for help.

However, although they may not yet have developed the ability to always take a mature perspective on events in general, pupils are by this age nevertheless very competent in hiding feelings and hurt effectively – the hidden shame of Scheff

(1988). Hence it is easy to overlook or underestimate how they may feel. I would suggest that it may be common after an incident where it is felt that they have lost face in front of peers for a child to focus wholly on what happened for much of the remaining school day - perhaps indeed hidden from those around, but impacting on their ability to learn as they are distracted and feeling emotionally hurt.

Despite this I do not see this research as undermining the peer literature that has highlighted the value of effective peer relationships in children's learning.
Piaget saw the potential in peer interaction for helping children develop from egocentric (and unable to appreciate another's point of view) to the more developed decentred position. The suggestion was that this was because peer relationships offered more symmetrical relationships than say that of the child with a parent or teacher. Light and Littleton explain that more recent work has further suggested that peer facilitation " could have rather dramatic effects on children's cognitive development" (1994, p.93). Some of these studies suggested that sociocognitive conflict or at least argument and "disagreement may be a necessary condition for progress in peer interaction situations" (op. cit. p.96).

However as Light and Littleton also remind us, Vygotsky's work suggested that collaborative rather than conflictional processes (op. cit. p.98), might be the ideal. Vygotsky saw "the 'higher mental functions' (reflections, thinking, reasoning etc.) not as products of individual development but as resulting from the internalization of initially social processes" (op. cit. p.98). The pupil comes to an understanding of the world through interaction with others. As Mead (1934) said, language is especially important in this – so highlighting again that we surely should be concerned if we can't at the most simple level provide the conditions for children to readily talk together and in front of one another in class at times of teacher questions.

An inescapable conclusion from my data was that many children seemed to feel a sense of concern regarding the presence of peers – hence the jibes about 'let someone else have a go' / 'You always put your hand up'. Although this to some degree appears to weaken the findings of much of the other literature on peer culture in schools that has tended to emphasise the positive nature of peer interaction, I argue this is only in terms of occasions of whole class teacher questioning.

Just how much is each one looking out for themselves and how much there may yet be a spirit of co-operation I am unable to specify outside such teacher questioning events. With the new levels of attainment children are expected to reach at certain ages, how much has a sense of competition between children been heightened? I observed a lot of watchfulness amongst pupils about the attention other pupils may get – from the teacher as well as other pupils too. It seems reasonable to suggest that it may detract from learning? Observation has shown me that it certainly meant they were often off task.

However, I would like to posit that the supportive role of peers and the negative role this research suggest they can also have, as pupils risk a negative judgement arising from poor or inappropriate performance in times of teacher questioning, can and do co exist. The existence of one does not mean that the other cannot also be present. It may seem a paradox, but the children, as I would suggest people do in general, are quite capable of such complex relationships where they can often work supportively with one another, but can just as readily undermine each other, especially when their own status seems to be at risk.

10.8 The impact of the NLS and NNS

Initially at least, the NLS and NNS have probably made the situation more complex. The additional time constraints and fast quick fire type of questioning I suspect has led children to an increased belief that the only valuable answers are right answers. There would seem to be little understanding or appreciation amongst the pupils of the value of brainstorming and discussion and the value of process. Things are generally right or wrong – at least to children of this age.

Eric Hall states that social and emotional development such as taught under the umbrella of PSE (Personal and Social Education) is only given low stature within the National Curriculum (Hall, 1994). Under the NLS and NNS, I would suggest that it is still given low status and that the lack of attention to this area will insinuate itself to pupils so that they may learn to consider that reflecting on their own feelings as well as those of others is relatively unimportant.

Yet children are being brought up in a culture that seems to increasingly depend on the sound bite, when only a few seconds are available to make a point or impression. The ability to speak clearly and coherently, marshalling thoughts with ease and lucidity has possibly never been so important. But due to all that I have outlined above, many children may be at risk of rarely practising the sort of talk that will lead to their acquiring such effective communication skills.

There is a lot at stake. Children are at least partially constructing their identities through their intercommunication with peers, teachers and others in school. Whatever the other influences, school is likely to profoundly affect children's perception of themselves as they interact, perhaps for the first time for any length of time, with adults and children other than their family. The ability to talk clearly, expressing ideas and responding to questions and queries should help them develop confidence and self esteem. It needs to be remembered at this point that I am not arguing about an issue of their being a loud or quiet child. Vociferous, thoughtless chatter is likely to irritate both peers and teachers alike and does nothing to enhance reputation although the degree to which the child concerned is aware of the effect of their behaviour will inevitably affect the impact on their ego. The quiet but thoughtful speaker who, on the occasions they do choose to speak, says something of significance is unlikely to suffer for being labeled quiet. Roger is a good example of this; highly regarded by his peers yet definitely a quiet child.

But what if a child is suffering in silence, has half formed or uncertain ideas they'd like to express but is always too slow to speak up in class, always beaten to it by a more vocal peer. If they are never really encouraged to speak out in a non-threatening atmosphere, is there not the possibility of their eventually giving up and descending into total silence in the whole class questioning time? Rowland speaks of the value of "fostering a 'conversational' relationship",...enabling "them (the pupils) to reflect upon their activity, by presenting them with new ideas, alternative perspectives (.. on their work in this case).. and by setting up a dialogue", (Rowland 1984, p.148).

Children need to develop better thinking and speaking skills in group situations. Despite the renewed emphasis on speaking and listening begun in the Nineties with

the advent of the National Curriculum, someone as bright as Suzanne had nevertheless still not learnt that others vie for the teachers attention and she can't always be given time to speak in class. Of concern too is the finding that some children can still seem surprised that an adult may have an interest in their point of view (as stated in chapter 9). To address both these issues, additional time would need to be carved out of the current curriculum specifically to not only further promote good listening, thinking and speaking skills but to perhaps link them even more clearly with value and respect for one another. The teachers are trying to achieve this for their pupils. As was apparent in the conversations with Kath and Helen in chapter 7, they are aware that teacher questioning can be a difficult time for children as they risk their status. Hence the teachers, amongst other strategies they employ, try to never say 'No' to a child, always seeking to encourage, support and scaffold their learning as they hear and respond to the pupil answers. But with the pressures the teachers themselves are under to complete the NLS and NNS hours each day, they can find enough time to do this effectively very difficult to create.

10. 9 Original Contribution to Knowledge

We are perplexed for life, but pupils have reasons for special perplexity...They are especially subject to ...changes and transformational episodes, over which they have little control...
Through this maze of activity and encounters pupils negotiate their way,... discovering and inventing strategies of infinite number and complexity.

(Woods, 1990, p.156)

Although Woods in the above reference is talking about the pupil career overall, do we really want children negotiating and inventing strategies when it comes to whole class teacher questioning when they clearly have enough of it to do in other aspects of their school life? It was something Holt (1982) was aware children were doing and I have already argued that it would seem at the very least to be distracting them from a lesson's learning objectives.

To return again to the original questions I posed in order to situate this research in the literature, what lies at the heart of this study is the desire to have a better understanding of one particular aspect of pupil's school days over which they "have little control" but nevertheless have learnt to negotiate (Woods, 1990, p.156), that of whole class teacher questioning. I wanted to see if what John Holt found some thirty or so years ago about children's feelings at times of questioning is still true of children nowadays and if so, highlight the existence of this anxiety as something that we should at least be more fully aware of.

In this respect, I wanted to follow in the tradition and further contribute to the literature of those who have led the way in helping us understand so much about what life is like for children in school. People who have influenced my thinking such as Davies (1982), Jackson (1968) Pollard (1985, 1987) and Woods (1990, 1995) amongst many others, who have shown us much of what it is to be a school pupil.

Teacher questioning has always been an important topic in ITT (Initial Teacher Training) with many books - from Austin (1949) to more recent authors such as Ted Wragg (1993, 2002) offering practical help for the trainee. With the advent of the NNS and NLS, the quest for effective teacher questioning is probably as strong as it

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has ever been. Issues around its value remain a frequent topic in research and papers, an interest reflected in the media too.

But much less has focused on the possible drawbacks of questioning and very little has specifically focused on the emotional effect that may be generated by teacher questioning as a result of the need to be actively constructing a learner identity whilst still being accepted by a peer group. One contribution of this study is to address this. By exploring something of the presence and generation of anxiety in the context of pupil peer relationships, it will also add to the literature on the significance of peer relations in that the data generated supports the contention that peer relationships are the most important relationships for children in school (Meyenn, 1980, p.108; Woods, 1983, p.96).

That it has already begun to contribute to these debates is illustrated by it being cited in an article in the Times Educational Supplement (Hastings, TES Friday 4 July 2003). In an article entitled "Questioning", Hastings referred to an early paper (Anderson, 2000) of my preliminary findings and the fact that it "revealed that primary school children often find questioning in class to be stressful and a cause of anxiety". Although this statement was not entirely accurate, it did demonstrate that whole class teacher questioning may not be as unproblematic as some literature can suggest.

I have shown that in a small number of classrooms at least, anxiety affected most pupils to some degree. However, although it may be uncomfortable or unpleasant for the children, does it have any real long term impact on their life in school?

As referred to briefly earlier, a common effect observed was disengagement (Anderson and Boylan, 2000). Often this may only have meant a temporary lack of attention to the ongoing classroom interactions. In more extreme cases, for example where a mistake has been made publicly, the pupils' behaviour suggested that the anxiety remained for some time and the pupils' attention was focussed on the

interaction that caused it so that they were no longer engaged in the lesson. They may also be discouraged by the interaction and withdraw from further participation.

So does it matter? There is a "growing concern" that SATs tests at both Key stage 1 and 2, put much pressure on both children and schools, leading to pupil stress (Morris, 2002). If in addition, they experience what seems likely to be daily anxiety about answering teacher questions and this is linked to pupils' status and impacts on their learning identity in relation to their peers, it seems that there may be reason for disquiet. In a recent study following children through their primary years, Pollard and Triggs state that:

> Pupil performance has become more high stakes and more overt ... The consequence of this is likely to be a growth in polarisation ... Thus those who succeed choose to socialise with each other, and those who do less well, seek to preserve their dignity by discarding any learning ambitions they may have once held, and join forces with others in the same position.
>
> (Pollard and Triggs, 2000, p.277).

I have now found the experience of emotional responses to teacher questioning, especially negative responses, to be prevalent amongst pupils in the small number of classrooms I have been able to study. In addition to other factors relating to pupil performance generally, could it be that current questioning trends risk, at the very least, of leading to more stressful pupils? Could it at worst be risking leading us to an increased number of disaffected pupils in our primary schools and their joining forces in emotionally opting out? If so, it could mean that long term, negative feelings under teacher questioning could have a very detrimental effect overall.

With reference to the objective of trying to teach so that individual students can all realise their full potential, Covington and Beery write that " being aware of a problem and willing to work to create change brings solutions that much closer" (Covington and Beery, 1976, p.146).

I do not offer definitive solutions as such from this work but cannot agree with Dillon and "recommend against questioning by the teacher." (Dillon,1994, p.78). I believe

that whole class teacher questioning still can be a valuable tool. One answer may be more questioning of pupils within groups as implied in the interview with Roger and Pat - and more one on one conversation between children and adults. What I can conclude with certainty is that we should at least be aware that it seems very likely that whole class questioning is not without problems and should be used perhaps more cautiously and thoughtfully than may sometimes be the case. Then perhaps teachers in subsequent years will not see the pupils' tense expression that Holt (1982) witnessed in his primary classroom when questioning them, not because teachers are unaware and not watching for it but because different teaching practices have led to a lessening of negative emotional reactions, including anxiety, for their pupils.

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The National Literacy Strategy - Framework for Teaching (2 / 98)

The National Numeracy Strategy - Framework for Teaching Mathematics (3 / 99)

Literacy and Numeracy National Project - Mathematical Vocabulary, published by National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy, Reading

Appendix 1

Letter to Head teachers

confirming the arrangements agreed verbally with reference to my working in their schools

Dear....

May I formally thank you again for your interest and willingness to allow me to undertake research within your school. I am writing this in case there is no real opportunity to speak with you today so please forgive any repetition!

Please find enclosed an 'Ethical Code'. It has been drawn up with a view to offering the security to all participants that their involvement will be treated confidentially at all times.

I would hope that my coming to the school could be beneficial overall. To (*name of class teacher)* I hope I will prove to be a useful additional pair of hands, particularly in the first instance when I am looking to get to know the pupils.

For the children, I would hope to be useful as another adult 'helper' in their class and in time, someone they may enjoy discussing aspects of classroom life with. I would hope that I could make it stimulating and fun for them, particularly if in the Spring/ Summer terms we might look at video footage together as a means of initiating discussion.

For the staff as a whole, I would like to offer to give a short presentation of my findings, perhaps as part of a staff meeting. For reasons of confidentiality, this could only be in general terms, covering the data collected across the three schools, but I trust it would be of interest.

An aim of mine for the later stages of the research is to find a small number of pupils from across the three participating schools that would be willing to be subjects of small 'case studies'. The purpose of these would be to provide more detailed data. It may be appropriate for parents of these children to be invited to hear more about the work I am doing and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further should there be pupils within your school who would be suitable subjects for this.

In the meantime, I remember your saying that you would want to inform the parents in general anyway. If I could be of assistance at all, I trust you will not hesitate to contact me. I am keen not to burden you unnecessarily but would be happy to return to the school to help or to meet with you specifically should you wish to discuss this or any other issue relating to the project.

I fully understand that you have no obligation to the research but hope that I will be able to complete the academic year alongside (*name of class teacher)*. I am looking forward to the work and shall certainly do everything I can to make it an interesting and useful exercise for everyone.

Appendix 2

Ethical code for research in schools Sept. 1999 - July 2000.

Aim of the Research work within Schools

To monitor the incidence of stress, if any, experienced by Junior pupils in every day classroom interactions. It is proposed to focus on the pupil responses to teacher questioning. The literacy and numeracy hours will also be a particular focus.

Principles underpinning the research work

1. That nothing will be undertaken that is likely to be distressing or harmful to any of the participants.

2. Confidentiality will be maintained and data will not be released to third parties except with the prior permission of the participants involved. *

3. It is recognised that the researcher will need to collect data and keep records. A range of media will be used to record data as unobtrusively as possible. This will be confidential to the researcher who will make analytical judgements based on this data.

4. For the purposes of completing a thesis and possible publication of some of the findings, the researcher will ensure that through appropriate changes, the identity of the participants will be protected.

* In the unlikely circumstance that the researcher becomes aware of a situation that is felt to be potentially damaging to a pupil, the researcher will encourage the person who had provided the information to act. Should that be unsuccessful, for whatever reason, then the principle of confidentiality may need to be broken."

Marlborough Community School - Year 4 - general field notes for the 4. 10. 99

Cold but sunny day - wore black skirt, cream blouse and grey cardigan. Too hot! Heating has been switched on unexpectedly in school. Workmen outside laying cable so school can be connected to the Internet. Noisy.

Arrived at assembly and joined in with the class when began to do individual work. Maths subtraction. Many had problems with carrying tens and Helen and I had long chat about her problems with them not being taught to subtract in Year 3, later in the day.

There was just a short literacy time today, grouped around the Dick King Smith story of a loveable old lady witch. There was an odd incident with Warren and Rachel. Warren ended up tearful, not seemingly for attention as some of his past actions have appeared. Still don't know exactly how it started!

All the class were grouped on the floor and on tables and chairs to see the storybook perched on the white board in the opening of the classroom into the corridor. As usual, I positioned myself to one side but so that I could also see the storybook, I was virtually sitting in with the pupils. Elizabeth nudged me and looked towards Warren who was crying quietly and discretely. I decided not to interrupt the lesson and so made eye contact and mouthed "OK?" to both Warren and Emma with the intention of indicating that I knew something was up and we'd sort it later. However, someone else, seeing Warren, called out to Helen, " Warren's crying". It seemed that all the rest of the class looked towards Warren. Helen looked to me questioningly. I shrugged and shook my head hoping to indicate that I didn't know any more about it than she did. Helen asked Warren what was wrong and he replied quietly, averting his eyes: "Nothing". She persevered by then questioning Rachel, sat beside Warren but she said she didn't know. However, she was not believed by either adult. She had a defiant type of look on her face.

Helen looked back to me and I understood that it would be left for now. I nodded; it was the right course of action if Rachel is involved. Helen returned to the lesson and most of the class focused back on the whiteboard.

As I looked back around to Warren, I witnessed a surprising moment. Elizabeth, seated between us but slightly behind, looked up at him (she is tiny) and gave him a broad and what looked to me like an understanding smile. Even more surprising was his response that was to give her a very warm if watery smile back. I have never observed these two exchanging any words together and they didn't now, just the look.

When the class dispersed and started returning to tables ready for the follow up activity, both Helen and I watched Rachel and Warren. She seemed to be trying to be conciliatory, making amends? However, he shrugged her off and looked downcast.

The work was on Powerful verbs - the class taking 5 or 6 verbs - said, cook, move etc. and having to find 5 or 6 verbs to go with them, i.e. say/ said had muttered, whispered etc. They ran out of time but will be creating card flowers, the petals having their new

words circling the root word at the centre. I supported several groups and it afforded some time to chat informally. Useful.

After lunch, spent looking over work ready to teach next Wed when I Supply cover the class for a day, Helen took the class for Science. They recapped on the previous lesson and they wrote up their experiment (bean seeds in a cup with water, light and a blue paper towel). The end of the afternoon was tests - spelling and tables, differentiated into 4 groups.

For the first time, I was seen writing (mostly names on a class seating plan) and this intrigued / bothered some nearby - certainly didn't go unnoticed. I did not have opportunity to explain why.

After school Helen and I caught up on class and school news.

Appendix 4

Year 4 Pupil profile – Marlborough Community School

Alex. - 27.9.99 - Came with me and three others to do maths measuring with scales work outside in the corridor working space. Very quiet, kept work hidden from other pupils - allowed me to look at his estimates when I asked. Back in class, talked quietly once to me about an Alsatian dog he knew - relevant because the work was about linking a suitable dog with an owner using the written clues provided by Helen. Quite animated for Alex but only for less than a minute in total.

4.10.99 - Looking across I saw him smile conspiratorially with Patrick when some papers slipped off Helen's desk and landed on the floor between them. No one else showed any sign of having noticed. He didn't see me watching because of the angle I was sitting. He smiled to himself and then again with Pat on and off twice- neither looked to Helen to share the joke or even see if she noticed - she hadn't.

Otherwise, sadly like blood out of a stone when it came to working with him and Paul later on powerful verbs - Paul leaning across to answer when Alex said nothing. Watching him, he really looks out of it for much of class time. Went in and out several times to get a book to read with Mrs. D. - didn't seem embarrassed despite disturbing Helen and the class waiting to do literacy around the white board in the corridor. Was he aware that everyone was waiting for him to get settled? He showed no sign.

6.10.99. - Very bothered by my asking him how he would start his writing on the newspaper re: the Mary Rose. Looking down as usual but also looked quite distressed, an odd expression, so I moved on to help someone else. Discussed it with Helen afterwards and she felt it likely that he was finding that particular piece of work overwhelming and just didn't know what to say to me. Otherwise, extraordinary vacant expression all day really, even more obvious than usual. The story the Head, Kath, has told Helen is that there is violence in the home – the mother being beaten by the father. Apparently, when attempts were made to help
(bringing in relevant agencies), the allegation was then denied although it was the Head herself the mother had told.

Alex does seem unusually withdrawn - afraid of adults generally? There are only two men working in school (Yr. 3 teacher and the caretaker) - I haven't had chance to observe him with either on a one to one.

11.10.99 - Helen asked me to support the four of them for the literacy work. Alex didn't look up but was diligent about putting lines (with a ruler) through the words when as a group most of us agreed on where they were. Paul was having a better day after the calling out etc. last week. He was really kind to Alex although Alex didn't say a word to him for the whole session. All the children just seem to accept Alex as he is. I've seen no pressure being put on him by them at all. Some of the morning he was out again having one on one support for his reading. I've chatted several times with Mrs. D. now and must ask her how Alex is with her.

13.10.99 did work more happily with me and wrote a story on dinosaurs when I got him started. Had excellent joke with Helen doing his target about talking more!

Appendix 5
Letter to parents of Year 4 pupils

Were I doing this work again, I would ensure a more proactive approach was taken in writing to parents, with the letter including a reply slip to ensure it had been read and that the parents had actively agreed to their child participating in my study.

Dear Parents,

As you may be aware, I have been visiting the school regularly since September to work with Miss Smith and the Year 4 pupils.

After some nine years as a classroom teacher, I have moved into educational research and am currently working with Sheffield Hallam University.

This term, with your agreement, I would like to invite the Year 4 pupils to discuss aspects of their classroom experience with me. I propose to use a small camcorder and audio equipment to record the children both in class and in conversation with myself. It will in no way interfere with their schoolwork; any follow up discussions taking place in break and lunch periods.

This is entirely voluntary but it would be hoped that it would be an experience that would benefit the children. It will be an opportunity for them to reflect on issues not usually covered in the curriculum and further develop their speaking and listening skills, both together and with another adult.

The conversations will be treated as confidential. I will only share aspects of what is said with colleagues at the university as necessary. If some of the work is published in the future, I will ensure that the names of both the school and the pupils will be changed to protect their anonymity.

Should you be interested in discussing the project in more detail, I will be happy to meet you and answer any questions. Otherwise, I trust that you will have no objections to my asking your child to participate.

Thank you in anticipation of your help,

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Julie Anderson
B.A. (Hons.), P.G.C.E., M.A. (Education).

Appendix 6

The School Trip

<u>Rebecca Daniels – Year 4 pupil</u>

We are all late getting up again this morning. The baby was crying in the night and I heard mum go in to him and I guess give him a bottle and that. There isn't any time for breakfast. I get some juice from the fridge but the carton is stupid and I spill it, which makes mum a bit cross and upset at the mess.

Mum lets me push the pushchair on the wide bit of pavement but keeps a hand on it which really annoys me. She always takes over when we have to cross the road. It's really annoying when she does that too. I'm not the baby – I'm looking after him.

We're on a straight bit now and I can see my friend Harriet ahead of us. She's nearly at school already. She's never late because her mum has to go on into town early to work in one of the shops, so Harriet says. Harriet says her mum runs sometimes, just to keep fit! I can't imagine my mum running. My mum just takes Wesley home.

I try to walk faster to catch Harriet. She's wearing a new coat. It must be the one she got at the weekend when she went to stay with her dad. It's really nice. I like the colour and I love the furry hood. Mum calls to me to come back and hold her hand and cross the last road. It's only a little road – it doesn't even go anywhere. It's a dead end. It doesn't count.

Oh! I've just remembered that I forgot to ask her for the school trip money again. I've still forgotten to give her the letter about the trip too. She isn't going to be pleased when she finds out. It's still in my bag.

I look up at her. It's not fair. If I ask her now when we're rushing, she'll try not to be, but she'll be upset. If I go into school again without the money, my teacher will be cross or look at me with that sort of sad, disappointed look and everyone will know. It's not fair. Yesterday I was almost the only one who hadn't paid except for two of the boys. They don't count.

It's raining a bit now so mum starts to rush even more, pulling me along. I hate it. I don't care if I get wet. I can't keep up. I don't know what to do.

We're at school. Mum is talking to the mum of the new girl I think. She looks okay. Oh no, I can't find mum's purse under the pushchair so there's no point in asking her now anyway. I don't know what to do. Harriet isn't anywhere either. Why can't she wait for me sometimes – I always have to find her. I'm not going to. I'm going to see if I can find Miss and tell her about the trip money before everyone else comes in.

I say "Bye" to mum and kiss baby Wesley. He grins at me. Mum is looking down at us and smiles at me. She looks tired. She should just go home and go back to bed and sleep. I don't expect Wesley would mind. He often sleeps in the daytime. He just doesn't sleep at night! Anyway, I can't hang around now, I need to get in.

Oh no, the deputy head is out with his umbrella and telling everyone to get inside because of the drizzle. He's very tall and very old. You can see white bits of hair around his ears and his moustache is white. He doesn't know my name but sort of whooshes me and everyone in with his spare hand like all the teachers do. Except Miss Leigh. She's cool. I think she knows almost everybody's names but I suppose that's her job, being the Head teacher. In assembly, she knows who's talking and tells them off using their name. Perhaps she only knows the names of the people who are naughty. She knows my name.

My teacher is in the corridor talking to the lady who comes in and helps us sometimes. Mrs. Wilson she's called. They are both laughing about something. That's good; perhaps Miss is in a good mood. I stand nearby. The lady sees me and is still smiling and says "Hello Beccy". Miss says "Hello" too and then asks about the money for the trip? I look up at her and make my 'I'm really, really sorry' face. It always works on dad. Even mum sometimes. Oh no, Harriet and all the others are behind me now, waiting to get in to the classroom. I wonder if they can hear?

Miss is so nice sometimes. She doesn't say anything but sort of makes a face back, making her lips sort of small and thin. I don't really understand but I don't think she's cross. Miss tells me to go and get something from the Wet Play box before registration, as school hasn't started yet. Harriet's disappeared again now. I bet she's giggling about me in the toilets with the other girls. I don't care.

Miss is the kindest teacher in the whole wide world! She just came over to me and talked really quietly with her back to the others sat on my table. She's all wet. She must have been outside without her coat. We'd be told off if we did that! The others couldn't see what she was saying. I could see Harriet trying to look but Miss just got closer to me and sort of leaned forward so no one could see. I could smell the wet wool of her jumper. It's really pretty. Miss is really pretty. She's quite young really and doesn't have all those lines on her face that mum has. She said she'll put the trip money for me in the tin herself and sort it with the secretary but I MUST bring the money and permission slip in on Monday. I promise I really, really will. I'm going to write it on my arm so at least I'll remember at bath time tonight. She's really kind because I think she's a bit scared of the secretary. I am! I am going to be so good for Miss today!

When Miss asks people to bring their trip money out to her she doesn't say my name. I'm waiting and not breathing but she misses me out. Harriet looks puzzled and puts her hand up. Miss ignores her so she starts to call out to say that Miss has forgotten me but Miss tells her to be quiet. Harriet looks really cross. Miss is totally brilliant!

Sara Stott – class teacher of Year 4

Walking Mrs. Wilson to the door, I see Rebecca's mother standing outside with the mother of the new girl. Everyone else has either ducked in out of the rain or gone home. I walk across the playground. I smile at both women.

I just wondered if I might have a quick word Mrs. Daniels?

Oh dear, she looks a bit awkward – perhaps I've caught her at a bad time. Perhaps she needs to get home for the baby. I look down at him. Wesley, I think it is. I don't know how she does all this fostering. So much uncertainty. Miss Leigh was telling me that not one of them are actually her own. She apparently fostered Beccy when she was about three and then adopted her. You'd never know. They're lovely together. Amazing woman. Amazing partner somewhere in the background too I imagine.

> *I just wondered if you'd consider accompanying us on the trip next Thursday Mrs. Daniels? I need two more adults as the Planetarium has a strict ratio of adults to children we need to stick to. Actually, since I've caught you, would you happen to have the money on you for Rebecca and then I can sort it all with the secretary and confirm numbers?*

Oh no, she doesn't know! Beccy hasn't even given her the letter about it! She can't have. She doesn't know what I'm talking about.

She hesitates long enough for me to continue quickly. I'm gabbling now.

> *I'm sorry Mrs. Daniels, I need to get in for registration. Rebecca will give you a letter about it. Perhaps you'd think about it and we can speak early next week? Sorry to rush, thank you so much, goodbye!*

I can feel my face is all hot as I turn and go back in. I've been teaching for nearly a year now and I still find talking to the parents difficult! I hope she comes. I could really relax with her and Mrs. Wilson accompanying the children with me. My first school trip! They'd be marvellous with them. Harriet was fussing yesterday and saying it's her mum's day off on Thursday and she would be delighted to help. Delighted. I bet. I hardly know the woman except in her role as one of the governors but she always seems to be in a rush and somehow always winds me up. How does she do that? Does she mean to? Perhaps if Mrs. Daniels won't come … Ugh, I'm soaked. I look up at the sky. I bet it will be wet plays again all today. The kids will be impossible. Oh well, at least it's Friday.

Jane Daniels – foster mother of Rebecca, pupil in Year 4

Oh Beccy! Why didn't you tell me about the trip? Why didn't you say that you needed money? It was a little bit naughty not to at least give me the note.

I just don't know what to do for the best sometimes. Pete says I mustn't be too soft on her. He says Beccy wraps me round her little finger. He can talk.

I wonder why Miss Stott wants me to go on the trip. I'd have thought she'd prefer someone younger like Harriet's mother. Still, it'd be good to spend the day with the children. I could see what that Harriet is really like with our Beccy. It might be nice to go up to town again too. It's been a while with one thing and another. Wesley could stay with Pete. He's off on Thursday.

<u>Beryl Leigh – Head teacher</u>

Beryl Leigh stands at the front of the school hall and checks she has all the bits and pieces she needs to take assembly. She's noticed a tendency to be a bit forgetful recently. Still, she seems to have everything. The most important is in her hand. It is the photograph from the local paper of Rebecca flanked by Mrs. Daniels and Miss Stott. On her own initiative, Rebecca had written to the Planetarium thanking the staff after the school trip. The Curator had apparently been so impressed she got onto the local press. And so it had all escalated with Rebecca being presented with a certificate, gift token and tickets to return to the Planetarium. In this day and age it is all good publicity for the school!

She scans the article again. It's lovely to see the child smiling and being the centre of attention.

<u>Rebecca</u>

I was surprised there was so much fuss about my letter. I just said "thank you" as mum has always told me to. It really was just such a brilliant visit. Seeing all the stars in the dome reminded me of when I was very little. I don't see the stars like that in town with all the streetlights where I live now. Harriet says I must be remembering when I lived on a farm out in the country when I was tiny. Perhaps when I grow up I'll go back and live in the countryside.

<u>Fourth Visit - 14.10.99 (Thurs)</u>

Dry, bright day - wore black skirt and cream blouse.

Did not see most of the class until after assembly as when they arrived I was out doing photocopies for Sara in the office. Robert's mum delayed her doing it herself as she wanted to talk (right now!) about an incident of kicking between Alec and Rob. Apparently Rob is now doing 1000 lines (he tells me) from Mr. L. (Head teacher); I saw him at break working on the floor outside the staffroom and he started to cry telling me about it. (Comment - surely 1000 lines is too much for a boy of 7/8. He said he'd only done 42).

Assembly gave Sara and I a chance to chat. She said she is a bit more 'tight' with the class when I'm there but otherwise she gave me to understand I was a great help. I had offered to (and did) finish a wall display for Sara - the Wizard work.

I worked with the top group for maths Shape work - and with Sara after break on sentences.
The latter gave me a chance to listen to two groups talking. When I refused to help Ella from the other table, (I felt she'd tried to monopolise me enough on the previous visit) Nancy told Emma to help her instead " because that's what friends do, help each other, don't they?" (to me). I nodded in agreement. Emma and Jeff are boy/ girl friend according to Sara.

Nathan was spoken to sharply twice by Sara - did not see his reaction - back to me. At the end of the morning a large group of seven children, (the maths top set) were stood by the wall in front of the remainder of the class to present their work on using reference books to find out about butterflies. Ann (who'd had most trouble with the maths earlier) referred to a Magpie butterfly. Sara thought she'd made a mistake, asked her whether she was sure about the name and on no reply from Ann, sent Ann to fetch the book she'd been using so that Sara could see the source material. Ann looked embarrassed and became increasingly red faced as she picked her way through her peers (sitting on the floor facing the wall thus creating an audience for the seven) to reach her desk with the book. She was right in what she had written and therefore had read out and Sara told the class that before they were dismissed for lunch.

NB The sessions for literacy or whatever on the floor do give lots of opportunity for kids to fiddle and squirm and fuss with each other – Alec was pestering Alicia, pulling her very long hair and then trying to poke someone else until I moved across and stopped him - almost impossible to tell he was doing it from a distance. Sara didn't appear to see from the front.

The Chris story for SEN pupils

The text for the Chris story for the S E N pupils was as follows:

Chris walked to school with a friend. They talked together until it was time to go in. Chris still felt a bit sleepy.

The teacher asked the class to gather around so that every one could see the big book with the story. After a while Chris realised that the teacher had asked a question.

> " Chris, could you tell us what you think the author meant?" asked
> the teacher.

How do you think Chris felt?....

What do you think Chris may have done? ....

Has something like what happened to Chris ever happened to you? Can you write about it?...........

Draw a picture of Chris's face when the teacher asked the question.

Appendix 9

Children's written answers to question 1 of the 'Chris work' February 2000.

Pupil: Baz

petrified cris pulled out his magic watch and stopt time and jumped in the book he
saw a trane and the gard said "all abord" and blew his wisle cris got on he did not see
it was a pokamon trane he saw pecatue and charmanda he came back cris wat is the
answe itis pocamon got to cach them all is the ansaw pecatue charmandar

Pupil: Elizabeth

worried asnwering the question in front of the class, and he asked the teacher "Please
can you pass the question to somebody else" and the teacher said "Yes Chis and when
everybody went out to play Chis had stayed inside the building all play time and went
inside the story and when he came out of the story class was coming in. After play the
leacher said "chis could you tell us what is the answer....."

Pupil: Lee

Very scared becaues he was fiddling With his pokemon toy . All of his frenise Was
Laughfing at him- em em em is it the dog no!!! get to the head wwhy now ok chise
had ties dripping down his face he got expled for 1 month

Pupil: Marc

very shaked and had butterflies in his tumy."Errrm," just then a real monster but only
2 feet tall was an orange little dinasaur with fire on his tail! "Miss, Miss there's a
monster behind you!" Chis shouted.The teacher bursted out laughing.No other people
in the class could see him "ha, ha, ha, haa!" the class said."Chris is thinks there's such
thing as monster," the class sang, "Rrrrroaaaaaaar!" groaled the dinasaur.The class
stoped singing. The teacher ran out of the room," Chris is a hero, he got the teacher
out of the room!"We achuly found out that the monsters name was
"CHARMANDER!

Pupil: Jessica

perplexed and still. "I don't know Miss" he murmered, "WHAT!" yelled the teacher madly "you haven't been listening have you? Well! come with me, this is the 3rd time and it going to be the last!" OH NO though chris. What was going to hapen? His stomach was in a knot, he felt like shouting help! "Here we are." said the teacher. "Were are we?" I asked. The teacher didn't answer, the teacher didn't move. Tine had stoped.....I ran back into class and looked at the watch in my hand, I had pressed the buton on the side! The answer was in the draw I found. I ran back next to the teacher and Pressed the buton again. "I know the answer now" he said "Its he meant to they were about to start a race." "Good, just let me cheah. WERE IS MY ANSWER SHEET!.....

Pupil: Emily

Shy, Scared.He says"I don't now." chris went all embarassed and aShamed.He felt very worried miss page said You SILLY BOY." said miss page. "go to the Head teacher"she shouted "but miss." (GO NOW!) she shouted.

Pupil: Nicola

shy because he was not listning to the question "Well wat is the answer?" asked The Teacher "Well er mm well lets see now" "Chris stop playing, I know you know the answer" said the teacher, "erm is is Chals Dickens?" muted Chris"NO!" shouted The teacher "Chris could you stay at school please" "Ok Miss" when nobody was looking Chris opened the book. whooshhh! "Aahhhhh" "where am I going" "you are in auther world" shouted a spooky voise' BUDD "who are you"....

Pupil: Priya

perplexed, worried and astounded. Chris stuttered "eh erh erh erh" Suddenly time graduly slowed down until it totally Stopped and chris with his short blond hair and sparkling blue eyes jumped into the macbeth big book "let get to the front cover" he whispard "Oh so shakespeare meant this story would have blood in" When he jumped back out of the book everyone was laughing at him "Chris doesnt know the answer ha! ha! ha! ha! "Infact I do know the answer shakespeare meant there would be blood in the story. So Sarah what was the answer to the question Chris whispard to himself "I hope miss stephens doesnt ask me a question again!

Pupil: Tom

perplex , shocted, Worried that Will get told off I made up an anwar "is it 44 Miss" "on that is not the answer" "I am sick of this happening go to the head-Mistress but Miss I did not head the question go now I said to my Self I better make up Something So I take my Sicker back to her and Said I have got 3weeks on the run in spellings I cane back With my eyes red and Pretending to cry Miss Said what did She Say She Said if it happens again I will be xSpelled for 3weeks it will do for Something I have made up.

Pupil: Ray

Perplexed. Shocked When the teachter asked him a Cwestyen and I Was So Worried
because I did'nt know the anwer of the Qustyen. So then the teacter Said Whats the
answer Cris the hole Class is Waiting for an answer Cris and Cris Was Still, perplexed
and Shocked but the techter Said "Whats the answer to this Questuian how IS this
author" Said the teatcher So Cris Said "I don't now that answer Sorry Cris but you
Will have to go to the headteatcher said mr Cocks.Then the Hed'd teacher said your
exspeled

Pupil: Carrie

perplexed his class mates laughed When they went out for dinner play So When he
Went back in he tried to answer the question "I diddent here you miss ok this is the
third time on the run, go to the headmaster, but no buts just go" So christopher Went
to the dark brown door KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK "come in hello christopher I've
not seen you in a long time What do you Want" "Well I did'nt here miss" "you are
band from School" "See you in two weeks bye"

Pupil: Debbie

like he had butterflies in his belly and just pretended to think. Then he Just Said "Can
you Just say that again , Please" "You never here anything I think you are deph, Go
the Doctor tonight". The teacher was looking at him all day , he felt ashamed. Then he
was walking home and everyone looked at him. The next day miss asked him a
Question . . . . "ur, ur, well I um I ur , I feal Sick." "Go to the Head teacher" She Said
he knocked on the door "hello, Good boy where is the Book" Said the Head teacher
"ur, ur, well I have been" and the Head teacher butted in" you have been naughty" . . .
. . . .

Pupil: Katrina

...~~Chris felt~~ "what did you say" said Chris. "This is the second time on the run go to
the headteacher" said the cross teacher,"But miss said Chris"No buts" Said the
teacher. "I wonder shat she is going too say" thougt Chris "I'm going too get in deep,
deep trouble I know I am" knok, knok, knok Chris knoks at the headteacher door
"what have you came" for""Miss Jones sant me to you becaues I was daydreming"
said Chris.." tot, tot, tot, you are a nuagte boy"...

Pupil: Jane

Shocked ? the ancer wat did the arther said the ticher miss joun

Pupil: Lydia

Shocked because he didn't hear the question So he got his magic pocket watch "clik"
everything Stopped Suddenly, he opend the book and saw the ansew he ran back to
his place and "clik" time started again "well chris what is the ansew" said the teacher
"he meant happy" said Chris "that's the write ansew" said the teacher.

Pupil: Melanie

Shocked and worried. So the teacher said What do it mean but Chris said I don't o Miss and the teacher said go to the head mistres now.

Pupil: Warren

Scared he didnot have a clow den he saw is
Pupil: Jed

oh I forget go to the hed teacher said to Chris because I dinte not you wiLL be suspended fome scool his friend Laught at him· · · · ·

Pupil: Julia

worried because she hadn't been listening to the story. "Christina" repeated the teacher Christina jumped up in fright at the teacher's question, "Oh you've forget the awnser haven't you. "Yes I have" sHe carefully took out his stopwatch and. He started think "does he mean that he feels quite sad"said Christina. "Yes Welldone you got it right "phew I got the awnser right". "Come on it's time for merit assembly". They walked into the hall, they all sat listening to the other teachers until it came to their class; The teacher started to say lovely things abvout a girl in her class and finally the words came out of her mouth and my merit winner this week is Christina, for being so good.

Pupil: Kate

Shy Shocked and Perplexed er erm e I fgotin miss "OW" I think about leting you of
Pupil: Roger

worried that he had not been listening, psst he asked his mate what the answer was I am not going to tell you said he's mate, hey I saw that said the teacher cheating again the class giggled at him at playtime it was even worse they kept on skitting him arrhhh....

Pupil: Patrick

like his body had turned into a very small ant he had to find out want happened and what the author ment. "Miss could you say the question again please I didn't hear you" said Chris"The people at the back can hear me have you been day dreaming"the teacher shouted. "No miss" Chris explaind. Chris knew that he was not listening and he needed to listen for the rest of the english lessan . . . .

Pupil: Alison

Worried and perplexed. The he sird I don't realyknow, At play time he got skited all play.

Pupil: Suzanne

he had butterflies in his stomach he was shocked , worried, nervouse, astonied, embarassed, struck by lightning, shy ashamed, perplexed, feel as small as a bug and scared he spluttered his words"I I forgot" Miss Page "YOU NORTY BOY! I will have to go the head teacher I will tell her now if I was you KNOCK

KNOCK 'Come in she' said' 'What my child" II have not been listening what! I will have to expell you for 2 weeks

<u>Pupil: Steve</u>

it was like his worst enamy then SUDDENLY! " he means to say he is happy" "who said that"? " We us characters in the book""he means to say he is happy said Christina " well done Christina" you have listened very well. After break Christina went sneakly into the class and looked into the grilla size book WUSH! He was inside the book.
When the children came in after break the teacher called " we are going to look at this book again ok" "OK" shouted the children "HO!NO!" Christina ran page after page as the roller hands choped toward her . . . .
Christina shouted "Guyes! Guyes were are you" then a voice called " we helped you you help us by drawing us as fast as you can and we will apear again""OK!OK!" so Christina drew as fast as she ever has . done befor. Then the teacher opened the book and the chacters apeared again and the teacher said "OH I forgot we are doing maths "AAAAAAAA!" shouted Christina " can I go now""NO" you can't because the curs has been broken . . . .
Then after two days Christina had turned into Babe the pink, fat pig . . .

<u>Pupil: Lucy</u>

small .He felt like evrey body else was giants. "Come on Criss ,you must know the answer"."I need the toilet."Evrey body began to laugh .Criss now felt like a mouse.He felt like a ~~mouse~~ ant. The bell then rang and the children went out .Ha Ha the childrenlaughed . Chris went back inside to read the story, so he could answere the question when they all came back in."Wo I'm inside this exelent book." The book was all about a famous experamenter.Chris ran the pages until he found the great experementer. This picture of him was in a cartoon." Hello I'm the famous presor".said the prefesor as he poured some green potion."Please leave the room intruder."He added quite rudly.

<u>Pupil: Rachel</u>

embarrased and worried "pssss" "whats the answer" Crhis asked his mate "can't tell you."Chris what did the author mean"shouted the teacher "a a chu"cris did a false sneeze "can I blow my nose miss" "very well""phew that was a close one" cris walked back "now chris what was the answer""er er er he was describing that Trigger was a kind er er dog. At play-time people said "you ot out of that one well didin't you."

Pupils using the simplified text wrote:

Pupil: Alex

    Question 1:   nervous

    Question 2:   Oh I forgot

    Question 3:

Pupil: Caty

    Question 1:   he ashamed

    Question 2:   I dot Now.

    Question 3:   I wont to NOW.

Pupil: Kelly

    Question 1:   erm I don't know Hi Hi Hi you go to the Head-misters the Head-misters said don't do that agian

    Question 2:   you have done no am not telling am getting on with my work your exSpeld bcause you have you should at me

    Question 3:   Cris Should a me ocne the teather was cross with cris. Cris was up set – cris went

Pupil: Paul

    Question 1:   embaraSSed

    Question 2:   Feal Strange

    Question 3:   SometimS I bont here the queStion and then I fell funy

    Question 4:

Appendix 10

Sam lesson worksheets

Your name..*Date*.................................

Sam and the Question

Mum dropped Sam off at school as she did every day. Sam was pleased to arrive early and have time to play outside before the bell.

After hanging up coats in the cloakroom, everyone rushed along with Sam to their classroom at the end of the corridor. It was a sunny day and they were all talking about looking forward to the Games and Art lessons that afternoon.

The first lesson was maths. They had been learning about grams and kilograms and the teacher began the lesson by asking everyone questions about weights. Sam's hand went up to answer some of the questions but the teacher kept asking other people. Then, when she'd finished asking the next question, she said Sam's name.

Sam hesitated, then gave a reply. The teacher smiled and said, "Well done Sam!"

Sam felt ....
....
....
The other children around Sam felt ....
....
....
....
Later, after the lesson, some of them said ....
....
....
....
....
....
....

* * * * *

Can you think about how you yourself *usually* feel when it is a time of questioning in class? Please will you try to describe your feelings?...

Sam worksheets for the SEN pupils

Your name ....*Date*............................

Sam answers a question.

Mum dropped Sam off at school. Sam played outside until the bell rang to go in.

After hanging up their coats, everyone went with Sam to their classroom. They were all looking forward to the Games and Art lessons later.

The first lesson was maths. The teacher began by asking everyone questions. Sam's hand went up to answer some of the questions but the teacher kept asking other people.

Then, when she'd asked the next question, she said Sam's name.

Sam gave a reply. The teacher smiled and said, "Well done Sam!"

Sam felt ....
....
....
The other children around Sam felt ....
....
....
Later, after the lesson, some of them said ....
....
....
....
....
....
....

* * * * *

Can you tell me how you yourself *usually* feel when it is a time of questioning in class?

Name_____

Sam and Chris in the Science lesson

Chris and Sam had really enjoyed their lunchtime. It was a warm, sunny day so it had been lovely to be out on the school field.

One of the dinner ladies blew a whistle and the classes lined up. Chris and Sam's teacher came and collected the class and led them back into their classroom. As she did the register, Sam remembered that it was Science that afternoon

Sam usually liked these lessons. Today they were supposed to be doing more work on Pond life. Chris also remembered that it was Science. Chris wasn't so keen on the subject.

To start the lesson the teacher talked to the class altogether, reminding them about what they had done last week. Then she started asking questions about the work.

She asked if anyone could tell her at least three things that might live in a pond. Sam had some ideas and put a hand up. Chris also had some ideas but didn't move.

Could you give some reasons why Chris did not put up a hand to answer the question?

....

....

....

The teacher asked Sam to answer and Sam gave her two answers but couldn't remember a third thing. The teacher thanked Sam but moved on to ask if anyone else could give at least three things that might live in a pond.

Sam felt sad.

What does 'feeling sad' mean?

....

....

Appendix 13

Written answers from pupils working on May 23 2000 on the

Sam and Chris in the Science lesson worksheet

Pupils answer sheets have been typed as written, with any grammatical and spelling errors included. As mentioned in the text of the thesis, three pupils did not do the work through absence or refusal (Caty). Some forgot to name their work and some did not have time to complete the questions.

Pupil: Nicola
Question 1:   Chris might have been inbarised if he got the question WRONG!
Question 2:   I means wen you feel hurt inside
Question 3:

Pupil: Alison
Question 1:   He didn't know
Question 2:   upset
Question 3:   becos he only give 2 out

Pupil: Lucy
Question 1:   I think that Chris did not put up a hand because he/she did not like science.
Question 2:   Feeling sad means a lot of things, hurt, upset, in pain, all these things.
Question 3:   Because he might have felt jelus.

Pupil: Tom
Question 1:   I think chris did not put his hand up because he did not know the ansaw
Question 2:   When you are unhappy
Question 3:   because Sam had ansawed a lot of question but he did not know the ansaw to this

Pupil: Lydia
Question 1:   he or She might be Shy
Question 2:   not happy
Question 3:   because She or he might have wanted to get the ansew right

Pupil: Steve
Question 1:   I think because he didn't know the answere.
Question 2:   Down, cold upset, unhappy
Question 3:   I think because he got only two question right.

Pupil: Patrick
Question 1:   He might be embarested when he answered the question If he got it rong.
Question 2:   It means when your upset
Question 3:   Because she didn't say all three

Pupil: Emily

Question 1: They might have had a fight and said girl's are cofdents then boys but he said yes.

Question 2: upset, hurt, sad, mad, narky.

Question 3: because she only said two.

Pupil: Priya

Question 1: Because he didnt no the answer or he felt shy.

Question 2: not happy, missrible, lonley, cold hearted.

Question 3: Because he didnt put his hand up.

Pupil: Marc

Question 1: I think that Chris just didn't know the answer.

Question 2: It means when you are not happy. eg: Upset.

Question 3: I think he or she felt sad because she wanted to get all three right and she only got two.

Pupil: Elizabeth

Question 1: because he might be jellis to answer the question.

Question 2: unhappy, hurt

Question 3: I think he dosen't like answeing questions.

Pupil: Julia

Question 1: Because Chris might have felt Jeaulous of Sam.

Question 2: Unhappy, feel down, ashamed, your heart is cold.

Question 3: Because he only tried to awnser a question and he could only think of two.

Pupil: Melanie

Question 1: He might be shiey, He might think he will get it rong and he might be gellis.

Question 2: That your heart is cold.

Question 3: Because the teacher did'nt put it down on the bord.

Pupil: Jed

Question 1: sam new the answer

Question 2: you are not happy

Question 3: she is not happy

Pupil: Ray

Question 1: becouse Sam already Said the answer.

Question 2: It means When there misrible.

Question 3: becouse Some boby had to Wait and Someboldy told the answer.

Pupil: Paul

Question 1: Be cos he Would of not nawn the answer and He was to shuy

Question 2: when you cry

Question 3: Be cos ur'l the other people new

Pupil: Alex

Question 1:   Becas he did not kwon the answae
Question 2:
Question 3:

Pupil: Roger
Question 1:   Chris might of felt shy or might
Question 2:
Question 3:

Pupil: Debbie
Question 1:   because he was skeard!
Question 2:   feeling like you want to cry.
Question 3:

Pupil: Matthew
Question 1:   he might be Shy and he Knows the aw
Question 2:   it meand your happy
Question 3:

Pupil: Jessica
Question 1:   he or she might of been nervose or may be he didn't know the answer.
Question 2:   upset, down, hurt.
Question 3:

Pupil: Kate
Question 1:   lazy, sad, silly
Question 2:   not happy and Feel little
Question 3:

Pupil: Suzanne
Question 1:   I think chris is lazy
Question 2:   I mea
Question 3:

Pupil: Kelly
Question 1:   because he is to frightend to put his hand up because he might get the
              anser rong
Question 2:   it means if Someone is living you out you are sad.
Question 3:   because the teacher might Shout at you.

Pupil: girl, probably Carrie
Question 1:   he might of been Shy, he might of thought he had got it wrong.
Question 2:   that you feel down and that you are unhappy
Question 3:   because he only answered two questions

Pupil:
Question 1:   Chris might have been shy or he/she might not have liked science.
Question 2:   not Happy
Question 3:   because she wanted to get it right.

Pupil:

Question 1: because he dose not licke since.

Question 2: down

Question 3:

Pupil:

Question 1: Becaues he is shy and he is being lazey.

Question 2: Unhappy, hurt in side, not happy.

Question 3:

Pupil from 'grey table' by door

Question 1: because she was to scared to Ansewr the question

Question 2:

Question 3:

Appendix 14

Questions for Kath and Helen

Questions for Head teacher Kath and class teacher Helen

Query their perception of the impact of the new guidelines for Literacy / Numeracy on use of teacher questions?

Ask about their intentions behind their teacher questions in general - what they want to achieve?

Use of closed / open questions?

Query re: decision behind who *(which pupil)* to ask including the importance of differentiation?

Time lapse allowed for answers - thinking behind?

Responses to pupil error / incomplete answers

Responses to correct pupil responses

Their perception of pupils' feelings in times of teacher questioning?

Their own feelings in times of whole class questioning.

Appendix 15

Visit to local parish church with Year 4

Visit to Year 4 – Thursday, 11 May 2000

I arrived slightly earlier than expected, as the traffic was surprisingly light. It gave Helen and I an opportunity to take longer to chat over her plans for the day before Lucy arrived and started doing jobs – giving out books etc. for Helen.

Helen had to go and sort some things elsewhere so I took the opportunity to talk to Lucy who told me about a Christening she'd attended over Easter. Later she started talking to Priya through the window. I suggested she go out to talk as she seemed to have finished the jobs but she told me she wasn't allowed to.

When all the class came in, I was sat outside in the corridor noting the summer term's dates from a newsletter about to be sent home to parents. There were greetings and hugs from some as usual. Lydia hugged me and told me that she and Alison were now friends. I told her I was pleased to hear it and proud of them both.

During registration, I sat in the book corner on the small plastic yellow stool there. I was suddenly conscious of feeling completely relaxed in the company of this class.

Jed was very unsettled and was 'pushing' Helen. He does not like change and may be reacting to the change of routine today with the prospect of a visit outside the school.

Helen had a quiet talk to him. The others fidgeted a bit and Paul started to get very vocal about a broken zip on his coat and the fact that Helen hasn't come to help him. I went over and helped him, which seemed acceptable to him - but I therefore missed what happened between Jed and Helen.

Helen then came to me and asked me to arrange for Jed to go home as she told me he wouldn't go on the visit and there is no one to leave him with. The Head and deputy were involved in the interviews and a student teacher was in with Year 5 so the staff is already stretched to cover. I went and sorted this with the secretary and took Jed who was subdued and worried now that his mum would be cross with him.

As interviews for the new Year 2 teacher had already begun in the Music/ Radio room just outside the classroom, we lined up and left to visit the local Parish Church through the Fire Exit door, which leads straight into the Infant playground. Jan *(classroom assistant)* led the way being the only local who knew a short cut through the housing estate. I brought up the rear. I had little idea of where we were going as I'd only travelled to and from the school by car. It was therefore particularly interesting to see many of the pupils' environments. They know I'm not local and tell me things about the area, especially where other pupils live.

On the way, we actually passed Jed's mum at a bus stop. She had not got the phone call and was on her way into town. Helen appraised her of what has happened and she went to get Jed. Although Helen suggested he be brought back at lunchtime, Jed did not come back to class that day. Elizabeth was also absent again today.

The class was quite excited about the trip. Most must have visited the church as the school has close ties with it and held their Carol Service there in December 1999.

A Mrs. White met us as arranged. She would be our guide in the church. She took Helen's previous class, now Year 5, last year too and the two quickly agreed to follow a similar tour as then.

I took the opportunity to stand or sit back as much as possible to observe the children working with another adult in this different setting. The majority of Mrs. White's questions were closed – for example, "What is this font made of" and "What is this?" (when starting a talk about the altar). As the tour continued, some children were confident enough to put their hand up to ask their own queries. Mrs. White usually responded quickly although answers could be quite lengthy and some children became fidgety. It was mostly girls asking questions – Suzanne, Katrina, Lucy, Rachel, Priya, Nicola all asked at least one. Jane did not ask whilst working as a whole class, but took the opportunity when on her own with Mrs. White to ask her something. The children's questions were, as far as I could ascertain asking points of fact. For example: " Why is the lectern an eagle?" and of a carving of the crucifixion on the altar screen, "Is that where Jesus died?"

After the tour, Helen had the pupils sit near the front and invited them to make notes in their writing journals. She wanted them to focus on all their senses. She directed them first to consider what they had seen; she gave them the example of the sunshine coming through the stained glass windows, the carved pulpit, and the lectern. At Mrs. White's invitation the children had been able to feel and touch items made of different materials (thus they had been able to compare marble, wood etc.). Helen gave them time to jot these things down now.

For the sense of smell, Helen asked the class what they could smell in the church. Paul whispered to me that the building had "an old smell". Others spoke loudly enough to share their thoughts with Helen and the whole class and included "polish" and "dust".

For the sense of hearing, Helen invited them to ask what they could hear now. Someone said the echo of her (*Helen's*) voice. She then asked them to imagine what they'd hear on a Sunday and Marc said that he came here and told us we'd hear "bells". Others talked about the organ/ singing/ the voice of the priest or minister.

For each, some time was allowed for the pupils to compile a rough list of their own. They were then invited to go off to make sketches.

The children were not just preoccupied with the church. Although in a different setting, normal life with its usual concerns went on. When left to return to favourite areas to make drawings, Alison came over to ask me if I was teaching them today. I answered "No, just helping" today. Others talked about other events or issues in their

lives both amongst themselves and to me. A little later, Alison and Lucy argued loudly by one of the fonts and had to be separated.

Various items were lost in the course of the morning and several times I went off with a child or on behalf of a child to look for something. Nicola lost her writing journal and came to me for help. Everything was found except a pencil that Paul dropped down the central heating grating. He didn't make a fuss so it was presumably deliberate, perhaps to get a reaction / laugh from the others.

Returning to school, it was still a sunny day but the wind had picked up and a sudden gust took Warrens' drawing into the road. I retrieved it and as I did so felt relieved that he hadn't gone to get it himself. I am interested by what I have seen today of Warren's attitude outside class. He can be quite silly in school, quite immature, and I would not have been surprised if he'd gone straight into the road after his work.

Dust then blew from the road into some pupil's faces including Rogers who was stoic as usual in the face of difficulty or problems. We walked a slightly different route back to school and this took us past Warren's house. One of the girls told me it was his. When I looked and asked Warren if it was, Warren looked mischievous and suddenly dashed back a few metres to knock on the front door after which he ran back to rejoin the group. No one appeared. Had I not spoken to him, he would presumably have just walked past?

Back at school, Helen led the children into class to leave their work and then straight out for a short playtime, they having missed the usual morning play period. With Jan going to make each of us a cup of tea, I used the time to set up the camcorder to use at lunchtime. It still takes me at least ten minutes to tape wires down etc. so that it does not constitute a Health and Safety problem.

I had the camera facing out of the window into the infant playground so that on their return to class, the children would know it was not recording them. I had expected Helen (as she planned) to set them to use their notes to write a poem after the visit. Unexpectedly she used the whole twenty-five minutes remaining of the morning teaching session to conduct a whole class questioning time on the church.

It was a fascinating time. The questioning was genuinely open much of the time, the children generally attentive and enthusiastic and several worked hard with Helen to contribute to a type of class poem. The main contributors were Rachel, Priya, Roger, Marc, Lydia, Suzanne, Lucy, and Warren.

Some question and answer exchanges were illuminating. On being asked how they could describe where the marble font was positioned in a corner of the church, Priya offered the answer " In a right angle". Helen told her that although an accurate answer, it was not a phrase that was ideal for a poem. Priya seemed to accept this. Another pupil then suggested " in a deserted corner" and this Helen found more appropriate. Interestingly, this then generated further debate. Someone countered that saying 'deserted' was not really true since we had been there today and it had therefore been visited and not deserted. Helen continued to argue for the phrase and someone else then said nor was it deserted because there was a model of the church and other things in the corner with it. Nevertheless, we stuck with 'deserted'. I doubt

Helen was being dogmatic. It was probably at least partly because it had been a pupil that had recommended the word.

I would suggest that the subject of the church of which Helen was perhaps not seen as expert (that role having been taken by Mrs. White) generated confidence in some children to counter and argue (perfectly politely) with her about possible phrases for the poem. I have rarely observed such a genuinely open time of discussion with this class over something that was still clearly a core subject area, that of English.

Another intriguing exchange occurred with Helen and Roger. On asking the class to describe another part of the church, Roger put his hand up and offered "the golden eagle of the lectern". Helen queried "golden". Roger countered with the fact that it looked like a golden eagle. It was likely that the two were misconstruing "golden" – Roger referring to the breed of eagle being a golden as opposed to say, a bald headed eagle – Helen almost certainly thinking about colour. Although commonly painted gilt / gold, this particular lectern eagle was plain oak. The discussion between just the two of them actually extended into at least a full minute, with several long pauses – a long time in front of the whole class. No one else became involved this time. Roger showed some signs of tension. He blinked more rapidly than usual for him but otherwise held Helen's eye contact steadily.

Although a whole class discussion, possibly no more than 25 – 30 % of the class was actively involved in terms of sharing ideas out loud. However, interest and attentiveness seemed good generally and from written work produced that afternoon, ideas had clearly been absorbed. This was demonstrated by the fact that I had interjected with some new vocabulary during the pre lunch discussion. A pupil had been trying to describe the dust in the air seen in the shafts of sunshine and some fairly awkward phrases were being suggested. I therefore called across from the back of the room that they may be termed motes of dust. This subsequently appeared in a large number of the poems that I saw.

After interviewing Roger and Patrick, Helen and I had a moment to discuss my involvement that afternoon. We agreed on my doing a type of master class with some of the more able writers who Helen has been concerned may be left to get on with it whilst she has to deal with the more vocal and less able pupils. Knowing her concern with at least some of the class achieving Level 4 in the tests due to be taken the following week, it seemed a good use of my time.

The start of this session, conducted on the round table just outside class in the corridor was recorded but the camcorder was then switched off, as there was no discussion as such for it to tape. Having started the children working after reassuring them that they were working with me not because they were in any way bad but so that we could really concentrate and I could as a teacher give them more support, there was no talk as such and the camera was mainly recording my or others backs as we moved close to each other depending on who I was focusing my attention on.

This work was continued until time for assembly at 2:45 after which it was home time. Helen had already told me that she had to leave straight after school to attend a physiotherapy appointment at the hospital and we agreed to talk later by phone.

Appendix 16

Full interview with Roger and Pat

At 12:35 the boys came back to class after lunch as arranged. I had asked Roger if I could talk to him again as his was the most dramatic exchange in the brief question and answer session Helen had with the class after our return from church, just prior to lunchtime. I invited him to bring a friend of his choice and he immediately asked if Patrick could come. I agreed and found Pat to invite him. Pat seems worried so I do what I can to allay his fears.

They appear at the classroom door together. I sit them facing the camera and whilst I make final adjustments to check they are in shot, they make grinning faces at the camcorder and then laugh together and with me. Patrick seems a *bit* more relaxed now but still a little tense. He fidgets on the chair. I sit to one side.

I start the interview by reminding Roger of the discussion had in front of the class when he and Helen discuss the eagle on the lectern in the church. To draw Patrick in I ask him if he also remembers the exchange which he says he does. It actually took place within the last hour so I had hoped he would this time! I asked Roger how he felt.

R.   I didn't really mind … (*becomes indistinct momentarily, due to the tape being damaged*)…
       … I just thought it was a golden eagle.
JA.   A sensible answer…. I wonder what Patrick thinks?
       (Patrick *hesitates and Roger answers*) A bit nervous in front of a big crowd.
JA.   I wonder if you two can tell me why it makes you nervous?
P.   Well sometimes I could get a question wrong and people might laugh at me.
R.   Yeah and me the same really.
JA.   Is it just that?
P.   People might call me names like "silly".
R.   …might say at playtime "You were stupid for getting that wrong".
JA.   Has anything been said today (about *the eagle*).

Both shake their heads immediately; Roger then says "No".

JA.   So are these realistic fears – *do* people call you silly?
P.   No. (not *the case – I am concerned throughout the initial part of the interview that Patrick is still a little nervous with me and keen to give the right answer*).

R.   No, not really.

This is more likely to be so. Several children clearly look up to Roger. Elizabeth told me she did for one. He is popular with his classmates, one reason given being that they are impressed by his mathematical ability and I suspect, his calm, grown up manner. Little really seems to worry him yet although school is relatively easy for him, he is very kind and thoughtful towards his peers. Patrick is less academic, quiet and easily embarrassed. I was surprised that he is currently Rogers best friend as they are very different.

JA.   Are you nervous of the teacher?
R.   (*half grins*) Um. Maybe a little.
JA.   Why?
R.   She might think that because she'd have known it by the time she was our age
    ...
P.   She might have thought we'd know it. (this *is half said over Roger, almost
    echoing his answer*)
JA.   You've known Miss Smith (Helen) for some time now. Do you think she
    thinks like that? Do you have any evidence?

Patrick is quick to say "No"

R.   No, well we don't have any evidence ... (*hesitates*)
JA.   But?
R.   I don't think so really. We don't have any evidence.
JA.   She strikes me as a very kind teacher – but I might be wrong – she might be
    different when I'm not here – (we *are interrupted by Jessica coming in to get
    something).*
Sometimes when people are naughty, she tells them off.. (becomes *indistinct*)... she's
    not mean, she ...

(*I am intrigued that Patrick now seems much more relaxed and is initiating the
answers now).*

R.   She's fair, she's fair. I think that to be strict is one way of being a
    schoolteacher, but not too strict.
JA.   And how is she?
R.   Fine really.

(*I summarise the points made so far and then go on to say:)*
    "So it's interesting that the fears are still there".

R.   I can still feel a bit nervous even though I know it's not going to happen, but
    ... you don't know what could be coming ahead of you.
(
*Two Yr. 4 pupils looking for a teacher interrupt us again. Having talked to them and
sorted them out I have lost the thread of what we were saying).*

R.   We were saying about Miss Smith.
JA.   Oh yes, I wonder if we can broaden this out. I wonder why you think teachers
    ask questions in class.
P.   She wants you to learn. (again *it is Pat who speaks first*)
R.   Yes, she wants you to learn and she wants you ... to see what you know, so
    she can tell the next teacher.
JA.   So you think that what you know, she'll pass that on.

Both nod
JA.   Any other reasons?

P.   If you don't do questions you'll never learn and you won't get a good job when you're older.

R.   Yeah, you can learn by your mistakes, um...'cos I've got lots of poster charts in my room and I've learnt off them.

JA.   What sort of posters?

R.   Well, I've got Pokemon and ...

JA.   Oh no, so you can tell me all 150 Pokemon can you?

R.   Yes (nods, *quite serious*).

JA.   Oh no, please don't! (The *boys smile / laugh).*

Roger starts pointing into space, presumably imagining the position of the posters on his wall at home. He shapes the rectangular shape of the posters too as he talks.

R.   I've got this one about bones, a solar system one; I've got a geography one ..

(Patrick is looking away, bored? He rocks a little on his chair).

JA.   Now you talked about learning from your mistakes and then went on about your posters. How do you mean you learn from your mistakes?

R.   Say I make a mistake and I say my pelvis was up here (touches *his left shoulder).*

JA.   And it's not.

R.   Yeah, it's down here (*indicates with a sweeping motion*). So you can learn from your mistake.

JA.   So if you make a mistake in class, you can learn from that?

Roger looks to Patrick who nods and both say "Yes". (I am out of camera shot but must have looked at Patrick hence Roger looks around to him too).

JA.   So how does it feel to make a mistake?

R.   I don't feel. I don't mind about it 'cos it's better to know than not know and if ... you know the question, off by heart, it's better to put your hand up than let other people do the job for you.

Patrick talks over Roger at some points here and is indistinct but it is clear he is agreeing. I felt the boys are giving me 'pat' answers and decide to share the fact that I'm not sure about this theory about learning from our mistakes in public. I finish by saying in a light-hearted tone:
       ...perhaps you can be so embarrassed that you don't listen to the answer!

R.   (laughing) Yeah, Patrick sometimes goes red.

JA.   Is that true?

P.   *(nods)*

R.   He goes all hot and goes red.

JA.   Is that what going red means, that you're embarrassed or...

P.   Yeah. (nods)

JA.   What does embarrassed feel like?

P.   Feel like people might tease you.

JA.   But you just said that making mistakes can give you more ...confidence? How does that work? ("confidence" *is said very questioningly and I'm not sure now*

where the word originated. It could be that something now indistinct on the tape, was said by one of the boys, who introduced the term).

P.   Later on in school in a different Year, you could ask that question and get it right.

JA.   So you think you'd remember your mistake. I wonder boys if you'd remember making a mistake and being embarrassed more than things you got right?

(Both boys look non-committal? No answer anyway)

JA.   What does a teacher do if an answer is wrong?

P.   Ask another person.

JA.   What else?

P.   Miss Smith makes you laugh.

R.   You could um… feel a little bit sort of embarrassed, maybe.. *(trails off, indistinct)*.

(They *discuss Magic finger for a while here. I've not seen Helen do this in all my visits but it would appear from what the boys say that she sometimes points to pupils pretending to have a magic finger).*

JA.   How do you or people decide whether to answer a teacher question?

P.   When I'm sure and confident, I put my hand up. When I'm not too sure I won't.

JA.   What about you Roger?

R.   Same as Pat really – I only answer things when I'm sure and confident and sometimes if I'm not that confident the words just stay in my mouth 'cos I'll be embarrassed if I get it wrong.. sometimes.

(I *wonder if I imagined a slight expression of confusion here as he realises he has contradicted himself somewhat?)*

JA.   When we last spoke, you said you found Science and RE more difficult than maths.

The boys both nod. Both had identified RE as problematic.

JA.   Sometimes teacher questions don't have a clear right or wrong answer. If I say what's 6 time 7, you both know …

(both) 42.

JA.   But I if say to you, what's the meaning of life …?

(Roger *gets the joke and sniggers; Patrick looks away, thoughtful?)*

R.   The reason we're all here is to learn more really, to enjoy life sometimes …

P.   If you get the question, "Why do we live", it will take like forever, take like, two minutes to answer…

JA.   ... a long time to answer. Are you more or less likely to put your hand up if it's a long answer?

P.   Less likely.

JA.   Why?

P.   I don't really know what to say *(not to me now, but if an open question such as above is asked is how I understand his reply here).*

JA.   But you do have some ideas – but you'd be more embarrassed giving ideas in front of everybody? Would you be happier perhaps if for a question like that the teacher was just sitting on a table with you?

P.   *(nods)* Yep.

R.   Yeah

JA.   *(to Patrick)* Yes, but in front of a big class? ... No?

P.   Cos sometimes you can get dizzy. sort of ... answering questions in front of everybody.... embarrassed.

JA.   You get dizzy?

I wish I'd clarified this but Roger cuts in with something that seems unrelated (?) and I continue with him rather than returning to clarify Pat's answer.

R.   'Cos me and Patrick are best friends; we think the same really.

JA.   Do you?

(There *is some discussion about why they don't sit together, then*)

JA.   So when you were <u>very</u> little, when you first came to school, did you work just on tables (as *opposed to whole class*)?

They nod agreement.

JA.   As you have got older, perhaps have you noticed that there are more teacher questions to the whole class?

P.   Yes

JA.   ...than when you were little.

P.   When we were little we gave perhaps three words for an answer and now they seem more than five words.

R.   It's a bit more complicated for us in English because ...(he *pauses*)

JA.   Tell me why.

R.   We do more punctuation and I'm hopeless at English and Patrick is better than me.

JA.   You told me this last time (referring *to Roger describing his worry about punctuation lessons).*

P.   We're both good at maths and, um.. quite good at English.

JA.   Right.

P.   He's better than me at times though.

R.   Yeah (said *quietly, in a resigned sort of way*)

JA.   So you know this about each other. Would you say you could tell me how everyone is in maths and English?

P.   No.

R.   No, but ...

JA.   You couldn't? *(pause)*

Anyway, I was asking about whether there are more teacher questions to the whole class now and you said "Yeah" and also that it's more complicated.

R.   ...*(long pause)* yeah, it's a bit more complicated than that.
JA. But do you think there are?
R.   Hmmm (agrees).
JA. If you can remember back to Year 1, 2 and 3 – you think the teacher asks you more questions now you're older?
P.   Yeah. (a *whisper*)
R.   Hmmm. (*?)*
JA. And you think that helps your learning? (they *nod/ agree*). But did you prefer it in small group work?

Patrick starts to relate how they worked on tables in groups in Reception. Roger looks around to the clock on the wall. Aware that I've taken a lot of their playtime, I look to draw the conversation to a close).

JA. If I may finish with this question, would it make any difference to you if you thought you would not be asked a question in front of the class by name?
P.   Sometimes ...

Patrick doesn't elaborate but goes on to talk about the physical difficulties of being seen on the table and confused with Tom (a pupil who sits nearby) which is why he seems to think he may be spoken to by name by Helen.

Roger looks a bit put out that Patrick has answered and then cuts in with a story about how the girls may not be seen around each other. To him, asking people by name seems to be about the teacher being fair. This is very brief.
I thank the boys and they return to the playground.