

**Scottish Secondary Education
from a Critical Community
Psychological Perspective:
Power, Control and Exclusion**

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Abstract of Thesis Entitled: Scottish Secondary Education from a Critical Community Psychological Perspective: Power, Control and Exclusion

This research examines problematic and taken for granted issues in Scottish Secondary Education, from a critical community psychological perspective. Young people are positioned as central to the research, in particular young people experiencing exclusion being the most disempowered group in education, and to fully understand problems they experience the thesis develops a standpoint with young people. Methodologically the research is grounded in a particular approach to praxis. Critical reflection, action and knowledge construction all influence one another cyclically in complex relationships, at times conflicting and at others developing together dialogically and these relationships are embraced and reflected upon carefully. Power and knowledge are viewed as being inextricably linked and knowledge, what is legitimated within a certain frame of reference as 'truth' or 'reality', is viewed as being constructed by dominant groups with the power to do so.

Ethnography was carried out in three educational settings: a mainstream High School; a Special School in a city centre catering for young people experiencing exclusion; and a Youth Project where permanently excluded young people were on an alternative curriculum. Qualitative methods were used in a varied and tailored way for each setting and group of people and included Participatory Action Research and group work with young people, interview and group work with teachers, active participation in settings leading to fieldwork notes, and collection of textual information. Analysis involved careful examination of a wide variety of material, drawing on various methods of discourse analysis. The research material

was analysed for the ways in which education made possible and placed limits on legislation, social practices, ways of speaking and ways of being.

The assumption that adults must be in control of young people in education was found to be absolute and pervasive, stemming from societal ideas of young people, but also perpetuating them. This emerged throughout my research, from practices in mainstream school to ways of speaking available to adults and young people. Inclusion, while often spoken of in relation to equality and social justice, in practice is often conditional, and is re-positioned in this thesis as a form of control. School exclusion is often described in education as being expelled or suspended, but is repositioned in this research more generally as being excluded from learning and peers, and is argued as inherently problematic.

Problematic, institutional, educational discourse is constructed as often placing limits on ways of speaking, such that critical reflection and action within secondary education becomes very difficult for adults and young people. Ways of speaking available to young people are examined and demonstrate that while education imposes particular ways of speaking and being, young people find opportunities to resist and reconstruct. Ways of being are examined, between adults and young people in educational settings, and an account of performance of resistance and compliance between young people and adults is developed.

This research draws on a complex and multi disciplinary use of theory, literature, methodology and methods, and in doing so constructs an account of young people's experiences in education that is based on a standpoint with young people. By grounding the research in the interests of young people, particularly those experiencing school exclusion, it challenges assumptions of dominance and control that have implications for education as a whole and all those operating within.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Thesis, Position of Author and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction to Thesis

Broadly speaking this thesis focuses on secondary education in Scotland, and views young people as the least powerful interest group within the institutional system. I worked with young people who had at one time, or were currently, experiencing school exclusion, as this began as the original focus of the research. However, I became concerned with education more generally as I came to view school exclusion as a symptom of much wider problematic issues in education. School exclusion is sometimes taken to mean physical exclusion such as permanent expulsion or suspension for a fixed period of time. However, it is viewed in this research in a wider sense: as exclusion from learning and one's peers, including forms of 'internal exclusion' such as being sent out of class or forms of 'self-exclusion'.

The research has involved a continual cyclical process of praxis: of critical reflection, practice and knowledge construction and much has changed during that time, both in my thinking and in my approach. I aim to convey: my subjective journey through the process, how the experiences in the field and the reflection I underwent shaped my experience and decisions, and how I have come to position myself and offer an account of educational issues. The process of research did not involve steps or stages but more a synergistic development. Through a process of critical reflection, practice and knowledge construction; the lines of enquiry, literature read and reflected upon, epistemological and methodological positions, and practice and research carried out in the field, all developed simultaneously and influenced each other cyclically in an exploratory way.

The next section of this chapter describes some of the core epistemological

assumptions, values and methodological decisions that underpin the thesis and inform the research. The final section of this chapter then reviews and reflects upon literature.

1.2 Position Taken by the Author in This Thesis

The assumptions and values of the work include things which were seen as important and central to the research right from the start, as well as ideas that developed as I travelled through the process of doing research and of reflecting upon it. Many of the ideas are formed out of existing theories and other writing. However, at all levels of the work assumptions, values and methodology were tailored to the context and area under study and the people I wished to work with. Theories which were useful and relevant were drawn upon, sometimes in collaboration with other theories (taking care at the same time that theories did not contradict one another), but they were not adhered to rigidly and I did not limit myself to drawing on one or two theories, either when forming my methodology, my methods or my methods of analysis. Thus it is important to describe from the outset what these assumptions were, and what I mean when I use certain terms.

1.2.1 Ontological Position

In terms of ontology my construction of ‘what is’ or ‘what exists’ is greatly influenced by an epistemology of social constructionism and a concern with how knowledge is constructed rather than what knowledge is. I also find it useful to think in terms of reality and the ‘real world’ and prefer to take an eclectic position which fluctuates and is dependant on the phenomena being discussed. In this way my position ontologically draws on realism and post-modern constructionism, in a similar way to Parker (1992) when he describes “critical realism” (p. 25). In his

account 'real' things exist; objects, subjects and social structures, but discourses, and 'what we know' do not perfectly reflect these. Rather the account of ontology this thesis is grounded in is that there is a relationship between reality and discourse, which is influenced by power and ideology, and that discourses shape the way we view reality. An account like the one in this thesis is not aiming to describe 'reality', but rather the discourses which are describing objects, subject positions and social structures, whose interests they serve and what their implications are for those operating within them.

1.2.2 A Standpoint with Young People

Prior to this PhD the final year research project of my undergraduate degree involved a group of young people who had been expelled from their secondary school. This work became pilot research for the PhD, and was a factor in my decision to make young people central to the work. Young people, in particular those experiencing forms of exclusion from their mainstream secondary school, are the least heard and least powerful group within secondary education. Young people have little opportunity to make decisions, little control over their school day, no influence over policy making, and their voices, particularly those experiencing exclusion, are largely unheard in research studies. One of the commitments of this research was to reflect, act and write in a way that challenged and exposed these inequalities – rather than colluding with disempowering institutional conventions. In order to make young people's interests central to the research it was important to reflect very carefully on what was taken for granted and assumed about young people and education and to tailor methods in order to respect young people's interests in meaningful ways. Similarly analysis and writing were tailored carefully to illuminate inequalities and problems in a meaningful and empowering way. A

core aim of the research was to develop understanding of young people's experience and the inequalities they face, not from an institutional or conventional perspective, but from the perspective of young people being dominated by adults and adult institutions.

What it meant to be committed to young people and to make them central to the research was reflected upon and problematised. Simply 'siding' with the young people, or giving them a voice would be no less problematic than 'siding' with education or teachers. As the research developed I also struggled with some of the accounts the young people conveyed, which at times were quite negative: if the young people were conveying dominant ideas about education and their place within it, what would be achieved by reproducing these claims? Reflecting on these issues and literature on control and power, enabled a progression of my position, from wanting to 'side' with young people to developing and aiming for a 'standpoint' with young people.

The idea of a standpoint has been developed widely by feminism, built on work done by Marx, whose standpoint was with that of the proletariat: "like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy" (Hartsock, 1983, in Harding (ed.), 1987a, p. 159). For Hartsock, research aiming for a standpoint with women considers how the material interests of men, the ruling class, and societies' material reality shape the experiences and beliefs of women, the oppressed. For this to be possible it is insufficient to use what we 'know' in society, of research or theories. These Hartsock argues are from a male standpoint, and are both "partial and perverse" (In Harding (ed.), 1987a, p.159). Harding adds that people often: "assess

men's experiences, values and judgements as the paradigm of human experience... women's as only an immature, partial or deviant form of men's" (Harding, 1987a, p. 181).

Feminist research has had great impact in other areas of work with oppressed groups and has had much influence on methodology. It is both useful and desirable to develop a young person's standpoint, attempting to unmask problematic adult assumptions that are disempowering young people and affecting their well being. In addition one of the critiques of much feminist research is that it is done predominantly by white, middle-class, western women, and in itself partialises experiences of women (Harding, 1987a). Young people are not homogenous, and so this thesis aims for a meaningful and empowering standpoint with the young people I worked with: all of whom are different, but who as a group all experienced various forms of school exclusion. It is not aiming to speak for them or to uncritically reproduce problematic accounts, but to promote their interests, even if those interests were not explicitly conveyed.

1.2.3 Praxis

Praxis is often described as a dialectical relationship between reflection and action. The many complexities of those two elements and the relationships between, as well as a third notion of knowledge construction are rarely considered. Here, a cyclical relationship between reflection, action and knowledge construction was essential to the work. The multiple and varied processes involved in the research, at a variety of levels, fall within these three broad elements of praxis. My position on praxis is itself a construction influenced by processes of critical reflection, action and knowledge construction.

Reflections aimed to be a careful questioning of the taken for granted, not just within secondary education and in the lives of the young people, but also within academia, questioning assumed research practices or theory and literature. Reflection was not performed in isolation: discussion with others, from the young people I worked with, to my supervisors, to staff in the research fields all enabled further problem posing and reflection that would not be possible done alone.

Action is often described in the context of research for community psychologists as being transformative social change (Parker, 2005). This was, still is, and will be for some time as I disseminate my account to different communities, one of the most important goals of my research. Additionally, action is developed in this research to encompass much broader ideas of experience, doing and practice. Immersion for a prolonged period in educational settings, interaction during that time with young people and adults in education, interacting with secondary education itself as I performed roles within, and the 'doing' of reading, planning, carrying out research, analysing and writing a thesis were all considered elements of action or practice that cyclically influenced, and were influenced by, reflection and knowledge construction.

The idea that 'new knowledge' can be constructed is questioned here, particularly in light of Foucault's critique of how we come to know (1972). Knowledge construction in this research is positioned as being embedded in a context and this thesis seeks to make visible that context. Knowledge production is problematic where it is constructed using epistemologies, methodologies and approaches that tend to be in turn grounded in problematic assumptions that maintain the status quo and mask problematic issues, by being, for example, based on blaming assumptions

about young people. I have attempted to construct knowledge using processes that disrupt the status quo, unmask taken for granted assumptions and challenge inequalities.

The relationships between these three elements are what make the approach to praxis in this research so important. More positivist approaches, particularly in psychology, tend to be reductionist in their approach to the complex relationships between research and society. Attempting to construct knowledge where only a handful of 'variables' exist creates partial, problematic knowledge. In this research relationships were embraced and reflected upon in complex ways, between and within the key elements of reflection, action and knowledge construction. The nature of these relationships were varied: at times one aspect of the research affected another; at times two aspects affected each other dialogically, complementing each other and adding something to their developments; and at other times two aspects of the research conflicted each other in a resistant relationship. It is not even accurate to speak of just two aspects affecting each other: many aspects of the research were all affecting each other, in various ways at different stages.

1.2.4 Community Psychology

Community Psychology draws on many ideas and theories, transcends disciplinary boundaries and is concerned with promoting the interests of community members more than the labels attached to academic grouping. While it is not unique in its ways of working, it was my starting point, enabling a concern with qualitative, ethical, preventative, respectful work with people experiencing distress and oppression.

Community psychologists are concerned with the well being of individuals, groups and communities. They believe that situations, structures and societal arrangements have a great impact on that well being, as opposed to a positivist individualising emphasis in mainstream psychology. Community psychology aims to prevent societal causes of distress (not just treat them) and to move away from the blaming rhetoric of individualising and pathologising discourses. Power is seen by community psychologists as operating at all levels in hierarchical societies. Control over one's own life is empowering but a lack of control, inequalities and disempowerment is evident in countless areas of society. Community psychology is explicitly political: it strives to create understanding that will effect change, and always strives to be transformative and empowering for communities. As such community psychologists view people in the community as experts and people who are experiencing distress as having expert knowledge. There is an emphasis on reducing inequality between researcher and researched and enabling communities to empower and effect change themselves.

Parker (2005) criticises community psychology for taking problematic, psychologising, individualising and blaming ways of theorising and acting, and simply applying them to 'communities'. This can certainly be argued in some cases, as I critique some areas of research within community psychology (Heaven et al., 2005; Prilleltensky, 2001; Williamson et al., 2005). He argues that many community psychologists "treat the community as something that can be conceptualised and studied by psychologists on their own terms – and then use that psychologised image of the community to understand the individuals that comprise it" (Parker, 2005, p. 40). Community psychology certainly has the ability to fall into problematic ways of reflecting and doing, but I find Parker's suggestions

extreme in implying that all community psychology makes such significant mistakes. Seedat, Duncan and Lazarus (2001), for example, suggest that the words ‘community’ and ‘psychology’ place “the accent on the psyche of the collective, and convey ideas about an academic activist agenda seeking to reform, redirect, or revolutionise the theory, method, and practice of psychology in the interest of disadvantaged groups” (pp. 3-4).

1.2.5 Being Critical

Being ‘critical’ was important to me in this research. However, the term ‘critical’ is widely used and so it is important to explain in what way I wished to be critical and how I intend to use the term. Prilleltensky (1994) notes that the idea of being critical in psychology has often referred to positivist concerns such as “logical reasoning” and “adequacy of generalisations” (p. 4), often used to refer to conventional and problematic notions of how ‘scientific’ research is. An alternative theory has emerged around the word critical, described by Prilleltensky as “critical thinking involved in examining the social, political and moral assumptions implicit in psychological theories and practices” (p.4). Seedat et al. (2001) describe a critical position as being focused on “detecting and unmasking”, that research should work towards emancipatory practice in revealing problematic issues that maintain the status quo (p.144).

For me, being critical is a reflective, ongoing process, which aims to expose underlying assumptions that conceal power relations that exist within society, and to reflect on what is constructed as ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ in society by dominant groups, whose interests that ‘knowledge’ serves, and the consequences it has for the less powerful.

1.2.6 Power and Knowledge

Knowledge, what is legitimated within a certain frame of reference as ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, is constructed by dominant groups with the power to do so. This relationship between power and knowledge is very important to this work. The theories I read and was influenced by in relation to power and knowledge included Marxist and Feminist writings and writing by Foucault. These theories and my understanding of them are described later in a more detailed section that critically explicates the theory I drew upon. I did not make theories and ideas in relation to power and knowledge the sole bases for research. Alternatively, I aimed to begin with the basic ideas Foucault and others had written of, to learn of core ideas and to explore how these basic ideas were used in relation to a group of people. I concluded: that knowledge is inextricably tied to power; that the interests of the more powerful tend to be served by assumptions and perceived norms; and that our academic perceptions and knowledges of the less powerful are a product of these assumptions. I wanted to take these basic ideas and apply them to working with young people and develop less problematic ideas about education and young people’s experience. In this way I hoped to utilise important ideas without falling into the same problematic patterns the theories themselves describe, in that I did not want to be influenced so greatly by other’s writings, all of which had their own context, that I perpetuated institutional academic assumptions about young people, education and knowledge.

1.2.7 Discourse

I use ‘discourse’ to refer to social entities which are spoken through people, are themselves powerful and in the case of some institutional discourses dominant and problematic. I became interested in trying to describe these discourses in education

as an institution, to identify them being used and to consider their impact. I did not limit my understanding of 'discourse' to what is spoken or what can be found 'inside the text', but rather viewed discourses as consisting of ideas, norms, practices, written word, ways of speaking and ways of being. In this way a particular conception of discourse has been very important to the work, and I often examine dominant institutional discourses emerging from people's conversations. Thus, as a fundamental aim, work drew upon core ideas of discourses as social entities and practices, ideas of social constructionism, critical power and knowledge and community psychology to illuminate problems in education from young people's perspectives through a continual process of praxis.

1.3 Literature Review: Writing and Research by Other People

This section describes and critiques writing and research by others that influenced my research. It begins by examining the research literature and moves later into examining the theoretical literature in relation to education and young people, and finally considers literature that influenced the epistemology, methodology and methods of the thesis.

1.4 Research Literature

In the field of community psychology relatively little research is done with young people, and almost none in relation education (not including higher education). Community psychologists often apply their principles and assumptions in critiquing other areas of psychology and institutions like education, and so it seems odd that young people, education and educational psychology should be so absent. In this way community psychology is colluding with dominant practices of excluding

young peoples' voice and ignoring issues pertinent to them.

A limited number of recent research projects stand out as being critical in their work with young people. Howarth (2004) has carried out research with young people in relation to education, using social representations theory, approaching the issue of racism in schools in England and reflecting on how inherently discriminative discourse pervades in education. Howarth argues that dominant social representations affect young people from black communities creating an understanding of their own identity as 'other', but that young people find "ways to resist and reject oppressive relations" (p. 358).

Bostock and Freeman's (2003) research is done using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods with young people. Importantly the project described is open ended with the researchers seeking to collaborate with young people on what their actual needs were, in contrast to most research projects (including my own) that decide in advance the issue to be addressed. The research is also carried out in youth centres which offer less institutionalised and more informal settings for research than schools. One aspect the research team did not fully consider, but do comment on in the paper, was how adult-centric and academic the focus was: "young people who came to the post-conference evaluation meeting said that it was difficult to contribute their ideas, due to the language and structure of the meeting" (Bostock & Freeman, 2003, p. 471). This highlights the need to challenge and transform methods and language that might be conventional, academic and excluding.

Lee and Breen (2007) did not engage in prolonged ethnography or more collaborative methods with young people, but rather conducted a series of interviews. However their work does focus on perceptions and experiences of

young people leaving school early after incidents of exclusion. Unlike much research, focus is drawn away from the young people towards social causes and they argue that school does not fulfil “needs for alternative opportunities, power and control” and that school was a negative experience for the young people they interviewed (Lee & Breen, 2007, p. 341). They argue that future research should focus on ways in which young people “resist the exclusionary practices inherent in educational institutions” (Lee & Breen, 2007, p.341).

Drewery (2004), documents research done in New Zealand using restorative conferencing and Maori traditional practices to address conflict in schools, particularly as experienced by Maori males. What is useful about this research, is firstly the idea of restorative justice and use of negotiation and dialogue, where “the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem” (Drewery, 2004, p. 340). Secondly, the methods of restorative conferencing are drawn directly from the heritage and culture that the young people come from, in contrast to westernised educational constructions which focus on punishment. Practices such as large meetings where groups negotiate the meaning making of issues and create solutions collectively offer insight into more positive practices, as well as highlighting how grounded in westernised, academic, institutional constructions our own practices are.

These four papers stand out in community psychological research and are particularly significant for this thesis. The first offers insight into doing research which describes in detail the effects of an education system and its dominant ideas about young people from the young people themselves, and seeks to critically describe and transform problematic issues in education for young people. The

second paper describes methodology and methods which aim to be collaborative, respectful and meaningful for young people, and the third offers an account of the problematic nature of schooling, calling for examination of resistance. The fourth offers insight into how far removed adult-centric academic and institutional ways of working might be for young people.

Research by Visser (2004) examines the implementation of a peer support project in 13 schools in South Africa. The idea of young people supporting each other is a positive one, and descriptions of the impetus for the research are critical in theory. However, the peer support is adult-led in that teachers are involved and approached first. The ideas of support are psychology and adult oriented, involving counselling and helping “learners who experienced psycho-social problems” (Visser, 2004, p. 444). Expert knowledge in some form is assumed at various levels and, in particular, the imbalance in power between supporter and supported serves to recreate dominant and problematic forms of 'helping'.

Bradley, Deighton and Selby (2004) use more radical methodology and ideas, but put them into practice in problematic ways. Methods of PAR are used to work with “youth at risk” (p. 197), in developing a theatre group to increase wellbeing in the young people and to attempt change at the local government level. Using Boal’s (1974) techniques from Theatre of the Oppressed they aimed to give the young people voice and to demonstrate, collaboratively, to the council what the young people’s needs were. However, these unorthodox ideas contrast with dominant ways of speaking in the paper, using negative individualistic language to describe individual young people, for example “slow learner”, “uses marijuana” and “often lies to make himself look good” (Bradley et al., 2004, p. 202). The adult-centric

positioning, such as the running of the group by adults and recruiting of young people through teachers and youth workers, means the participatory element is minimised.

While there is a lack of research in community psychology done with young people, what is more problematic is the presence of uncritical research. Recently published research is often individualising and blaming towards young people, colluding with disempowering and dehumanising practices in psychology and education. Williamson, Ashby and Webber's research (2005), takes at its core the problem of "delinquent young men", problematically claiming that "pupils who fail at school are more likely to become involved in delinquent activities than those who succeed" (p. 204). They group small communities, furthering their labelling negative rhetoric to use categories such as "'families on benefits', characterized by 'poorly educated young parents'" (Williamson et al., 2005, p. 225). The impetus for creating categories is described as being so that police may focus their efforts on the young offenders in more specific places. No consideration of social causation is entered into and the focus is more government-centric than it is concerned with young people's wellbeing. Heaven, Ciarrochi, Vialle, & Cechavicuite, (2005) use attributional and identity measures, designed using problematic ideas of what negative attributions are, or what kind of identity one should have. Young people are grouped crudely into contrasting groups of 'the studious' and 'the rebels'. This individualising and pathologising approach can be found in all areas of psychology, but seems to be used with much ease in relation to young people. In the US this individualising approach emerges in studying African-American adolescents in "impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods", and the origins of their 'hopelessness' (Bolland, Lian, & Formichella, 2005, p. 293). Among the many problems with this

paper, is the attempt to study young people over a longitudinal period with no concern for change or prevention. Another study within community psychology features an attempt at a multi-level approach to studying the sense of community young people feel in school (Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005), but uses non-participatory questionnaire measures.

Finally, a particularly important non-empirical piece of work by Prilleltensky, Nelson and Peirson (2001) was published (sub) titled “The role of power and control in children’s lives”. Prilleltensky and Nelson are very influential community psychologists in the United States and Canada and so this could be argued to be a large development in reflecting on and working with young people within community psychology. Indeed some of the reflections on the powerlessness experienced by young people and adult-centric theories are meaningful and useful. However, Prilleltensky et al. go on to apply adult centric notions to young people, suggesting that material needs are primarily what young people require, including among other things “stimulating toys” (p.155) and their suggestions for intervention include giving more money to the adults of the family. Parker (2005) suggests community psychology intervention is often “actually quite a conservative form of action, one that maintains power relations rather than challenges them”, and that seems a fair criticism in this case (p. 40).

Elsewhere psychological research becomes less relevant to the position and aims of this thesis, tends to be more individualising, deficit and blame oriented, and can be seen to be colluding in or itself creating dominant and pathologising discourse and practices in education and in relation to young people. It is not possible to thoroughly review the extensive body of problematic research in psychology, nor

would it be relevant to this thesis, but examples are examined to highlight uncritical issues. Widely used questionnaire measures serve to maintain social disadvantage, failing to consider the socially constructed 'norms' that are built into such measures. Ireson and Hallam (2005) use scales measuring self esteem, self concept and pupils' liking for school, and conclude that the extent to which pupils value and feel positive about school affect their learning. The measures assume for instance the belief that "school work is worth doing" is a positive attribute (Ireson & Hallam, 2005, p. 301). These assumptions not only fail to question dominant ideas in education, such as whether school work actually is worth doing (and if so, worth doing for whom, from which frame of reference and in which ways), but place all the focus on young people who are required to feel positive about their school without questioning the school or education's practices and values.

Frequently, psychological research serves to pathologise young people. A recent study in a school in the Netherlands by Leenders and Brugman (2005) for instance demonstrates extensive use of pathologising language: "it is well known that juvenile delinquents often have a lower level of moral judgement competence than their non-delinquent peers" (p. 65). Finally, a longitudinal study which used the British Birth Cohort Sample, a survey involving 30,000 people over fifty years (focusing on groups born in 1958 and 1970), involved psychological and educational researchers and produced a number of published papers relating to young people (e.g., Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Schoon et al., 2002; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Schoon & Bynner, 2003). These papers highlight further ways in which psychologists collude with or create individualising and pathologising discourse. While studying groups from deprived areas or backgrounds, they sought to understand what characteristics appear to be present in 'resilient' young people,

those who have managed to “overcome extreme adversity” (Schoon & Bynner, 2003, p. 22). The notion of understanding protective factors in individuals, with the aim of creating interventions that seek to instil these coping strategies in other people is prevalent in psychology but fails to consider societal conditions. Individualising and blaming ideas such as ‘resilience’ serve to mask higher level social problems and fail to give young people any voice in research.

Despite having a clear attachment to young people, much of the research carried out in education is also problematic. It is neither possible nor useful to review all the problematic research and so again an overview is provided of some of the issues that emerge.

There is, even in education, a surprising lack of research carried out with young people. Catts, Allan and Smyth (2007), in the *Scottish Educational Review* state: “in reviewing applied education research, we have noted many papers involving initiatives in which teachers are engaged, but few in which the pupils voice is heard” (p. 52). Research often tends to be labelling towards young people, whereas it tends to be much more careful about how teachers and schools are portrayed (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Hallam & Castle, 2001; Lloyd-Smith, 1992; Visser, Cole, & Daniels, 2002). Rather than focusing on issues at a variety of levels, many studies focus on particular groups: young people, parents or communities, teachers, schools, but rarely on institutional structures or government (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Head, Kane, & Cogan, 2003). Furthermore, particular groups are focused on in problematic ways, often describing deficits and ascribing blame (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998). Educational statistics, in particular those published by the government, are partial, inaccurate, and blaming: exclusion rates only count official

expulsions or suspensions and figures on free school meals are taken as a proxy of the numbers of young people from low income families (Hilton, 2006; MacKay, 1999; McManus, 1993). Despite this, many research papers rely heavily on such flawed statistical figures (Hallam & Castle, 2001; Head, Kane, & Cogan, 2003; Turner, 2003). Although there is a much greater volume of qualitative research done in education than psychology, many studies are adult-centred or adult-led, fail to be participatory and make no attempts to change unjust or problematic situations (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Cremin, 2002; Head et al., 2003; Turner & Waterhouse, 2003). Finally, research in education features a lot of language positioning young people problematically: focusing attention on behaviour, discipline, attainment, disruption, vulnerable or ‘at-risk’ young people, young people having ‘special’ educational needs or ‘emotional and behavioural difficulties’ (Turner, 2003; Munn, Johnstone, & Chalmers, 1992).

There was of course some educational research that added useful and critical insight to this thesis. Goodley and Clough (2004) worked with young people receiving support from services after being excluded from school, using a “participatory narrative approach to research with young people that [aims to] foreground their agendas as critical researchers” (p. 331). Young people using these services (community projects run by Careers and Youth Services) were asked to volunteer for a research group and formed a group who became honorary research fellows of the university, and who collaborated with the researchers throughout the entire research process. The young people are named in the paper, and carry out the research with other young people, creating narratives rich in experiences and views of young people. The paper demonstrates collaborative, critical, thoughtful work with young people, and offers insight into doing meaningful research: “PAR must

conceptualise its co-researchers in ways that celebrate their resistance and their criticality” (Goodley & Clough, 2004, p. 349).

Hilton (2006) reviews current legislation in Scotland and examines why inclusion policies still fail, by carrying out research with groups of young people. To examine this issue critically she aims to counter dominant evidence of statistics and policy: “a key goal of this research was to listen carefully to the young people themselves, as they are the ones who are usually excluded from the frequent public debates surrounding their education and employment status” (Hilton, 2006, p. 298). Young people are central to this research and again, the core content of young people’s expert accounts gives Hilton’s paper authority and depth.

Araujo (2005) conducted a similar ethnographic study, immersed in one school for eighteen months, using a triangulation of methods such as observation, interviews and collection of school documents. Araujo examines how the idea of indiscipline is constructed and describes distinctions teachers make between particular young people in a more complex way than in previous research. She found that staff tended to describe individualising, blaming and deficit constructions of issues, blaming young people, parenting or particular communities far more than structural educational issues. Araujo notes that this is very similar to dominant governmental discourse, while young people tend to describe wider reasons, including “school-based factors” (p. 252). She describes a perceived distinction in educational discourse, between young people who disrupt and those who are disrupted. She further suggests that teachers base these distinctions, not just on rule breaking or obedience (as young people reported) but also on what teachers perceive to be positive or negative attitudes towards school or teachers.

Turner (2003) also carried out ethnography in one school to examine the school's behaviour policy for its inclusiveness. The paper fails to consider the socially constructed nature of 'behaviour' at the core of any such policy and the qualitative methods used such as interviewing, are not critically reflected on for their shortcomings in relation to young people and are individualising and blaming. Focus was often on how some pupil's learning was "affected by the disruptive behaviour of others", and how teachers struggled to attend to all pupils when certain individuals were being 'disruptive' (Turner, 2003, p. 14). However, findings included pupils reporting that conflict was often dependant on behaviour of teachers and in the extract below Turner describes pupil solidarity between those "constantly in trouble" and those not:

Some pupils felt very aggrieved on behalf of those in their classes who are constantly in trouble because of their behaviour. They felt when things went wrong in the classroom, the first to be blamed were those well known for their disruptive behaviour.

(Turner, 2003, p. 11)

Willis (1977) carried out research in the 1970's in a handful of schools, conducting ethnography and working with groups of working class boys, in their final two years of school. His aim was to understand the working class culture at the time and the transition working class young people tended to make from leaving school at the first opportunity to take unskilled jobs. Willis suggests that the "working class counter-school culture" is where attitudes to manual labour are learned and develop, describing the oppositional phenomenon as "experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation and as a form of resistance" (Willis, 1977, p. 3). Willis describes an opposition to authority in the group he calls 'the lads', a deliberate inversion of conventional school values, disdain and subordination played out with energy, causing discomfort for teachers. Groups of young people who

have conformed to the system and invested in academic rules and structures, are rejected by 'the lads' and are thought of as inferior. Two particular ways Willis describes this opposition in practice are, firstly, chances to avoid aims of the school: "to win symbolic and physical space from the institution and its rules and to defeat its main perceived purpose: to make you 'work'" (Willis, 1977, p. 26). Secondly 'the lads' find as many opportunities as possible to 'have a laff': "to defeat boredom and fear, to overcome hardship and problems... In many respects the 'laff' is the privileged instrument of the informal as the command is of the formal" (Willis, 1977, p. 29).

Willis describes a contest for supremacy between young people and teachers, as they attempt to control each other and schools create constricted controlling structures of rules, boundaries, timetables and procedures to maintain order. Once education is thoroughly rejected and the young people have left school as soon as possible, they are on the one hand bound to working class jobs, but are also fully prepared for the 'shop floor culture' they soon become immersed in. Willis describes interaction in classrooms between adults and young people as actions of separation, division and conflict more than involving learning and teaching.

These papers demonstrate that collaborative research is being done in educational settings with young people and offer useful perspectives, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Other research findings often focused on interventions at a school level, in particular ways in which schools could become more positive communities and ways in which they might be more inclusive. Some found that the emphasis in schools and education on measuring outcomes and attainment, were often irreconcilable with the flexibility required for a more positive community

(Head, Kane, & Cogan, 2003; Lloyd, Stead, & Kendrick, 2003). An aspect of critically inclusive school ethos was found to be schools that accepted and catered for all kinds of difference, the “acceptance of any form of difference” (Carrington & Elkins, P. 57, 2002; Lloyd et al., 2003; Visser, Cole, & Daniels, 2002). Other positive attributes of an inclusive school community were: a management staff committed to inclusion; a whole school approach to inclusion; involvement of parents; collaborative and positive dialogue between staff, and between staff and young people; and encouragement and support for reflection and praxis (Hallam & Castle, 2001; Lloyd et al., 2003; Turner & Waterhouse, 2003).

1.5 Theoretical Literature: Education

The two writers and theorists I wish to focus on in particular in this section are Michel Foucault (1977) and Paulo Freire (1970/1996). Foucault did not specifically write about education itself, but his genealogical work “Discipline and Punish” (1977), on the development through recent history of the penal system in the west, has had implications for many institutions and has become an important work for education. Freire, a Brazilian educationalist, spent his academic life working towards the education of the poor and the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970/1996). His work focuses on adult education in South America, but the radical ideas of conscientization, dialogical problem-posing, pedagogy and his ‘banking’ description of current education, seriously challenge institutional education and advocate radical transformation.

1.5.1 Foucault

Discipline and Punish (1977) examines links between knowledge and power and is grounded in historical scholarship, describing the changes from very violent public

punishments in medieval times, to clinical, controlled, private, contemporary discipline. Foucault argues a move over time from a discourse concerned with retribution, reprisal and deterrence, to a discourse of reform and rehabilitation, in which the criminal's mind and personality must be altered and changed. Rather than the current dominant notion that this process created more 'humane' punishment, Foucault argues that it brings about greater control, and that new forms of discipline have constructed obedient, submissive citizens.

This is done, he argues, firstly by employing a "normalising judgement", attributing value to particular behaviours, creating overall rules, which are seen as 'normal' (p. 177). To stray outside these assumed 'normal' behaviours warrants punishment and discipline, creating a structure which "compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises and excludes. In short, it *normalises*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 183). Secondly Foucault describes modern discipline as using "hierarchical observation... to transform individuals... to make it possible to know them, to alter them" (Foucault, 1977, p. 172). The final technique of modern discipline described by Foucault combines the first two techniques, and is that of "the examination" (p. 184), whereby subjects are classified and compared against one another in a recorded kind of surveillance that serves in minute detail to classify where on a scale of 'normality' subjects sit. Where these disciplinary techniques really become powerful is not just in the surveillance and control of each other, but of disciplinary control *over ourselves*. In drawing on the architecture of the Panopticon as an example and metaphor, Foucault argues that within the institution, individuals come to know that they may be under surveillance, and that they must internally regulate behaviour accordingly. All these processes serve, and are served by, a process of individualisation and objectification that serve to draw attention to particular

individuals for blame and for correction.

A cyclical relationship is created between observation and normalisation; deciding what is 'normal', then observing by examination in great detail to see if individuals fit within the notions of normality. Its powerful function is to coerce individuals into the perceived brackets of normality. Where individuals do not manage or refuse to 'fit in', disciplinary punishment is administered and these individuals become more visible, recorded and examined. Individuals or groups of individuals thus become marginalised. They are not removed from society, but rather are forced to live at its periphery. Their values are seen as counter to mainstream society, and their wellbeing is positioned as a lower priority.

Foucault argues that this disciplinary discourse has since become a model for many institutions, such as medicine and hospitals, and importantly, education and schools. This disciplinary discourse has an affect (he argues) of excluding difference, independence and critical problematising, leading us to either exclude, or coerce individuals to change and conform. These theories were later developed by Foucault into theories of 'governmentality'. Disciplinary power is developed into the term 'bio-power', where the very right to life, wellness and health becomes a political issue, and power is exerted over every aspect of life: resistance to controlling forces simply justifies a need for more control (Hook, 2004). Foucault becomes more concerned with the link between micro and macro forms of power: "how power manifests itself at various multiple levels, of implementation, which flows down from larger structures just as much as it flows up, from minute interactions and transactions of seemingly mundane daily life" (Hook, 2004, p. 244). Techniques or 'apparatus', the structures and practices at a macro level

include systems like the “psy-complex”, described by Parker (1997) as practices and theories that regulate and control people. Normalisation becomes a much greater concern to Foucault and is positioned as a fundamental aim of power. A particularly significant micro form of power that Foucault becomes particularly concerned with is described as ‘technologies of the self’, an “aspect of self power, an acting of self upon self”. Here the ‘self’ is partly constructed through governmentality and we learn to evaluate, observe and examine ourselves and modify ourselves accordingly. Ways of ‘knowing our selves’, which are socially constructed come to be internalised in problematic ways. Though Foucault did speak of resistance to power, much of the work on governmentality, and indeed disciplinary power, focuses on compliance and a succumbing to power. I argue here that ways of speaking, thinking or being and ways of ‘knowing our selves’ are *co-constructed* by powerful systems and individuals, and that resistance is not just possible but that examining it offers greater insight and opportunities for transformative action.

Foucault is introduced here in relation to educational theory, but in fact his work has influenced the epistemology and methodology of this research throughout. Core theories of what constitutes knowledge and how it is related to power contribute to this research and to other authors included in the thesis. To question, to uncover the assumed and taken for granted is a process fundamental to Foucault’s work, described below in opposition to much of psychology as uncovering not what is

‘true’, but what has been labelled as ‘true’, how knowledge has come to be constructed through power and whose interests this has served¹.

Foucault also described quite firmly how he believed his theories should be used, when describing his book *Discipline and Punish*². Thus Foucault’s theories do not dominate in this thesis, rather I take core theories and epistemologies from Foucault’s work that complement other theories and engage dialogically with the research itself.

1.5.2 Freire

Young people seem to be, in society but also in education, the least listened to, most disempowered group with little control over their own education, and the young people I wanted to work with, who were experiencing school exclusion, were even more disempowered within that group and were being excluded from learning and their peers. This kind of reflection led me to the writings of a South American educationalist, Paulo Freire (1970/1996). Freire writes of poverty in South America being a direct result of exclusion from education. Like Marx, he writes of a ruling dominant class, and an oppressed, poverty stricken class, dehumanised and alienated from their own experience. What maintains this oppression he argues is

¹ *We are therefore not attempting to find out what is true or false, founded or unfounded, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive. What we are trying to find out is what are the links, what are the connections that can be identified between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge... such that a given element of knowledge takes on the effects of power in a given system where it is allocated to a true, probable, uncertain or false element.*

(Foucault, 1997, In Lotringer (ed), p. 59)

² *I want my books to be a sort of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they want in their own domain ... I want the little book that I plan to write on disciplinary systems to be of use for teachers, wardens, magistrates, conscientious objectors. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.*

(Foucault, M., 1994, translated by and cited from: Gutting, G., 2005, pp112-113)

the prevention of genuine education, providing opportunities to reflect critically on the structure of domination, to recognise the causes in order for the oppressed to transform their own situation.

Freire was referring to the millions of people in extreme poverty all over South America, and his main campaigns were literacy programmes, considered so threatening to the then military state that he was jailed in Brazil and then exiled for much of his life. His idea of conscientization (to enable popular consciousness so people might see their position and transform it) is critical and liberating. He saw conventional education as another form of oppression: “in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider know nothing” (Freire, 1970/1996, p. 53). In ‘banking’ education the teacher, positioned by Freire as a ‘subject’, narrates information, imparting it to young people with an authority and an assumption that what is narrated is ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. In turn, the students, positioned as dehumanised ‘objects’ by Freire are required to accept, record and memorise information, described as “receptacles to be filled by the teacher” (p.53). There is little possibility for students in education to learn by experience, for meanings to be co-constructed or for critical enquiry. Freire’s answer to this model is to conscientize and transform education and those operating within it. This is described by Freire as a dialogical method of education, where the teacher learns as much from the student as vice versa, and where learning becomes exploratory, problem posing, and socially active.

Freire’s theories of pedagogy and how education should change were criticised at the time for being unachievable: from education for being too philosophical and

idealistic, and from philosophy for not being philosophical enough. The fact that radical theories such as those of Freire's fail to make an impact on education may demonstrate the overwhelming power of the institution and the perpetuating power of its norms, practices and structures against ideas of change and transformation.

1.6 Theoretical Literature: Young People

1.6.1 Rights and Social Justice

Children lack power in our society. They are amongst its most vulnerable members, and have traditionally been denied basic civil rights – the right to freedom of expression, to freedom of conscience, to freedom of association, to privacy or confidentiality and, perhaps most fundamentally the right to participate in decisions that affect them.

(Lansdown, 1995, p. 19)

Lansdown notes that in recent decades there has been a move in our culture, from viewing the family as responsible for children, to the state intervening where its agents see fit. Lansdown argues that we hold a view of children and young people in which they are 'incapable', in need of our protection and, given the 'innocence' of childhood, that young people should be free from responsibilities. She challenges all these notions, noting that for many children around the world the notion of any innocence is naïve and that children often "develop a capacity for understanding and decision-making which far exceeds commonly held perceptions about children's capabilities"(Lansdown, 1995, p. 23).

Lansdown and others also contest notions relating to vulnerability. Mary Boyle (2003) describes society's tendencies towards a discourse of vulnerability as a "social category applied... only to those groups who are already socially and economically subordinate" (p. 27). Boyle argues that describing groups as vulnerable leads to "a set of behaviours associated with passivity, and possibly gratitude, [being] seemingly reasonable... [and] just as important, the opposite

behaviours [seemingly] unreasonable” (Boyle, 2003, p. 28). The idea that children and young people are vulnerable is taken up by Lansdown in her critique of the notion that they need protection by adults. With protection comes power and control, and she demonstrates convincingly, drawing on examples of sexual and physical abuse, that “adults can abuse their power over children” (Lansdown, 2001, p. 87).

Lansdown challenges the assumption that adults will always act in the best interests of children and young people, notes that parent’s rights are often protected over young people’s, and that children’s rights are often disregarded in public policy. Lansdown argues that *it is in fact our domination over children and young people, their powerlessness, and lack of control over their own lives, that paradoxically to our beliefs of protection, makes children and young people vulnerable*. Here structures in society, discourses, lack of political or economic power, are positioned as creating vulnerability more profound than simple individualising and disabling views of biological factors.

If young people are viewed as incapable and vulnerable, what is then surprising is the notion that young people are paradoxically ‘dangerous’ or in need of correction (Goldson, 2001, Lansdown, 2001, Treseder, 1995). Boyle argues that the reason for this is that we expect certain passive actions from vulnerable groups: if young people are defiant and rebellious this is perhaps unexpected, and with the unexpected, comes fear. Treseder (1995) describes fearing the unexpected and the stereotypes that exist for young people when attempting to give them control in his research. Goldson (2001) writes of our tendency to “demonize” young people: “children have been perceived both as vulnerable and in need of adult protection

(the child as victim), and as impulsive/unsocialized and in need of adult correction and control (the child as threat)” (p. 34). Goldson argues that as with many powerless groups when young people do not fit into our perceptions of innocence and vulnerability, they become a threat and are excluded and “othered” (p. 41). He argues that there is a tendency to simplify in social theories of young people’s lives, and to polarise notions of ‘them and us’, or ‘good and bad’.

I have argued in this chapter that much research literature is problematic for young people and does not contribute to a meaningful insight into young people’s experiences. In critiquing research literature, I have found much is individualising and blaming, but also passionate and compelling arguments as to why and in what way young people do not have power over their own lives and are not listened to. Questioning the research literature and finding it problematic would not have been possible without reflection on theoretical literature, and so literature that influenced my epistemological and methodological standpoint is therefore considered below.

1.7 Theoretical Literature: Epistemology and Methodology

The literature already described in research, on education and in relation to young people, influenced my epistemology and methodology. Reflecting on research done in education and with young people allowed me to critique other’s work, constructing ideas of what I did want to do and what I wanted to avoid.

1.7.1 Freire and Participatory Action Research

Freire (1970/1996) offers possibilities for less problematic positions and methodologies. If researcher and researched are positioned in a similar way to the subject position of teacher and object position of students, his methods of dialogical,

problem posing pedagogy and conscientization offer an alternative subject-subject way of working. In this way research can be a two-way, dialogical process of communication where research is negotiated, and epistemologically both researcher and researched should be viewed as having knowledge which may be different but is not better, opening possibilities for learning, teaching and contributions from both sides. Conscientization and transformation should be methodological concerns of the research and reflection should involve problem posing rather than any notions of 'banking'.

Freire's work has been used all over the world to enable radical pedagogy and community work, but it has also become a foundation for transformative and participatory research. Most notably the methodology and practice of PAR emerged and developed in part in response to Freire's writing on critical pedagogy. Smith (1997) describes it as a "process of rediscovering and recreating personal and social realities" (in Smith, Willms, & Johnson (eds), 1997, p. 7). She describes a process whereby groups or individuals co-create understandings, values and meanings and reflect on shared realities: notions of a researcher and researched are blurred and the production of knowledge serves to "nurture, empower and liberate persons and groups" (Smith, 1997, p.8). Also described by Smith are the difficulties in engaging in PAR: particularly that the researcher must change for research to be participatory and must begin to work outside boundaries placed by convention (p. 173). She notes that both researcher and researched can have expectations which adversely affect participation: the researcher often fails to fully listen or to relinquish control of the research; and the researched often have an idea of conventional research that leads them to make conventional decisions, a kind of internalised oppressive

research model.

In relation to young people PAR is positioned in literature as being particularly relevant. Literature on rights and social justice already mentioned often advocate the use of PAR, but also note that the divide between researcher as adult and research participants as young people is particularly problematic. Simply listening to young people is described by Thomas (2001) as being difficult to achieve. He notes that in research and practice young people have the right to be listened to and should be given “time to express their views” (Thomas, in Foley, Roche & Tucker (eds), 2001, p. 111). Hart (1997) warns of tokenism and describes practice by researchers that often involves deception, manipulation or consultation which are all problematic from an emancipatory perspective (p.41). While writing of the various barriers that often make it impossible for research to be fully participatory, he emphasises the need for engaging and creative methods using art or role play for instance, which engage the research in methods of communication often preferred by young people.

Literature from voluntary groups and non-governmental organisations, working with young people, often offer detailed insight into the process of doing PAR with young people. Save the Children for example, is an independent organisation, with an ethos conducive to collaboration and a long history of using its resources for political transformation. It produces literature encouraging others to use PAR in research, and describes useful approaches and methods (<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>). Publications such as “Participation: Spice it up” are written to be read and used by young people as much as adults and give practical advice on reflecting, planning and designing research or transformative

projects (Save the Children, 2003). Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership (EYSIP, 2001) also produces literature in relation to PAR, for example an “Action Research Toolkit” describing among other things why organisations should do action research with young people (Campbell & Berry, 2001). In both cases there are limitations with the advice and language used. Possibilities for participation and transformation are often heavily framed within problematic institutional limitations, although working within these structures is the reality for many people. Furthermore when ideas for research or processes of ‘finding out’ are described they often fall into taken for granted and problematic methods of doing research, such as creating statistics and carrying out surveys which are grounded in adult centric positivist methodology rather than from a young person’s standpoint.

There are some issues to be raised when considering Freire’s theories as methodology and PAR as a method. The many barriers and limitations in society especially within institutions, and the internalisation of problematic assumptions by both researcher and researched pose serious problems for implementing radical, transformative, conscientizing and dialogical practice. Equally the idea of carrying out research is so grounded in academic assumptions that it becomes difficult to envisage meaningful PAR that draws on a young person’s standpoint.

1.7.2 Discourse

There are many different positions taken by different authors describing ‘discourse’ or doing ‘discourse analysis’. This section aims to describe in what ways I intend to use the language I have drawn upon to construct my account of the research and of discourses.

One of the most prominent authors in the field of discourse and discourse analysis was Foucault (1981), who argued for a questioning of the taken-for-granted, of things “that are accepted without question” (p. 25). He argued that there is always something underlying what is said and that these underlying rules and justifications must be studied. Importantly, Foucault’s call for a study of language and thought was not grounded in psychologising or individualising concerns with what a person is thinking or what internal meanings can be derived from speech. He argues: “to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules” (Foucault, 1972, p. 138). Foucault writes of examining relations between statements (a wide definition for sentences, concepts, ideas and more), made by different people or in different contexts, rather than simply within one piece of speech from one ‘author’: “even if the author is unaware of them [relations]; even if the statements do not have the same author; even if the authors were unaware of each other’s existence” (p. 29). He goes further to suggest examining relations between groups of statements between different fields and at different levels of society, and relations between statements, groups of statements and fields, such as the political or economic.

Foucault argues then, that discourses serve to limit, to create definable groups of

objects and subjects, to make knowledge continuous and unified. His methodology of studying the archaeology of discourses, argues for a disturbing of this continuity, to uncover that which is taken for granted and assumed, in fields of knowledge, but also in the methodology of examining these fields and in studying discourse.

A Foucaultian examination of discourse does not assume that a reality can be described, or that people's inner states can be reached. When examining ways people speak or interact, it does not position the cause of problematic discourse with the speaker. Conversations, interactions, pieces of writing, policy and practices are positioned as revealing aspects of a discourse and make it possible to construct theories of what that discourse does as well as describing it.

A further vital aspect to these theories of discourse is that power and knowledge are inextricably linked: that knowledge creates and reproduces power, and vice versa. The focus in this research is to uncover taken for granted inequalities and underlying assumptions and examine discourses dominant in educational settings, which serve to benefit more powerful groups in that context. Institutions are powerful places that create powerful and dominating discourses, but an institution like education, where knowledge is positioned as being produced and transferred to every individual in society is perhaps one of the most important places to consider the links between power and knowledge. As this research was done on education this is particularly important, but as it was done within a university department, the powerful institutional influence this had on the research also needs to be considered.

These theories of discourse have informed my epistemological position as a researcher and influenced the ways in which I analysed and constructed an account. In this way a basic theory of discourse has been very important to the work, and

much of my analysis is concerned with examining and describing discourses that emerge from discussions, writings or pictures. The fundamental, but still insightful and critical, core ideas of discourses as social entities and practices, together with ideas of constructionism, power and knowledge, combine to make tailored ideas which describe problems in education meaningfully, from a young person's standpoint, through a continual process of praxis. In the same way that educational discourse can be seen as masking inequalities and partialising, so too can theories, methodologies and methods in discourse.

1.8 Literature Relating to Methods of Analysis and Knowledge Construction

Descriptions of carrying out actual methods of analysis are very sparse and often problematic. In many texts examples of doing analysis are given but the example research material analysed is often limited and unlikely to be of use to many readers, for example the back of a toothpaste box or a short joke from the media (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994; Parker, 2005). Wetherell and Potter (1987), argue that “there is no analytic method”, and indeed where prescribed methods are given they seem to be too restricting. Systematically searching for nouns to list the types of ‘object’ described in a text, a step described by Banister et al. for example, may be achievable from their toothpaste box, but is neither achievable nor desirable for a vast amount of material in which the researcher is deeply immersed (1994, p. 97). Despite a preoccupation with transcribed speech, all material, from pictures to institutional practices, should be considered if they have “any tissue of meaning which is symbolically significant for a reader” (Parker, 1999, p. 4). In “Critical Textwork” (1999), Parker and the Bolton Discourse Network usefully demonstrate analysis of many different materials; different forms

of spoken and written texts, visual, and physical texts such as organizations or cities. Authors from other fields of research tend to draw on similar epistemological and methodological perspectives to critical community psychology. Analysts such as van Dijk (1998) and Fairclough (2003) hold epistemological assumptions very similar to the position of this thesis, and use the term 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. Though useful in theory, their approach when analysing stems more from linguistics, focusing on sentence structure and speech utterances. I would argue that this level of analysis is both unnecessary in community psychology, but also problematic, as a focus rooted in positivism and academic ways of knowing: "getting bogged down in formalism at the expense of content" (Parker, 1992, p. 11).

Willig (2001) critiques and compares different methods of discourse analysis. She focuses first on the methods described by Potter and Wetherell (1987) as 'discursive analysis', noting the importance of their book to social psychology. There are useful aspects raised in their account of method such as careful reading and re-reading of material. They stress the need for "critical interrogation of our own presuppositions and our unexamined techniques of sense making", to ensure material is not being reconstructed to make sense in an academic psychological sphere (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p.168). Potter and Wetherell stress the process of problem posing "why am I reading this passage in this way?" (p. 168). As previously noted they also argue for "a broad, theoretical framework, which focuses attention on the constructive and functional dimensions of discourse, coupled with the reader's skill in identifying significant patterns of consistency and variation" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 169). However, there are many issues with this approach to discourse analysis, and many of them lie within the theoretical framework in which Potter and Wetherell situate their approach. The grounding in

social psychology means that focus tends towards assuming speakers employ discourse as a tool or strategy. Assuming speaker's control over the discourse makes blaming or individualising accounts more possible, and it becomes more likely that analysis claims to be describing 'realistic' meanings. Furthermore Willis notes that this approach to discourse analysis privileges written or spoken word over other modes of communication (Willig, 2001. p. 102).

The second approach to discourse analysis Willig describes she terms Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, to reflect the difference in theoretical assumptions, deriving from Foucault's perspective on what constitutes discourse (p. 106). She describes Parker's approach to method as being particularly important, and in his book on discourse dynamics Parker describes important "criteria" for analysing (Parker, 1992, p. 6). The first criterion described is to examine the objects in a discourse. This does not just mean physical objects such as buildings, but also sets of meaning which form to describe something which becomes an object, in that it comes to be spoken about as some sort of 'truth' or 'reality', has effects and 'does things': "like gravity, we know of the objects by their effects" (Parker, 1992, p.8). This could be for example a discourse about discipline creating objects such as rules and practices which come to be viewed as absolutely necessary. A second consideration in discourse analysis is then to examine the subject positions that emerge, which should be done carefully to avoid "dehumanising jargon" (Parker, 1992, p. 9). This is described by Willig (2001) as "discourses [that] construct subjects as well as objects and as a result make available positions within networks of meaning that speakers can take up (as well as place others within)" (p. 111). In this way subject positions do not remove possibilities for agency or resistance, but are co-constructed and produce possibilities for speaking, reflecting and acting. Parker details

considerations when examining subject positions, including: what position is emerging for the addressor (which Parker adds should be viewed as the text not the speaker); what position is assumed for the addressee (which could be a variety of positions including the researcher); and what is made possible and is limited by this subject position for the person (i.e. what ways of speaking, thinking and acting become limited or available) (Parker, 1992). Parker then goes on to advocate an examination of coherence, of grouping and theming. Here Foucault's definition of 'statements' is used to describe how sets of meanings and texts and statements can be grouped into a topic or theme. However, this should be done Parker argues with careful consideration of: contextual and cultural differences within and outside a text that give rise to different readings, and the important notion that meaning will be different for "those whom the discourse benefits" and "those whom it oppresses". Parker differentiates this seemingly similar step from approaches in social psychology by making some points and exceptions. The first is that the level of analysis will rarely be at the grammatical and linguistic level; and secondly that presentation of coherence or a set of meanings and themes from research material should not suggest that the writer has created a "complete picture of a particular system, a totality of meanings" (Parker, 1992, p. 11).

The next criterion Parker describes is particularly important and offers very significant ideas for examining and reflecting on discourses. It begins with the idea that within a text, or a speaker, or a group of speakers, or within a particular community or wide scale institution, there are a number of different discourses, sets of meaning, and groups of statements. These often emerge together, they overlap, they contradict, and "discourses embed, entail, and presuppose other discourses to the extent that the contradictions within a discourse open up questions about what

other discourses are at work” (Parker, 2005, p.89). This may include an account of a ‘counter discourse’: two people may describe the same thing differently; the same person may describe the same thing differently at different times; or two discourses may emerge at the same point in a text and create confusion. What Parker importantly argues is that unexpected, surprising points, areas of contradiction and conflict, and points of impossibility should be viewed as particularly significant and should be focused on to explore “How the contradictions in and within the categories work” (Parker, 2005, p.89).

Parker finally describes the importance of locating texts within context, linking with other research material and culturally and socially locating the account. Using the analysis and reflection of emerging discourses it becomes possible to consider ways in which speaking, thinking or acting are limited by institutions; equally discourses which challenge, resist and subvert. In relation to power Parker suggests it is necessary to ask whose interests are served by particular discourses. He advocates that ideological effects should be examined, for ways in which discourses “include certain types of people and exclude others”, exploring how discourses make possible oppression, how they maintain the status quo and how they serve to mask relations of power and oppression.

1.9 Critical Reflection

It is important to reflect on the nature of literature, the limitations it poses to the research in this thesis, and the ways in which it contributed. While the aim of the thesis is to challenge the taken for granted in relation to young people in education, the notion of questioning the assumed also has implications for reading academic literature.

Literature describing education and educational theories needs to be reflected on very carefully for problematic assumptions and dominant discourses that mask inequalities in a similar way to research material. The fact that I focus primarily on literature from rights and social justice fields and on feminist methodology, outside the field of young people's experiences entirely, reflects the fact that I found very little writing that was not deeply engaged in problematic and disempowering discourse. In all these areas, but in academic psychology in particular (critical community psychology included), there are issues related to the psychologising of experience and theories in which individualising, blaming and pathologising language emerge. In this way academic literature, just like research material must be examined for ways that it describes experience and social phenomena, as described in feminism, in 'partial and perverse' ways.

Therefore, it was important during the research not only to reflect carefully on what literature was doing, but also not to privilege an academic account above the research itself. Instead several areas influenced each other and developed in dialectical relationships: literature and theories; my epistemological and methodological position; the research itself and people I worked with; and my lines of enquiry. All these areas developed and influenced one another, but none were privileged. To demonstrate this difficulty in research one can consider the literature on analysis. To focus very carefully on prescribed methods of analysis, and to keep psychological theories of explanation at the forefront of my mind as I analysed and reflected would have disfigured the research and the accounts of the people I worked with, even the accounts of discourse analysis that I argue are useful to this research. While analysis needs to be rigorous and critical, and needs to show justification for an account, theory-led analysis can have a tendency to bend the

research material around the theory. The bias in academia to direct reflection and one's focus towards neat, clearly constructed theories and methodologies makes it easier for us, as academics, to make sense of the research material, but it also produces a limited, incomplete and inevitably biased account which colludes with the inequalities that need exposing.

These issues become of paramount importance when we consider the final factor, in this research in particular. I would argue that hardly any of the existing literature and theory that attempt to explain experience, are constructed from a young person's standpoint. Grounded in dominant, institutional, problematic discourses, academia, education and psychology, community psychology included, fail in the most part to critically describe issues young people face from a young person's standpoint.

Chapter 2: Before the Beginning

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the initial stages of my research, focusing on the first year of the PhD. The rationale for this is that practically and reflectively I was in a particular place in the first year that gave me various opportunities and influenced decisions in research design. My subjective experience is described which sets the context for decisions made in research design and methodology. The first section will describe the impetus for beginning the research and concerns present initially. The next section describes experiences in the first setting I worked in, which influenced me in my reflections and decisions regarding research. I then describe the process by which research was designed for the first setting, and the route by which I gained access to two other settings³. The diagram in Appendix A details the time spent in each place and should be referred to in this chapter and the next. The final section describes a summary of the methodology of the research.

2.2 Beginning: Impetus for Research

The impetus for this project began at a youth project⁴ where I carried out my final year undergraduate research. This initial research was a small community psychological and qualitative project, which was an evaluation of a scheme designed to work with a group of young people being excluded from school. This group was the first I worked with at the Youth Project: I went on to work with a second group in the first year of my PhD and a third group in my second. I did recorded research with the third group (described later).

³ design of research in these settings occurred later in my second year, after a useful period of immersion in each and so are included in the next chapter

⁴ named throughout the thesis as “Youth Project”; research material references cited as YP

From this initial pilot work came a desire to investigate more fully the issue of school exclusion: why some young people become suspended or expelled from school and excluded from their peers. From this work it was clear that school exclusion was a socially unjust and worrying aspect of secondary education, and so I developed the research.

2.3 Youth Project

During the first year of my PhD, as well as spending much time reflecting and developing a set of assumptions and values for the research, time was spent in the Youth Project, working with young people. The reflective processes, such as reading literature and designing research were informed by and challenged by my immersion in a field: in my weekly interaction with young people and staff at the Youth Project.

This made the Youth Project an important context for developing my research in various ways. In these initial stages of reflection, my relationship with the young people was constantly challenging my theoretical ideas for research. I also developed a good working relationship with staff at the Youth Project and so was able to discuss my ideas. Staff placed far fewer boundaries on my ideas than a mainstream school might and the work that was carried out in the Youth Project with a group of young people during the second year of research was therefore more radical than work done in two other research settings; a mainstream school and a special school. The following sections will describe the Youth Project and the programme the young people were engaged in, before moving on to describe the initial reflections which lay a foundation for the methodological assumptions and research design of this project. I will then move on to an explanation of the research

design used at the Youth Project. Finally I will describe the processes which led to the design of further research and access to the other two research settings.

2.3.1 Background of the Youth Project

The Youth Project is in a rural village 30 minutes north of a city. It is a major tourist attraction, but offers little by way of social facilities for young people. Although employment is not overtly difficult to come by for young people due to the tourist industry (it is however seasonal and of poor quality), public transport into the city is poor, making the village seem remote and isolated.

The Youth Project was set up roughly 10 years ago to provide social support for the young people of the area. Its goals are to provide recreational facilities, and to assist young people, aged 14-25 into education and employment. In 2002, with the help of the council's Young People's division it became a rural base for an outreach scheme. This city wide scheme is aimed at 14-25 year olds who face 'barriers to participation'. The scheme in this particular village appeared originally to be related to helping young people into work (information about the Youth Project, town, local school and Youth Support are taken from various textual materials such as information leaflets or brochures, and my general knowledge having spent four years immersed in the community).

The local Secondary School is situated near the centre of the village, and houses 700 pupils. It is a relatively small secondary school, but its catchment area is very wide, catering for many nearby village primary schools.

As unemployment is not a primary issue in the area, the Youth Project was not being used to its full potential. The Youth Project staff then approached the secondary school, to see if they could identify any needs for pupils aged 14 upward.

The school highlighted a number of pupils entering their final year (fourth year of secondary school in Scotland, ages 14-16 years) who were greatly at risk of exclusion, for what was described as 'learning and behavioural needs'. It was then decided that these pupils might benefit from being on a scheme, and that their (potentially) final year of education was to be spent at the Youth Project where they would attend full time. Staff at the Youth Project, in accordance with Scottish curriculum guidelines, developed an 'alternative curriculum'. It focused on core learning such as English, Maths and Information Technology, as well as an emphasis on personal and social development. Importance was also placed on employability. Work experience was organised, qualifications were worked towards (and passed in most cases), and where possible and appropriate college places for courses such as mechanics or professional cookery were arranged.

My initial evaluation of the programme the young people were on (for my undergraduate degree) highlighted that there were many positive aspects of their time at the Youth Project. They were treated with respect and given a lot more control over their day, as well as a lot more one-to-one learning support and tailor-made work programmes that they had not received at school. However, it also raised serious questions about the apparent abandonment by the school of the young people. While the young people seemed to prefer attending the Youth Project than the school, their right to be with peers in their community and to learn in the same way as everyone else was being denied, something which led me later to reflect on issues of rights and social justice.

During the first year of my PhD (September 2003 – June 2004) I volunteered as a learning facilitator alongside the other staff. A new group of young people started;

the second group to start the programme and I kept a research diary in order to record and reflect on my experiences of my time there.

2.3.2 Praxis: Reflection versus Immersion

At the same time I was struggling with more conventional ideas. The discussions about unorthodox theories and methods such as those of Freire (1970/1996), I was having with my supervisors and others⁵ were very stimulating and encouraging. However, during time spent in the Youth Project my experiences seemed to challenge these ideas and would give me doubts about what was possible in reality. While volunteering at the Youth Project each week and working with the group who attended that year, I would get anxious that my ways of thinking and approaching the situation would not work. I was very close to the staff there and spent a lot of time discussing these new ideas with them, and they were even more doubtful. In some ways we had very conventional worries, like those described by Goldson (2001); fear that the young people would become ‘out of control’ if I relinquished my power and a default assumption that the young people were ‘incapable’. While the staff at the Youth Project were more respectful and egalitarian than many adults the young people had encountered, there were still a lot of boundaries and the adults were still clearly in charge. We would still tell the young people what to do, and if they asked us for something it was still in our power to say ‘no’. What I was advocating, as a research project with the next group of young people, was to have *them* take control, and to ask them what they wanted to do. We worried that this would go horribly wrong or, at the very least, that it wouldn’t provide me with meaningful insight.

⁵ For example: education researchers; other community psychologists; educational psychologists.

We also felt that it was ‘unfair’, in some sense, to expect so much from the young people. Theories and research discussed in this thesis make it clear that young people experience being dominated and controlled in nearly all aspects of their lives. It is also to be expected that young people will have internalised conventional notions of their experiences and that dominant ideas in society will have been accepted by young people as their own beliefs. Another worry that conflicted with my theoretical ideas was that the young people would have had many negative experiences of working with adults. No matter how equally and respectfully I approached the situation I worried that my attempts to work with them would be met with mistrust and cynicism.

I struggled in discussing ideas with various people, reflecting theoretically and engaging in the context of the Youth Project. On the one hand I was reflecting on theoretical ideas which seemed unorthodox and optimistic. I felt hopeful, but at the same time worried that these theories would not stand up to reality. On the other hand I was experiencing every day life in the Youth Project. I found this grounding very useful, but I worried that some of my concerns were problematic expressions of oppressive dominant discourses that I had internalised.

2.3.3 Youth Project: Research Design

In May 2004 I met with the staff at the Youth Project, to discuss my doing research with the group of four young people who would start in August. They would be the 3rd group I had worked with and they would attend the Youth Project full time on the alternative curriculum. The plan was that I would meet with the young people once a week for half a day for the whole school year. I did not intend to do recorded research specifically relating to school until much later on in that year, as I

wanted us to develop relationships and explore ways of working. I also hoped to enable the young people to arrive at a place where they felt comfortable and confident doing research that they wanted to do, and I knew that would take time.

I had formulated a rough plan: to start the sessions with me in control, discussing ideas relating to society and the young people, and to develop ideas of critical thinking and problem solving. As time went on, depending on how the young people responded to the situation, the sessions would get less and less planned by me and the young people would increasingly plan what they wanted to do. To begin with I thought this might be related to how they would want to communicate their experiences and beliefs, but I hoped that eventually it would lead to them coming up with ideas of how to take action in their community.

I was aware that this plan was problematic, both conventionally and community psychologically. On the critical side the idea that I was in control from the start was an obvious contradiction to Freire's ideals, and on the conventional side the fact that I was expecting the young people to take action in their community was in opposition to the idea that they just weren't capable. How much action would be possible would also be limited given restraints of time and resources, and the research was not fully participatory in that the young people had not been involved in the design phase. Indeed, I was aware that the young people had not even volunteered to work with me. In an educational setting, adults control the lives of young people and are the gate keepers; one must go through them first. The Youth Project was no exception. It was mandatory for the young people to be in the Youth Project in school time and my sessions had to be timetabled into their curriculum, for which I first had to get permission from the school, education authority and their

parents or guardians before asking them. I knew this would be important and possibly counterproductive in collaborating with the group.

For me to be able to work with the young people during school time, I was required to produce a written plan of the afternoon sessions. Planning sessions prior to working with the young people was not a collaborative approach and I felt it would undermine possibilities for meaningful PAR. I therefore managed to reach a compromise with the school that meant I only had to design the first six sessions. I wrote a detailed introduction to the ‘course’, which I decided to entitle “Personal and Social Development” (see Appendix B). I also wrote six lesson plans, designed to promote critical thinking, problem solving and working together, which are briefly described below but can also be found in Appendix B⁶.

The sessions were designed to have a long period at the end for activities unrelated to the more structured part, time for fun and a chance for us to get to know each other (Appendix B). For the first six sessions I planned specific activities such as graffiti art painting, crafts and sport activities. As well as the six well-defined

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- ⁶ *The Introductory Session was designed to explain very explicitly and carefully what we would be doing, who I was and what I hoped we would be able to achieve together.*
 - *Making Ground Rules was designed as a session where we reflected critically on why schools have rules, the negative and positive points and then to make some of our own that we all agreed with.*
 - *Conforming vs Rebelling was a reflection of the dichotomy between following the rules and breaking them; looking at the conventional views (bad to break rules, good to follow them) and critiquing those (negative aspects of following rules).*
 - *Consequences was designed as a discussion on the consequences of conforming or rebelling.*
 - *Being Included and Taking Part, was a discussion about why one would want to take part in things or be included, and equally why one might choose not to.*
 - *Teenagers Around the World was a reflection on other young people around the world and their experiences of life and school.*

(Description of preliminary sessions; YP; See Appendix B)

sessions, I developed a large amount of material, ideas and resources in order to be flexible and ready for any ideas the young people might want to pursue.

Though the designs I presented to the school were very prescriptive, my impetus for the sessions for the whole year was much more exploratory. I wanted the afternoon sessions to be fun and in some way ‘transformative’ for the young people. I wanted to learn from the experiences and beliefs of the young people and I wanted them to understand the dialogical process of us all learning from one another: while in many ways I was in the role of some sort of teacher, I wanted them to understand that I wanted to learn *from* them. I wanted to become a researcher who truly listened and respected young people, and I wanted to enable the young people to reflect on societal and institutional reasons for their exclusions from school and to take action if they wanted.

In many ways this piece of research was about process. It was an attempt to take radical and critical ideas and use them to produce research with young people which was collaborative, participatory and respectful. It was an exploratory investigation to see what process both the researcher and the young people would go through, and how their relationship would develop. At this stage, doing research with the young people relating to their experiences and beliefs of education felt a long way off. It was hoped that the sessions would lead to this, and it was explained to the young people at the first session: that I hoped to do work with them on research relating to education; that I wanted to learn and listen to them; and that I hoped they would decide what kind of research we were doing.

2.3.4 Including and Collaborating with Young People

For much of the beginnings of my PhD, such as the reflection and the design of research plans, young people, their opinions and meaningful participation appear absent.

During this initial stage there were times when young people ideally should have been included or collaborated with but were not. On the one hand there were barriers within myself, some of which I was aware of at the time, such as my worries that the group would get ‘out of control’, and of some which I was unaware of and required critical reflexivity throughout the research. These were often the product of my experience immersed in institutions such as education. Even though I was reflecting all the time on how to include young people into my research more, and even though I was getting much further away from conventional notions of dominating young people, problematic thinking and acting still emerged. On the other hand many barriers existed out with my control and made it difficult to realise participatory and transformative research.

The personal limitations were aspects of the dominant discourses and institutional practices within which I had been immersed and had internalised throughout life as: a young person who mainly conformed to institutions and society; an academic and a researcher; a youth worker and as an adult in general. Playing these roles and being exposed to these institutions led me to believe as ‘true’, various socially constructed claims and to have feelings – some of which I was aware of and found too powerful to overcome, and some which I was not aware of as being problematic or disempowering. Initially when I was reflecting and designing my research plans I did not feel confident enough to be able to talk to the group of young people I was

working with at the Youth Project at the time. I felt I would not be able to communicate my ideas to them for collaboration in a way that they would understand. My methodological reflections seemed too complicated and I felt incapable of translating them effectively in order to receive feedback. I was worried that they would find my sessions boring, difficult to understand, too constricting or alternatively not organised enough. These preoccupations are common in many different kinds of group work, but they focus on problematic conventional and individualising assumptions. For instance, worrying about being organised is an adult and institutional kind of worry, and a preoccupation with it masks the fact that young people don't generally care or spend time thinking about being organised: until they have learnt to be preoccupied by adult ideas and dominant discourses. These kinds of worries are not only adult as opposed to young person centred, but they are also institutionally centred, whereas the young people I wanted to work with had been excluded institutionally. I was aware at the time that my fears, mainly that both the young people and I would not be capable of being radical, needed to be overcome, but it would not be possible to fully comprehend how they were affecting the research process until we had actually journeyed through it and had a chance to reflect.

In other ways there were limitations and barriers that were entirely out of my control and made collaboration and dialogue with the young people difficult. In the first year I was participating at the Youth Project as a Learning Facilitator. In this role I was expected to be more in control and dominating than I wanted to be when I came to do my research. Therefore the young people I encountered during the first year viewed me more as a teacher or youth worker and any collaboration in designing research would have been affected by this. When designing the research,

it was also clear that any contact with the group of young people I wanted to eventually work with would have to be integrated into their weekly timetable. Staff at the Youth Project also required me to make a commitment of a fixed amount of time, so they could plan around it, and so I agreed to do a session once a week for a year. This would make collaboration conceptually difficult; the young people by law had to be at the Youth Project during school hours, and therefore had to attend my sessions. The request that I present a plan of the sessions to the school for approval (but not the young people), meant that they would have to follow my direction, at least at first. I also had to gain permission from the school and local education authority (and eventually parents) before the young people.

These issues highlight the difficulties faced when trying to do radically inclusive research. There were however, ways in which I attempted to overcome these problems and to include young people. I was comparing my reflections and theories with my experiences with groups of young people, present and past, in a kind of praxis. Theories which became important in this research for example, were practice-led in that they were challenged by experiences with young people and immersion in the Youth Project. Theories or methodologies became important because they described, verbalised or built upon grounded experiences I was having, working with young people, listening to their descriptions of life and their explanations of opinions.

The above sections describe the process underwent prior to spending an academic year with one group of young people, one afternoon a week. They construct a context for the methodology adopted, the design of the research plans, the methods used, and some of the barriers which would be faced. They also set the context

methodologically for deciding where else to do research, and the next section will describe the process of decision making and gaining access to two other very different educational settings; first a special school and then a mainstream secondary school.

2.4 Process of Access to Other Fields

To an extent the work in the Youth Project was somewhat removed from mainstream institutional education. It was also concentrated on experiences and beliefs of young people, one group of young people in particular. While the aims of the research did not include being comprehensive or exhaustive, I wanted to work in different educational settings, with other young people. I wanted to gain an understanding of teachers' experiences and beliefs, the decisions they made in classrooms and the pressures they faced. I also wanted to gain insight into the institutional structure of education and the pressures schools or local authorities face, in order to explicate at several levels, the disabling aspects of learning young people face.

2.4.1 Special School: Process of Access

During the autumn of my first year my supervisor and I discussed various contacts I might make who were working with young people. A community psychologist we knew, who worked in various schools, suggested I might get in contact with and possibly do research at a special school in the city where they worked, which they described as an innovative place that might be interested in my working with them⁷. I contacted the head of the school by letter (March 2004). I wrote asking if I could meet with the Headteacher and visit the school, with a secondary suggestion that if I

⁷ This setting is called the Special School throughout this thesis; research material is cited as SS.

could be of assistance somehow it would allow me to get some idea of the school. Finally I suggested that if the school felt it appropriate, they might eventually be interested in my doing some research there that was useful to them.

I met with the Headteacher in May: my diary entry for the first visit is below⁸. Apart from demonstrating the stereotyping and uncritical way I had of taking field notes at the time, for me the extract below reminds me of how welcoming the school and the Headteacher were. The Headteacher was very positive and pleased for me to come and volunteer at the school. I explained that it gave me a chance to experience the way they worked in the school and talk to staff and young people there, while also being useful and offering something back. Even though they were surprised I would want to volunteer they were more than happy for me to come into the school.

2.4.2 Background of Special School

The Special School had long been a day school for young people experiencing ‘emotional and behavioural difficulties’, as educational and psychological ‘professionals’ put it. Recently, after a period of reflection and with the backing of the Education Authority, it had changed its aims, curriculum and entire structure.

⁸ *School seemed in a very quiet area, even though it's very near busy and poorer areas. One of the boys helped me inside. Building is a small, beautiful Victorian primary (originally), but a little imposing and sterile for young people. The Head's office was very welcoming and warm, as was the Head – office wasn't well equipped or anything (sink in main area, toilet at side of room), but really friendly atmosphere. The school has always (about 25 years) taken young people from all over the city referred through a process of staged intervention and psychiatric referrals, on a full time basis until they were ready to leave school. They have recently changed their programme and now take young people on a temporary basis (explicit from the start), usually three half days a week, with emphasis placed on helping them back into mainstream. They have an art department, drama and teaching classrooms, but they also do things like anger management – they don't do any curriculum subjects like Maths or English.*

(SS Diary)

Currently, when a school (primary or secondary) in the area is experiencing problems with a young person and feels unable to cope, one form of outside help is to refer that young person to the Prioritisation Group. The school must apply to this committee, of which the Headteacher of the Special School is a member. The group then decides what outside help the young person and school would benefit from. This can range from a teacher at the Special School going to meet with the young person in their school and perhaps offering a period of outreach and advice, to the young person being referred to full time special education (in another special school). In most cases the school, and then the Prioritisation Group, go through stages trying various different strategies, with the aim being to exhaust all possibilities whereby the young person can remain in their local mainstream school before effectively excluding them and referring them to special education. The young people identified as needing help are seen to be having emotional problems or are behaving in ways the school or education system deems unacceptable, but which are not seen to be solely due to learning difficulties. The special needs described here also do not include young people diagnosed as having physical disabilities.

A young person can be referred to the Special School on a part time programme: they will still remain in their mainstream school most of the time where possible. Initially they are invited, with their parents, to visit the school and meet the Headteacher and their new classroom teacher. They usually attend for around twenty weeks, three half days a week, in small classes of around four. The teacher works out a tailored programme which can include health education, anger management, and a reflection of issues including behaviour, emotions, and relationships. At the end of a defined period such as twenty weeks a meeting is held

between all stakeholders, including the young person, parents and the mainstream school to decide the next step. Again this can be a range of things from the above strategies or it may be decided that it is time for the young person to stop attending the Special School.

As in the High School, access to the Special School was undertaken in the first year. The period of immersion as a classroom assistant began in my second year. While there, I engaged in a process of collaborative research design, leading to research at the end of the school year (Sections on research design and reflections on immersion for these two settings are featured in the next chapter).

2.4.3 High School: Process of Access

As well as the work I wanted to do in the Youth Project and the work I hoped to do in the Special School, I wanted to work in at least one other setting. I thought that working in 3 different schools or communities would be manageable and would give me a more varied experience. After making contact with the Special School, I decided that I should at least work in a mainstream secondary. In May I wrote to all the secondary schools in a nearby city, explaining my intentions and asking whether I could visit, with a view to spending some time assisting them so that once again I could immerse myself in the field.

Out of 7 schools I approached, 3 replied. I found mainstream schools the hardest to approach. Numerous phone calls and emails were required to get in touch with staff, and meetings were difficult to set up. I managed to make one meeting with a deputy head at one of the secondary schools in May 2004, and this school, known

throughout the thesis as the High School (research material cited as HS) became my third setting. My notes from the meeting are below⁹.

At this point I was very taken with the school: the building and the Deputy Head had made a very good first impression. In other ways though it was a very intimidating experience. I had actually never been in such a big school before. Even though the school only has 1000 pupils, my own education featured much smaller schools, and the work I had done up to this point had been in special education with much smaller numbers. This together with the fact that the building was so huge, with so much open space, was quite daunting, and the idea that I would ever be able to understand the place, or do in-depth research seemed unlikely. It was also difficult to explain to staff at the school why I wanted to be there. It seemed they were totally unused to the concept of a person wanting to volunteer or get a feeling for the place. Nevertheless the Deputy Head Suggested I volunteer as a Support for Learning Assistant in the Maths Department They approached the Maths department and got permission (verbally) for me to work there in the autumn as a Support for Learning Assistant (the department don't have their own so I would

⁹ *The Deputy Head was very nice; was very receptive to what I wanted to do and was impressed by me wanting to get to know people first. Said some very open things – that some teachers were bad, that Maths department was ‘in turmoil’ and wasn’t in any way guarded.*

Showed me around the school as well as the leisure centre they have; well thought out teaching spaces; an atrium so young people don’t have to go outside at lunch (“it’s very noisy in here, but a good noise”).

Gave me 3 volunteering options:

To follow a class

To be in a department

To be part of the Learning Support Team

I think part of a department would be best, but I’m not really sure. It will be a brilliant contrast to the Youth Project and their high school, as it has a very similar catchment area, but I’m not sure how I’ll go about doing really meaningful research there.

(HS Diary)

be the only one), one day a week. I was to meet the Head of Maths at the school in August 2004, at the start of the school term, who would organise a timetable for me and introduce me to staff.

2.4.4 Background of High School

The High School is a mainstream secondary school of roughly 1000 pupils. Like the school that the young people from the Youth Project originally attended, it is situated in a village, with a very large rural catchment area, ranging from villages ten minutes drive from the central city, to more isolated villages an hour from that city. The school itself is forty minutes from the city, with a second much larger city half an hour's drive away. Because of its relatively close proximity to this much larger city, some young people come from very wealthy families. At the same time it is a popular school for parents to refer their children to from outside the catchment area, from less affluent areas of the large city where schools are not deemed to be as good.

2.4.5 Details of Young People Who Worked on the Project

In total I worked with 10 boys and 4 girls, aged between 13 and 15 years. The six participants from the High School lived in semi-rural or rural areas. The four young people from the Youth Project lived in rural areas, mostly in near the centre of the main village. The four young people at the Special School came from urban communities.

All young people chose their pseudonyms: the girls were in a minority in the research, and in order to maintain their anonymity they chose male names. It is important to remember therefore that not all of the young people featured in the following account were boys. As this research reflects, many more boys are

excluded than girls and this is an issue that merits careful research. Gender is not discussed in this thesis at great length, nor is social background, sexuality, ethnicity, all of which were issues some of the young people I worked with were dealing with. Firstly to do justice to any of these issues would require focused, prolonged research and these were not phenomena I was focusing on. Secondly this research set out to focus on the way in which 'being young' within education is constructed and experienced, which can often be masked by other, different but no less important, issues. The choice of male pseudonyms by the female participants therefore dissolved distinctions between gender in analysis and in the account and the focus remains on youth rather than gender or another (less visible in text) grouping. These issues are discussed further in section 9.3.

2.5 Methodology

In this section the methodology of the research is summarised. The position of the author which involves both epistemology and methodology has been discussed, as have early research processes involving for example immersion and access. Methodology is summarised here to provide a clear description of principles that contributed to choices made in the design of research methods, detailed in the next chapter. This section describes key methodologies drawn upon and in doing so develops the justifiable and compelling nature of claims made in this thesis and why methods chosen were valid when making sense of the issue to be explored.

Immersion over a prolonged period was taken as being very important. PhD work and indeed much academic research, focuses on the reading of literature or the learning and reflection of different theories and ideas. While this is valuable, immersion in the field, in particular ethnography involving a recording of

experiences in that field together with reflection and analysis, offers a greater insight and understanding of the issues under examination and the people one is working with. Without a prolonged period of immersion, theory and literature become privileged, instead of developing a balance between immersion and theory that allows for a dialogical affect between the two.

Immersion at a variety of levels and in a variety of different settings was additionally important. Not only did this allow for an examination of several different aspects of secondary education, it also allowed for consideration of education at a variety of different levels; from legislation to the structures of a mainstream school, to relationships between individuals, adults and young people. Becoming a participant, an actor within the research field is an aspect of immersion that further enriches the process, as observation can become more detailed and can be associated with relationships developed with others. A further dimension of participating in the field is the opportunity to reflect on personal subjective experiences and the effects that structures, practices and people have on the researcher, as well as how she has an affect on them.

Collaboration, in particular with the young people was crucial, taking care as much as possible to make the research participatory despite there being barriers to doing so. As discussed, young people have a right to participate meaningfully in research. In addition to this however an account of young people's experiences of education (and other people within education) cannot be justifiably developed without aiming to enable their participation as far as is possible. Theoretically a standpoint with young people, as described, offers a position where dominant assumptions of young peoples' place in research are challenged, and reflections about how best to

construct a context, together, where young people are enabled to reflect and speak meaningfully.

The research was predominantly exploratory, which allowed for the unexpected to enter the research, but also strengthened the aim above of collaborating with the young people. Maintaining a flexible view about the direction of the research wherever possible serves to remove at least some power and control from the researcher, and allows for complexities and unforeseen elements to emerge: when an epistemological focus is to uncover what is assumed and taken for granted this is particularly important.

A concern with being transformative was grounded in the notion that research is meaningless without change for the better. This aspect of methodology is more of a moral standpoint than an element that constructs more compelling research. However, making change in psychological research is often framed as a negative devaluing action that undermines the validity or reliability of research, and that assumption is firmly challenged here. Transformative action, whether in interaction with others or at a level of social change is what research should fundamentally be concerned with.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has described the processes that occurred during the initial stages of the research, both in practice and reflection. During this first year I was engaged in much reflection, reading literature on young people's rights, ideas of conscientization from Freire and writing on participatory and transformative methods. At the same time I spent the year immersed in the Youth Project, using this and past experiences of working with young people to draw on reflectively in

order to challenge the theories and writing I was becoming interested in. These processes of praxis are important to describe as they situate the research in a particular context and describe decisions and groundwork that affected following stages.

The next chapter describes on a practical level the second year of research, which involved being immersed in all three research settings. Having designed my research plans at the Youth Project, the next chapter first describes my experiences during my second the year, working with the group of young people I did research with. It then moves on to detail my experiences in the other two settings, including a description of my experiences as a classroom assistant and what I observed, and the collaborative process of research design I underwent with each school. It also describes the impact the immersion had on my reflections and thinking in order to construct context prior to the chapters which give an account of knowledge construction from the research.

Chapter 3: Immersion and Research in the Field

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine my time spent immersed in all three settings: the Youth Project, Special School and High School, and will describe the research carried out in each. For the Youth Project, I will focus on the nine months we engaged in PAR, which culminated in recorded sessions on education. The section will focus on the relationship developed between the young people and myself, the impact the sessions we were doing at that time had on us as a group, and an examination of my experience in the field.

Time spent in the Special School and High School prior to research was more defined. In both cases I was a classroom assistant for roughly nine months before doing any formal research. This gave me the opportunity to observe life in school, but specific relationships were not developing between myself and the people with whom I hoped to do research with. For each setting, sections will first explain a little of the subjective experience from immersion as a classroom assistant. The chapter will then move on to describe the processes I went through in the two fields, getting permission to do recorded research and collaborating with the schools in the design of that research. For a clear understanding of the time I spent in the three settings, please see the diagram in Appendix A.

This chapter provides context for the more detailed analysis and reflection I present in Chapters 5-8. Burman (2004) describes the importance of “locating” an account, situating it within a context (Section 4, para. 2). This, she writes, should be done by describing epistemological and methodological assumptions, the literature which has influenced research, but also, as this chapter aims to do, an account of the subjectivity of the researcher. My subjective experience of teachers, young people

and the day to day structure of a mainstream or special school and of classrooms constructs an important strand to my account, and also contributes to an understanding of the construction of the account itself.

3.2 Experience of Immersion and Research: Youth Project

As described in the previous chapter, I began at the Youth Project with a research project in my final year of undergraduate psychology, working with my first group of young people. Then during my first year of PhD I spent time immersed in the Youth Project as a volunteer learning facilitator, working with a second group of young people. During this time I reflected on my experience and the literature I was reading and I made research plans for the next year.

This section describes my time at the Youth Project in the second year of my PhD, attempting to do participatory, transformative and collaborative work with a small group of young people. The initial design of PAR is described in the previous chapter, particularly the first six sessions with the young people. After these sessions I intended the work to be exploratory and led by the young people, and hoped, at the end, to do some recorded research with them relating to their experiences and opinions of school ('recorded' refers to artwork or film, not just 'audio'). In fact we did a series of recorded sessions at the end of the year, recorded by audio tape, art work and computer work, and these are analysed in detail in subsequent chapters. This section describes the nine months leading up to that recorded research; the relationships developed and difficulties experienced.

During the first year, I had spent much time preparing for the sessions with the young people, but I still felt PAR would be difficult. Whether or not these

expectations affected the sessions, I did often feel resistance throughout the year. Reflecting on diary entries and memories some time later, I felt there was often conflict and resistance, but more importantly many contradictions and changes throughout the period. Sessions would go from being calm and led by my agenda one week to full of conflict and resistance the next, and this seemed to be dependent on the young people and myself, our expectations, our different agendas, changes in these each week, and whether they conflicted or complemented.

At the time I felt my agenda involved simply wanting the young people to explore their experiences and to describe them. Reading my fieldwork diaries however, I often confused this with more conventional educational and institutional agendas, such as wanting the young people to come up with conclusions to issues. I worried that my research needs would not be met and that we would not engage in meaningful dialogue. I sometimes confused an academic, problematic idea of success with what I actually found meaningful as a community psychological researcher.

In my diaries, I often noted that a session had been successful when in fact I had controlled more and the young people had complied. I often decided in my fieldwork diary to do the 'right thing' (put them in control, do more creative things, or be less of a teacher) a few weeks in succession but still failed to, as the extract below shows¹⁰. I noted even in the midst of fieldwork how equal, collaborative

¹⁰ *So I think I need to keep going with a few adjustments
Talk about issues they are interested in
Watch out for things they tell me – LISTEN more to what they're saying and write them in here
Change myself – I need to stop thinking like a teacher/youth worker and stop getting so frustrated – have more compassion, work in their boundaries.*

(YP Diary)

dialogue could occur: by listening; doing what they wanted; focusing on their interests and yet at times I did not manage to do these things. There were also times when I made a decision without discussing it with the young people.

Both the young people and myself seemed to have agendas, and these seemed to vary, both between us and within us. My aim might have been to relax and listen one week, but another week it would appear from my actions that my aim was to be authoritarian and controlling. The young people seemed some weeks to want to please me or comply and others to resist or have fun. There were times when our intentions were more complementary and about being in dialogue with one another, and those sessions would be more meaningful. At other times our expectations clashed creating either resistance or compliance: in both cases an imbalance in power.

3.2.1 Recorded Sessions

Having spent roughly nine months together, meeting once a week at the Youth Project, we had developed an understanding of each other and of ourselves as a group. By chance the move to recorded sessions relating to education was in some ways a natural one, as the young people suggested one week that the next important issue to discuss (after discussing various others) was school. I asked if it would be possible for me to record these sessions, which they agreed to, and we spent one afternoon discussing tape recording, what I would do with the tapes, signing research agreements and so on (copy of agreements can be found in Appendix E).

The first of these tape recorded afternoons (YP1) was simply a conversation about some of the young people's experiences and opinions of school. After some discussion and a number of ideas for creative projects, the second session (YP2)

involved the young people creating drawings to express their views. Two of the young people drew pictures of a 'bad pupil'. Another young person (Craig) drew a picture of a classroom while I drew a picture of the Youth Project room, and we compared the positive and negative aspects of each space. For the third session (YP3) I prepared a fictional story called "Steven's Bad Day", about a young person involved in conflict with a teacher in a classroom (see Appendix B). This introduced the use of a third person narrative so that focus was on a fictional character. At the start of the fourth session (YP4) two of the young people communicated that they did not want to participate in the afternoon and so only Raul and Craig took part. Conversation included some very creative ideas for communicating opinions about school, and drawings were made by Raul of a 'bad' school. The fourth young person asked, during Session 4, not to be part of the research. For this reason their dialogue for all of the tapes has been removed and when others refer to them, they are referred to as X (as are other people or place names that need to remain anonymous). During the fifth session (YP5) Raul carried on drawing pictures of his 'bad' school, and Mark began drawing a picture of his ideal school. Craig began designing a website his ideal school. During the sixth session (YP6) I brought in the transcript of the fourth session, which the young people looked at and discussed. I also spent time engaged in conversation with Craig, about his experiences in school.

3.3 Experience of Immersion in the Field: Special School and High School

This section describes my subjective experience, similar to sections above. PAR was not attempted in these two fields and less time was spent with the particular young people with whom I did research. However, my subjective experience of

teachers, young people and the day to day structure of a mainstream or special school afforded unique insights which went further than those in the Youth Project.

3.3.1 Special School

After initial access was gained, I started my immersion in the Special School in August 2004. My main role at the school was quite clear – I was to work one day a week as a classroom assistant: each class had at least one assistant at all times. Care was taken by staff at the Special School to integrate my volunteering with the needs of the young people, and so throughout the year I tended to work with one group of young people for the duration of their stay so that they experienced continuity and we had the opportunity to develop relationships.

3.3.1.1 Subjective Experience

My experience of the Special School was a very positive one. I felt very included and welcomed: in some ways this made it more important when reflecting on my experience, to consider whether aspects of the Special School were problematic despite my feeling positive and affirmative. I enjoyed my role as a classroom assistant as it gave me the opportunity to develop close relationships with a small number of young people and reflect on our relationships and their experiences of education.

The school seemed very different to a mainstream school. Classroom interactions between staff and young people often seemed more collaborative and respectful than I had experienced elsewhere: staff took a lot of time to listen to young people and discuss the problems they were experiencing in school. Lessons were very creative, with drama sessions involving reflective role play and art lessons involving expression and reflection. On the other hand, there were aspects of practice that

seemed individualistic. Lessons were designed to ‘teach’ the young people ‘coping skills’, and in some ways focused on enabling the young people to conform to educational norms and expectations.

I also formed good relationships with the classroom assistants. The assistants treated me as ‘one of them’: because of this I learned a lot about the non-teaching staff working with young people, and a lot about the politics and ins and outs of the school. I also had the opportunity to provide a listening ear, and gave the assistants a chance to let off steam to somebody they felt they could trust and who had no power over them in their jobs. The teachers were also very open with me: they would often discuss issues they were having in class and general debates related to my research. One of the teachers helped me design some of the research methods I used. All these relationships were very rewarding as an experience and taught me a lot about the school, its staff and young people, communities where the young people came from and education in general, especially special education. Finally, when it came to doing research sessions, the staff at the Special School were helpful with every process. They helped me get relevant permission, helped me organise sessions and gave up a lot of their time as participants.

3.3.1.2 Reflection on Young People

There are major limitations in trying to evaluate other’s behaviour through a diary which was written during a long period of immersion. This section is not therefore intended to be comprehensive and conclusive – it is a reflection on what I experienced.

The young people attending the Special School were all very different people, but were similar in that most had been referred for ‘behavioural’ reasons. In particular

many had experienced conflict with their mainstream school, labelled as having 'anger issues' or 'emotional and behavioural difficulties'. Another factor that seemed to unite many of the young people at the Special School was their background. The city is large and contains many areas of deprivation: I worked closely for prolonged periods with at least 20 young people while at the school, and felt that most, if not all, came from communities experiencing deprivation. As I developed closer relationships with the young people, I got a powerful sense of the major difficulties and experiences of oppression in these young people's lives, occurring before and after a school day, which made their experiences within education simultaneously seem very frustrating and unjust, and at the same time of lesser importance.

There was a sense of event when a young person first came to visit: everyone would greet them, learn their name and encourage them to engage in conversation. They visited with their family, were shown around, spent time with the Headteacher and the teacher they would be working with, and met other young people, teachers, classroom assistants, the school Secretary, Janitors and lunchtime Supervisors. The visits seemed very positive and emphasised a 'new start' for the young people.

The interactions right from this early point seemed markedly different from mainstream secondary education. All adults were available to the young people and wished to engage in conversation, notable by the accessibility of the Headteacher. When sessions started much of this initial experience seemed to carry on, but of course conflict would emerge and their experience at the school was not quite as straightforward as might have been communicated in the beginning. Staff seemed aware of this dichotomy, of conveying positive hopes for the sessions somewhat

over optimistically, but it seemed a way of communicating trust and positive expectations to the young people that was important in itself. Once settled into the sessions, with a small group of young people, a teacher and at least one classroom assistant, the dynamics of each group would always vary, but conflict could often emerge which was hectic, very aggressive, prolonged, chaotic and very tiring for all involved. In the extract below I am trying to make sense of a particularly difficult day at the school¹¹. In this extract I am blaming the young people to an extent. I did feel however conflict would reach a point of no return and where the young people would change and it would not be possible to talk to them or use any ‘negotiating’ strategy, even to engage them in conversation.

There often seemed a lot of anger and frustration within the young people. I felt much of that anger came from being afforded no space or opportunity to reflect on their experiences, no chance in education or elsewhere to speak about and think about oppressive situations and most importantly to have people listen. On the one hand the young people seemed to find this at the Special School: they seemed struck hugely by the way adults related to them listened to them, and made space for reflection. On the other hand there were limitations at the Special School that meant reflection and discussion often involved assuming the behaviour of the young

¹¹ Phew! Today the pupils at the school were the most difficult I've seen them. I genuinely like all of them, but the teenagers I know and love were a lot less visible today. Sometimes it feels like they have an automatic pilot when they can no longer cope which includes running non-stop around the school, trying to upset teachers to get more attention, trying to start fights with other pupils, and often trying to distract anyone who has calmed down and is listening to the teacher. I didn't feel angry towards any of them at all, even though they frequently swore at me, told me they hated me in particular and one whacked me on the back of the head!

(SS Diary)

person was to blame for conflict and that the young person could change¹². Action and social change is also hugely important to people's wellbeing, and this seemed absent from the young people's lives more generally but also absent within the Special School. Outside the classroom staff at the school were often engaged in challenging the schools, teachers and the system, but this was not communicated to the young people, and I felt this was problematic. Furthermore the 'coping skills' that the young people were learning seemed unpractical to me and, as there was conflict in the school, seemed ineffective. Exercises for anger management like deep breathing and counting to ten are very difficult to put into practice in very unjust and frustrating situations and are reminiscent of individualising and psychologising techniques such as cognitive behavioural therapy. Aggressive reactions did seem extreme, but they also struck me under certain circumstances (not just at the Special School), as being often the only reactions available to the young people. In such limiting conditions as education these actions seemed ways of surviving they had needed to learn that they were sophisticated very skilled in. It never took much time to gain a huge amount of respect for them, soon seeing what others hadn't, simply by getting to know them.

3.3.1.3 Reflection on Staff

Staff would spend a huge amount of time negotiating with young people. For example, staff would spend at least an hour negotiating time in the local park, instead of classroom time, in exchange for a short period of classroom work the

¹² *Did occur to me though that the things they do with the yp are all (I think) about managing their behaviour, not acting to change others, which is of course a near impossible thing to do – I guess they are about changing others too – seminars, outreach and the closeness they have with parents.*

(SS Diary)

teacher had planned. There was a element of coercion to instances like this and the planned work was sometimes problematic (discussing how to ‘manage’ anger for example), but the pressure to ‘do work’ was much more relaxed than in mainstream education and so teachers were much more flexible. Teachers did not often seem determined to force the young people to do work, and the outcome of what would happen in a morning – do some planned work, go to the park, discuss something else, work through an argument – was usually unclear and open to change at the start of a lesson.

It struck me that most of the staff seemed ‘local’ in some way, and that it had an impact on the relationships they developed with the young people. The staff seemed to have a strong sense of community and an affinity with the city they lived in. In interaction with the young people this seemed important: the staff had knowledge of the communities the young people were from, past pupils who had come from the same areas, and would often engage the young people in discussion about their communities. In this way interaction seemed engaging and more at ease: there seemed an affinity in their ways of speaking and being.

The assistant and non-teaching staff seemed to play very important roles at the Special School. They tended to develop very close relationships with the young people, and interacted in different ways to the teachers and I learned a lot from working with them and observing them. Their ways of speaking and being seemed far less influenced by problematic, institutional, educational discourse and practice, no doubt due to the fact they had not been immersed in mainstream schools or had formal teacher training.

3.3.2 High School

After initial access was gained, an entire school year was spent volunteering once a week as a Support for Learning Assistant (SLA) in various classes in the maths department. Due to the long time spent in the maths department and the perceived role of an SLA, it was possible to gain detailed insights into life in a classroom. Due to my spending most of the year volunteering, and due to my age and perceived status in comparison to teachers, it did not take long for teachers and pupils alike to be very comfortable with my being there. While interviews and textual analysis are useful, it is impossible to understand what really happens in a classroom without spending a lot of time in them, and this period of participant observation was essential.

Opposing agendas and patterns of power were evident in classrooms, in similar ways to my experiences with the young people at the Youth Project. There were differences: the agenda of a teacher is somewhat different to that of a researcher, and the larger imbalance in power seemed to have effects on the forms of resistance the young people took. Nevertheless, the performances were often surprisingly similar and had implications for the teacher and the young people.

3.3.2.1 Subjective Experience

While working as a classroom assistant I experienced the sense of being in opposition to the young people. The powerful institutional norms and boundaries were impossible to resist at times. My diary shows I often became actively drawn into performing authoritarian roles, despite my standpoint with young people, something which became particularly important to reflect upon.

Much of the time I was an observer of authority, by nature of being an assistant. I

often disagreed with the way a teacher was interacting with the class and rather than reinforcing their actions I would try to be neutral. I felt I could not side with the pupils and remain a classroom assistant¹³. Despite this, given the right situation, I found myself being drawn into conflict with pupils. I might have been on my own with pupils and given in to the ‘fear’ I felt that I was about to ‘lose control’. Or the young people might have decided they wanted to have fun with the lesson or situation, and my negotiating or dialogical skills would be no match for their quick wit and I would revert back to scolding and making threats. Being immersed in this environment, as well as the other educational settings it became harder to be critical and reflective.

3.3.2.2 Reflection on Young People

I noted the diversity of young people in the school, and differing goals they had. Some young people seemed to want educational attainment and did not resist the control of teachers and education. Other young people seemed to be in conflict with teachers far more often and seemed to be resisting rules and attempts at control in the classroom and the school generally. These differences would vary and fluctuate within and between groups of pupils and individuals, with a spectrum of performances. Where pupils’ agendas appeared to conflict with the teacher’s, these

¹³ *It’s interesting when bad situations occur and I’m in the class, how often the pupils look to me to save them. It’s a nightmare because I have no power to stand up for them against the teacher. It’s an ingrained rule that the adults side against young people; the classroom assistant with the teacher. I know for a fact that if I even facially expressed a wish to side with the young people the teacher would get very angry. I still refuse in my own way though. I never tell the pupils off in the same way, I help them a lot and am as fair as possible. When they come to me looking for approval over the teacher I just remain neutral – “that’s not my decision”, “you’ll have to ask the teacher”. I just don’t know what else I can do.*

(HS Diary)

wishes appeared to include: not wanting to do work, not wanting to follow the teacher's direction; or wanting to have fun. There seemed to be a difference in the emphasis of these interactions from those at the Youth Project. At the Youth Project I was actively placing emphasis away from 'doing work', or following my direction. So while it still existed there was less conflict in this area than in a classroom, where the teacher's main agenda is to have the pupils doing set work and following instructions. In classrooms there seemed to be much more following of direction and doing work, but when conflict arose against this control it was much more serious and was resisted more by a teacher. In school aims of having fun or making fun of others are often actively discouraged or even prohibited in class, and so this behaviour occurred less than in my sessions, and created conflict which was more heavily resisted by a teacher. In my sessions I was more open to the young people having fun, and was less likely to resist this; it was very rare for a teacher to let the pupils make fun of them for example, something which happened to me often. In fact one of the pupils in recorded discussion at this school noted that they really liked a teacher who let them make fun of them.

Resistance from young people in the High School seemed more subtle than the Youth Project or Special School. With a greater power imbalance in a school and a lot more to lose if one is reprimanded, most young people tended to resist in ways which would allow them to remain in the classroom. If a teacher and class were in conflict, a lesson would turn into a kind of game; how far the pupils could resist before they got told off, sent out, or worse. Rolling their eyes, saying something under their breath, saying or doing something in the split second when the teacher couldn't see them are all things I observed. Not following directions might involve being as slow as possible, pretending not to hear, or claiming to have

misunderstood. All these performances seemed very important to the young people who were resisting, perhaps because they were viewed the rest of the class.

For young people who had become disillusioned with school, conflict seemed more frequent and intense, both sides seeming to resist each other with every skill they had. My own experiences with the young people at the High School I described as “intimidating” at times¹⁴. With my lack of experience in controlling classroom methods I often felt powerless against their skills. However, changing my own behaviour did often appear to alleviate conflict.

Being open, communicating, evaluating interaction from a critical standpoint rather than a defensive, authoritarian one all helped to earn trust with more disillusioned young people¹⁵. Enabling learning rather than expecting compliance seemed to create less conflict, even within the confines of school.

3.3.2.3 Reflection on Staff

I often reflected on the performance of teachers. I found myself in an unusual position in the High School, able to observe almost unnoticed. Teachers seemed very used to having classroom assistance during their lessons, and despite them knowing I was there to learn and observe I quickly became seen as a Support for Learning Assistant (SLA) rather than a researcher. This role meant most teachers

¹⁴ *It's a very intimidating experience ... So many young people [in one place] is also scary*
(HS Diary)

¹⁵ *One of the 2nd/3rd years is very interesting. They often come in late, and walk in looking like they hate the place, sit down sullenly, get their book out at the last possible moment, roll their eyes, play with their pencil case and gear up for an argument with the teacher as soon as they can – all this I think because they struggle at maths and desperately don't want to be shown up in class. I try and give the pupil lots of help and encouragement but it's pretty hard for anyone to see vulnerability through the hard as nails façade – the teacher doesn't really!*

(HS Diary)

were at ease with me in the classroom and appeared to interact with the class in the same way they always would. There is no equivalent way to observe a class while being absent from it and so it is not possible to compare, but teachers nevertheless appeared comfortable and significantly unafraid at times to behave in ways which could be viewed as ‘bad practice’ in the teaching profession.

From a teacher’s standpoint, their agenda is somewhat different to that of a researcher, or mine at the Youth Project, the main aim being to teach a subject. While different teachers have different ideas about how to teach and beliefs which range from advocating a kind of Freirian banking style of teaching to more dialogical approaches, much of teaching has become about curriculum. This includes: a list of topics, lesson plans, national tests, all to complete within a year or term. Because of pressure from government this curriculum, further than the usual agendas of a teacher, for instance to communicate knowledge to a class or to nurture pupils socially, often felt as though it had become a primary goal¹⁶. To do this seemed often in direct opposition to what pupils wanted to do, and so teachers then had to resort to control.

There did seem to be more ‘positive’ strategies for classroom teaching, involving humour, wit, actions deemed to be ‘fair’ or interesting. I observed classes change instantly with different teachers – those who used fair judgement and humour would have a class listening and those who got angry or very controlling would experience

¹⁶ *Undoubtedly the rise in ‘ideas’ from the government must make more work. There seem to be so many curriculum books around here and so many types of courses running at once (Int 1, Int 2, credit, standard, higher etc) rather than a continuum of maths – many courses overlap.*

(HS Diary)

utmost resistance from their pupils. Despite the pupils responding to these strategies however, almost every strategy in the end seemed to involve power over the class.

As well as actions, a wide spectrum of different beliefs were conveyed by teachers. In relation to young people teachers had varying opinions and sometimes communicated these to me¹⁷. Opinions or beliefs about young people were rarely openly discussed as there was little time for discussion. There was a small number of staff who had more collaborative, respectful and furthermore open (i.e. they would speak about them) beliefs about young people. Equally there were a small number of teachers who had very oppositional opinions of their pupils and usually young people in general¹⁸. I found these teachers immensely frustrating. Assisting their classes, as previously mentioned, was difficult¹⁹. As frustrating as I found these experiences, I also felt there was more to these beliefs. As the young people expressed their frustrations, so too were these teachers. Finding constant pressure

¹⁷ *One problem [communicated] was that so many young people expect their parents to support them forever and don't even think about jobs, money, pride, self earning etc.*

[One teacher thought that] forcing young people to do certain lessons was a waste of time and detrimental to young people

(HS Diary)

¹⁸ *There are a tiny few who are proactive in their dislike for this new breed of children who doesn't sit and listen. They think exclusion is a good thing...*

(HS Diary)

¹⁹ *Sometimes it is very obvious that the teacher has low expectations of a pupil or class, and sometimes the teacher will discuss these things with me (expecting me to collude) in front of the class. Irrational emotions like these lead to mistakes – often the wrong person is told off, or not the worst behaved, and so injustice creeps in. I feel I really have to bite my tongue in these situations.*

(HS Diary)

on their time and with new skills expected of them continually, these teachers seemed to be experiencing oppression and like so many others directing their frustration problematically. Crucially, with so little communication and time for thinking and reflection, these teachers seemed to have no time to reflect on ultimate reasons why they were experiencing such stressful situations.

3.3.3 Roles in the Field: Different ‘Selves’

A very important aspect of my research and this period of immersion was trying to develop good relationships in the fields I was immersing myself in. I was attempting to enter schools which did not know me and I was approaching Headteachers, and later other teachers and pupils, without people having clear prior knowledge of who I was. I was also trying to make good relationships at various levels simultaneously. If the young people liked me and yet the teachers resented me, I would not get very far. As well as this building of relationships, there were many cases where I was trying to prevent negative opinions of myself, and to erase problematic assumptions people might have about me. This meant being very careful at all times in what I said, explaining very carefully what I would like to do at a school. People often make a lot of assumptions about a person as soon as they meet them, and I was very aware of being English, female, young and academic to name but a few. I therefore sometimes felt that people were judging me negatively on these counts and tried all I could to combat this and forge trust. Concentrating constantly on communication and forging relationships can be exhausting and I did not always get it right. But nevertheless it was a vital aspect of my immersion in the field, and made carrying out research more successful.

In the Youth Project, I already had very good relationships with the staff, and

because of this they were very supportive in what I wanted to do. As I wanted to spend a whole year with one group of young people it was vital for me to make good relationships with them as well. This is one of the primary reasons why I worked with them for the whole year, one afternoon a week. This kind of contact was just not possible in the other two settings. In the Special School I spent time trying to forge good relationships with young people whose classes I was assisting, as this is an important part of a teaching assistant's job; hugely exhausting but immensely rewarding. The pupils I did research with I met a couple of weeks beforehand, and spent as much time as possible in their classrooms before the research began. In the High School I only had the opportunity to meet the young people I was doing group work with at the first session. In this case all I could do was try to demonstrate to them that I was someone who would listen without judgement.

As well as the young people I tried to get to know other people at various different levels within the settings. It was important to make good connections with staff as they had the power to allow me to do research, but also had a wealth of knowledge and experience I could learn from. Going in 'cold' made it doubly important that I interact well with staff to gain their trust, but also made this process very difficult. In the High School for example, I had a huge sense of not fitting in, and constantly felt that my role there was very ill defined. In such a large school it was just not possible to make good relationships with the school as a whole, and perhaps my research suffered as a result. In the Special School on the other hand the relationships I made had huge implications for my research. The school is a small one with a staff of about 25, and by nature of it being a special school the staff aim to be caring and welcoming. I was welcomed immediately into the school as part of

the adult group, and cannot remember there being a time when I felt really uncomfortable.

3.4 Design of Research: Special School and High School

During immersion I went through a process of research design and organisation, in collaboration with the schools and my supervisors, and informed by my immersion in the settings. The following sections describe this process of research design.

3.4.1 Special School

Plans for doing research at the Special School began at the end of October 2004, with actual research going ahead in February 2005. I approached the Headteacher at the end of October with various ideas, which were informed by my experience at the school and discussion with staff, and were based on what I thought the school would have time for and what kinds of research would be possible with staff or young people. I had not at this stage been able to collaborate with young people in the design of the research. Aside from young people being quite busy in the short time they attended the Special School, the methods and process I would be able to apply at the school were not very collaborative in nature, and so involving young people in the design would be tokenistic due to the barriers that were in place for me.

The Headteacher was open to doing research and agreed to me attending a staff meeting to discuss my ideas the following week. I compiled my ideas into a few pages which I left several copies of in the staff room for people to read (Appendix C).

At the meeting staff were very positive about my doing research and mentioned

many further ideas. These included: visiting the mainstream schools of the young people in the research to gain further understanding; using the art room at the Special School to make really creative work; a lot of creative ideas from the Art Teacher; and perhaps a comparison between primary and secondary schools and pupils. To do all of these would have been impossible, but the enthusiasm of the staff was reassuring and very helpful.

Following this I drafted possible guides for group work with staff and young people, ethics applications and drafts of letters, all to submit to staff for approval. Many teachers were busy and communicated that they trusted me enough not to need to read through the drafts, but I made sure key stakeholders, in particular a Depute Headteacher and the Principal Teacher gave full approval.

At this stage the Principal Teacher showed interest in the research I wanted to do with the young people. At the time I was assisting their classes and so we were working together much of the time, but this particular teacher was also attracted by critical engagement in research on education and more creative research methods. I therefore had a lot of valuable input from the Principal Teacher in designing research with young people at the school. We designed four sessions, to be carried out with a small class of young people to fit into the school's timetable. Lessons at the Special School had various similarities to research I wanted to do and probably in some part informed my design, but it was not hard to fit creative research into the young people's timetables. Lessons at the school focus very much on reflection and discussion, about issues in the young people's lives, often using creative means to express themselves, including; art work, role play, film making, or games.

The content of the planned sessions are briefly described below, but can be found in greater detail in Appendix C²⁰.

None of my work with young people involved asking them direct questions about school exclusion, even though at the time this was the impetus for the research. On the one hand this was because ‘school exclusion’ is a term used by the education system. While most young people would no doubt understand it, the term is not something they would use to describe their experiences. When describing one’s own life few people would use words like ‘exclusion’ or ‘oppression’. Even at the start of my research, it was clear that exclusion was a symptom of underlying causes, and that it would be necessary to discuss with young people what they felt those were rather than limited discourse on exclusion itself: the design of research with the young people reflects this.

For research with staff, the Depute Headteacher suggested incorporating group research into staff training days, as a morning or afternoon seminar, and so it was decided to do two half day group sessions with all staff (at this stage I hoped non-teaching staff would be attending). This was important as it meant staff were being

²⁰ *Best and Worst School Experience – to draw pictures of the best and worst experience while discussing them, in order to reflect on concrete experiences of school, with creative elements to help describe past events*

Classroom Role-play – a session where as a group we would work through role plays of things that happen in a classroom, both positive and negative, with the possibility of making a short film at the end

Feelings Session – a session to try and combine concrete or hypothetical events with how they have or might make the young people feel. A difficult thing for people to express, the idea in this session was to make big collages of statements (of events in school) linked to emotion words or pictures (smiley/sad faces etc.), describing how the young people might feel

My School – a chance for the young people to talk about what they would like to see happening in schools. As well as reflection and discussion, the young people make brochures of an imaginary school that they have designed.

(Original research plans can be found Appendix C)

paid and I was not taking away from their teaching time. The two sessions were mainly developed through discussion with my supervisors. We felt the strengths of working with staff at this school was that they seemed to be very experienced experts in the field of education, both in their practice teaching and working with young people, and in their thinking, assumptions and beliefs about young people and education. The first session was planned as small group discussions about the exclusion of young people from schools, problems teachers and schools face, and what needs to change in education. It would be made clear to the staff that discussion could include anything they felt was important, and not all topics from the provided topic guide would need to be discussed; the emphasis would be on an informal and unstructured style. The second session was designed to get more theoretical feedback from the staff. An extract from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), on the theory of banking and the prescriptive notions of two way dialogue and conscientization would be made available for discussion. This would focus on theory, as well as discussion on the research at the Youth Project where I was trying to put this theory into practice. The idea was to get feedback from experienced people, many of whom practiced radical methods in their teaching, not unlike Freire's ideas. As well as this group work two interviews with key staff were carried out: one with the Headteacher of the school and one with the Principal Teacher, in order to gain insight into the structural and Local Authority levels of the school and special education. See Appendix C for details of all these plans.

In January the plans for research were put together into an application to do research, for the city council's Education Authority, as well as an ethics application to the Department of Psychology at the University of Stirling. The application to the council included a letter from the Depute Headteacher of the Special School,

confirming that they fully supported my wish to do research. It is important to note here that much research done in schools is designed and applied for without any input from a school, and that if it is approved by the council they then pick a school to be involved. The process I undertook, while a long one had huge ethical implications, in contrast with conventional methods, as the school were informed and involved throughout. Perhaps as a result what was also unusual was that the ethics application to the Education Authority was passed in a week without problems.

Once permission was granted from both bodies plans were put into action. It had not been possible before this permission was granted to think about which young people might be approached to do the research, as it was unclear when the research would coincide with which groups attending the school. Once permission had been given, the management staff at the school met to consider which young people would be best to approach (it was not possible or appropriate for me to be involved at this stage). They decided upon a group who were due to start in two weeks and I was given details with which to contact the parents to get permission. The group was chosen because the teacher who had met them and was about to work with them felt firstly that they would be interested in talking and would be open and frank, and secondly that they had been treated somewhat unfairly by their mainstream schools who had in various ways excluded them on grounds of behaviour. Letters were sent to parents who were asked to send a permission slip back and I called them personally to make sure they, and the young people were fully aware of what my research entailed (see Appendix E for example parental consent letter).

Thus everything had been planned and decided before the young people even began attending the Special School. This was certainly not ideal in terms of participatory research, but was the only way within institutional boundaries. The young people would have been well within their rights to be mistrustful and guarded of the research but this was not conveyed. The letters home had caused quite a stir and they seemed quite excited that they would be part of some research. I spent time with them informally (a few afternoon lessons and break times) getting to know them, and then we met as a group and I explained fully what was involved. They seemed happy to do the sessions and we signed the research agreements, a copy of which they each kept (see Appendix E for example agreements).

There were several limitations to this process. The 'ethical' process leading up to the young people agreeing to do the research made their agreement somewhat tokenistic, and set the ground for a conventional adult-child relationship. The young people may have also had very conventional expectations of what research might be, and may either want to comply or resist, both of which would be problematic actions for them to take in relation to the research. Equally the sessions would be timetabled and so would be much like lessons, again with the conventional expectations attached. I would have to behave more like a teacher and would be leading the already planned sessions. This inequality of power might again lead to the young people resisting and there being conflict, or complying and being conventional 'students', for example giving me answers they think I want to hear or are 'correct'.

Things which led me to be positive about the planned research included the fact that lessons at the Special School were already far from conventional and, up to a point,

encouraged the young people to think critically. I also took every care, from the parent's letter to informal discussion with the young people, to explain my position and the nature of my research. I stressed that the young people were experts, that I wanted to listen to them, and that the sessions would be very informal.

Research with the staff went ahead as planned. However, I was not made aware until the afternoon of the first session, that only teachers and teaching assistants attend training days. Furthermore the Headteacher and one of the Depute Headteachers chose not to take part as they felt teachers would be more comfortable talking without them present. Agreements between us were signed at the beginning of the first session, where I went carefully over the details of the research process (Appendix E).

3.4.2 High School

After a period of immersion in the maths department, I was still unsure how I would go about doing research. I decided it would be useful to receive feedback on this from staff, and so I sent an email to the maths department staff, detailing my ideas for doing research, primarily with teachers. I conveyed that I felt they may be too busy to do any research with me, that this would be fine if they would let me know, and that any feedback or ideas would be greatly received. I did not receive any emails back, but during informal discussion staff conveyed they were far too busy. They were positive about my ideas and interested, but offered no feedback.

As well as being unsure of how I might do research with staff I was even more uncertain of how I would go about doing research with young people. I had however made a contact in the pupil support department (one of the more senior staff) and went to meet them informally in November (2004), primarily to ask them

how the school supports pupils and what structures and strategies are in place. As well as a very useful and insightful conversation, they seemed interested in my research, and believed it would not be too difficult to work with pupils: they identified a small number of pupils who had experienced exclusion and might be interested in talking to me. I met with them again to discuss how to move forward, as they seemed positive that it would be possible to organise. I suggested I draft a plan of what I would like to do, in particular for an ethics application for the Education Authority. I made it clear that this would not be sent, but that it would give a clear idea to the teacher what processes would be involved, parental permission letters for instance, that would go into doing some research. The pupil support teacher emailed this to the Depute Headteacher of pupil support to see if it would be possible. At the same time I set up a meeting with another Depute Headteacher I had initially met to inform them of what had happened so far and to ask whether these ideas would be possible. I also hoped to get some advice on how I might go about doing research with teachers.

I attended the meeting two weeks before Christmas (2004), but found the Headteacher and both the Deputes present, and found they were not altogether happy about my doing research²¹. They were now very cautious, and caught me somewhat off guard. The two senior members of staff I had conversed with most had always been very open and positive about doing research, and so I had moved quickly in setting it up and had alarmed the other senior staff who knew nothing or

²¹ *To cut a long story short, the school is very busy and doesn't have time for a lot of research. They would also rather I focused on positive things, such as how they include students, as 1) they feel they don't exclude many now, an 2) they feel they are trying to create an extremely inclusive ethos in the school, and don't want to think in terms of exclusion any more*

little about it. They felt if I could focus on the positive things they were doing they would feel more comfortable and would be more open to my doing research. I tried to explain that we were not thinking that differently; that my emphasis on exclusion was simply a vehicle to gain a considered understanding of all the difficulties schools, teachers and pupils face as a community. I also explained that no examination of exclusion would be taken out of context and that they would be anonymous in my final report. Their worries were understandable knowing the pressure all schools face in performing in a way the education authority approves of. After the meeting I sent the management staff an email explaining that I could not change the title or focus of my work for one school. I proposed to produce an internal report for them to read that would be detailed and tailored to them. They could then, with my help if they wished produce a public report that they were happy with. I explained that aside from this I had, for the purposes of a PhD, to produce a more rigorous report that would stand up to scrutiny, but stressed that they would be unidentifiable in this work. They thanked me for the proposal and agreed to consider it.

During the next few months I followed up with the management staff asking them if they had made a decision. Finally in May 2005 they gave the go ahead and one of the Depute Headteachers agreed to support me through the process. I was given, with the help of the Depute access to teachers, staff meetings, and textual material. The staff member from pupil support was given the go ahead to assist me in approaching pupils and their parents. Once details had been agreed with these staff members an ethics form, along with a permission letter from the school was sent to the local Education Department and the University of Stirling Department of

Psychology, and permission was granted.

Various interviews and group discussions were recorded at the very end of the school year, during May and June of 2005. In the case of young people I was given access to a group of 6 young people, for 3 sessions lasting roughly 50 minutes (one class period). Discussions were very informal and centred around: things the young people liked or disliked about school; feeling part of the school versus feeling excluded and left out; actions of young people, teachers and the school; fair or unfair aspects of school; concrete events; feelings and opinions and any solutions they had to improve the school from their perspective (Appendix D). One of the 3 recordings failed to properly record and had to be discarded.

I also had the opportunity to interview 5 members of staff. I interviewed a Depute Headteacher (DHT) in charge of Pupil Support, the Head of Staged Intervention, and 2 other teachers – one who had just started teaching and one who had taught at the school for a number of years. A fifth teacher volunteered to be interviewed; a supply teacher teaching at the school for one term. A general topic guide for staff can be found in Appendix D.

Apart from observation and recorded material, there were a number of textual items which offered insight. These included policy documents from the school, including the school brochure and staff handbook. I also collected textual material from the local education authority (which the Youth Project also operates within), and this and the school's material are described in full in Appendix F. Finally I collected Scottish wide texts, including legislation relating to education and policy and guideline documents from the Scottish Executive (described in Chapter 5, cited in reference section).

3.5 Summary

Throughout this research praxis was of paramount importance, but the fluctuation between critical reflection and practice varied and was dependant on various institutional factors. During the first year of the PhD I spent a lot of time reflecting on theories such as those of Freire (1970/1996), and methods involving transformative and participatory work with young people. In parallel with reflection I was immersed in the Youth Project as a volunteer, which gave me the opportunity to develop relationships with young people. This meant the theory I was reflecting on and the practice I was engaged in could impact upon, challenge and inform one another. However, institutional constraints from both academia and secondary education meant I had to spend much time applying for permissions to do research, and so at that time I did not have the opportunity to be engaged in action research while I reflected. During the second year of my research, having gained access and permissions, I was intensely immersed in three research settings and engaged heavily in fieldwork. During this period the theories I had reflected upon previously were challenged greatly by practice, for instance the attempts at PAR we were engaged in as a group at the Youth Project. The level of practice required however left much less time for critical reflection and so the balance of praxis was tipped again. Furthermore the powerful institutional setting of education made reflection and thinking critically, very difficult. Immersion in education gave me first hand experience of the powerful force such an institution can have on thinking and actions, and this gave me the opportunity not only to reflect on how this had affected my research, but to use my personal experience itself to draw on when thinking about problems in education.

During this second year, the time that had been required to negotiate research in

these settings and to gain permission was such that the recorded research occurred towards the end of that academic year. Thus the institutional norms of secondary education required me to leave all three research settings rather swiftly after carrying out recorded research, as the summer holidays began. It might have been possible to return after this break, but again institutional barriers came into play, in particular academic expectations that work must be completed within three or four years, meaning that there simply wasn't time to return and work further with the young people and staff. Throughout the research process institutional limitations meant that it was not possible to create an ideal balance (as it rarely is) between critical reflection and practice or action, and this will be reflected on in later chapters.

Chapter 4: Introduction to Analysis, Reflection and the Process of Constructing Knowledge

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the process that occurred in the final two years of the PhD, involving: analysis, reflection and knowledge construction. In this way I demonstrate the epistemology, methodology and method involved in the account presented in the following four chapters. This process did not draw on conventionally prescribed methods of analysis, and analysis was not carried out in 'steps', one after the other. Aspects of praxis that are described below were carried out together, in relation to and in dialogue with one another. The various aspects involved in constructing an account such as developing my methodological position or analysing material, did not all begin and end neatly one after the other. Rather they all developed cyclically, my position developing as I considered literature, which informed the way in which I analysed the text, which all in turn informed the way an account was constructed, and so on.

In the first two years, practice involved actually being in the field, and reflection was related to those experiences. Institutional factors in relation to completing a PhD and the finite time I had permission to be immersed in education, meant it was not possible to remain in the field and co-perform analysis or co-construct the account of the research. Thus in the final two years I moved from prolonged engagement in settings, to transcribing, analysing and writing.

In many ways the process of analysing, reflecting and constructing knowledge was a fluid, flexible and creative process. However, the creativity of the process did not mean a lack of rigour. Specific steps or procedures designed by particular academics were not mechanically adhered to, and in fact much literature cautions against this kind of approach. Potter and Wetherell (1987) state that there is not a

method of analysis which can be unproblematically applied to all research: “there is no analytic method... rather, there is a broad theoretical framework” (p.169). Van Dijk (2001) writes against following “ready-made method”, or particular approaches, which he feels would be incompatible with a critical approach: “I have found that contributions that imitate some great master are seldom original... Good scholarship... should integrate the best work of many people, famous or not, from different disciplines, directions of research” (van Dijk, 2001, pp. 95-96). Few pieces of literature go into great depth about the process of reflection, practice and knowledge construction involved in analysis.

The methods of critical reflection, problem posing, searching for unexpected accounts and uncovering assumptions which initially mask inequalities are methods not only rarely written about but also marginalised and devalued, as described by Smith (1997)²². In this way the analysis process aimed to be creative, exploratory and flexible, while simultaneously using careful and critical reflection.

While methodologies and methods were critiqued and the reflective process developed, analysis was continually performed and re-performed. As methodological approaches to research material were reflected upon they had an impact on actual analysis, and the account that was being constructed. This in turn allowed for meaningful critique of theories, methodologies and methods in relation to actual research material. This allowed for a process of reflection and re-

²² *Our current attitudes towards research and theory-building have become fragmented and frozen so that we operate stiffly within finite boundaries. We devalue the potential of people’s everyday experiences because they do not live up to standards determined by some external body*

(Smith, 1997, p. 244)

reflection, in dialogue with analysis and re-analysis, developing over time a more meaningful construction of knowledge.

This chapter serves to make visible the process involved in analysis, reflection and knowledge construction presented in the next four chapters, in order to locate the account in a particular approach that was creative, rigorous, grounded in praxis and relevant to the research itself. The first section explores the preliminary focus of practice: transcription and immersion in research material. This section also summarises the extent and nature of the material I was reflecting upon. The next section focuses on critical reflection, on the reflective aspects of praxis that developed during the construction of my account. It describes the lines of enquiry that developed and the way in which my epistemological and methodological position developed, in relation to relevant literature. Finally the chapter turns to reflection on methods of analysis, on the process of analysing and developing the account in the next four chapters.

4.2 Immersion in Research Material

An important process was to spend time immersing myself in the data, transcribing the recorded tapes and reading and re-reading transcripts several times to become better acquainted with the material. The advantage of carrying out all research and transcription myself, though a time consuming task, meant I had much deeper understanding. With such a wide variety and such volume this was an important process.

4.2.1.1 Research Material

While becoming familiar with and immersing myself in the research material, it was important to reflect on which material could contribute to my account. In working

with young people and staff I had recorded conventional material, such as audio tapes of one-to-one interviews and group discussions, and I had collected a lot of textual information from the three settings such as school brochures and policy documents. I also had less conventional material such as drawings done by the young people, written material, lists and cognitive mapping-style pieces, and a piece of role play which the young people at the Special School had filmed. In addition to this there was a lot of contextual and experiential matter, which not only had potential to make the recorded material much more rich, but offered insight in its own right. My fieldwork diaries for all three research settings spanned an entire academic year of immersion, describing subjective experiences as a researcher and a member of staff. I also felt my memory of the spaces was important. It allowed me to reflect on what I had written in my fieldwork diaries; whether I still felt the same, whether I found what I had written unusual. In some cases I may have forgotten to write about an important aspect of the setting or the people that was important. I felt that while it would be very difficult to use information like this, it could possibly provide rich insight and was worth exploring.

The unconventional resources I had were treated as research material. Memory, personal experience and even fieldwork diaries are problematic, even from a critical perspective. Conventionally resources such as these are often discarded for failing to be rigorous enough: memory of events for example is often termed too 'subjective' to be used, where subjectivity is viewed as a negative. As a community psychologist I did not view this to be a compelling enough argument to discard rich material. I did feel there were issues relating to power, knowledge, and working in an institution that would have affected my experiences and my diaries, for example internalising institutional beliefs about education and young people. I felt the

findings could be enriched if these issues could be explored rather than used as reasons to discard. To do this, ultimately the vital ‘analysis’ tool applied to these resources was a creative process informed by critical reflection, often in collaboration with others like my supervisor. My experiences, my memory of the environment, events, things I had forgotten to write down but felt were of importance, along with all the material, were reflected upon carefully, critically, and crucially with other people as described later on. The next three sections describe in detail the material collated for each setting: a detailed summary of material can be found in Appendix F.

4.2.1.1.1 Youth Project

From the Youth Project there were two sets of somewhat separate data; information from the six recorded sessions at the end of the year, in which we focused on experiences and opinions the young people had of school exclusion, their school and education in general. Sessions prior to this were not tape recorded, but were used as material (via field work diary, pictures created by young people, memory etc.), as well as creating a rich context for more detailed analysis of the recorded sessions.

The recorded sessions included a variety of material (see 3.2.1 for description of sessions). I had often made textual planning in preparation for the sessions, such as information sheets or ideas for projects. I had made field notes, including a reflection of interactions that occurred immediately before and after the sessions themselves. Audio tapes of the sessions were typed into transcripts. Finally, there was art work, drawings, lists and cognitive maps, pieces written on computer, and a website created by one of the young people, that we had produced during these

sessions.

4.2.1.1.2 Special School

The Special School was in a different authority to the other two settings, and so I had collected slightly different local government policy and procedural information. I also had procedural, policy and curriculum documents for the school itself. I had developed contextual knowledge from spending a year at the school and had kept a fieldwork diary.

Recorded research involved four young people (aged 11-13 years) and I, doing four sessions together (see 3.4.1 for description of sessions). As well as recordings which were transcribed material included: my field work diary for the sessions; material I had prepared for the sessions; art work the young people had made; textual work such as lists written on the classroom board or cognitive mapping; and a role play which the young people had filmed. There were problems with the audio recordings: the first session did not properly record, and the second and third sessions recorded badly because the young people were moving around the classroom away from the microphone much of the time. For the first session I took more detailed notes directly after, to try and preserve some information. The difficulty in transcribing the second and third sessions was due to the more relaxed sessions; as a group we had produced very rich and creative material; drawings as well as the video, and these were useful in analysis and reflection.

With staff, analysis drew on: tape recordings made of one to one and group discussion; diary entries from these discussions; and preparatory material I had collated.

4.2.1.1.3 High School

I collected a lot of textual material, relating to policy and procedure at a school and local authority level, including: the school prospectus; the staff handbook; school rules and detailed policies; a recent HMI inspection report; results of a questionnaire survey carried out with staff and pupils; a copy of a training session carried out on positive behaviour; and a report written by a Deputy Head Teacher on the school's inclusive strategies (see Appendix F for further description). This material was the most comprehensive textual information I had for a setting and was also more directly related to mainstream education.

Spending an academic year at the school volunteering as a Support for Learning Assistant meant I had experienced life in the Maths department in classes of all ages, and had kept a fieldwork diary. I had also had the opportunity to attend a mathematics departmental meeting and a house meeting which focused on pastoral issues with various young people, and had taken notes following observation.

I recorded interviews with five members of staff, all of whom were at different levels in the school and in their careers. Material included transcribed tapes, topic guides and fieldwork notes made at the time.

I carried out three sessions with a group of six young people at the High School. Sessions were tape recorded, I made fieldwork notes and preparatory notes, and the young people made drawings during the sessions. Though this had been an opportunity for the young people to express themselves creatively if they wished, they had chosen to use it as a relaxing activity while talking, and so the drawings were not related to the research (for further description of material, see 3.4.2).

4.2.1.2 Contextual Differences

This section reflects upon the contextual differences between materials from the three settings, to demonstrate the consideration that went into constructing an account. I focus here on contextual differences in relation to the young people I worked with: similar considerations were involved in analysing research carried out with teachers and in relation to the settings themselves.

At the High School I had developed contextual knowledge of the young people's educational environment. I had not however had the opportunity to get to know the young people before research, and knew much less of the community they lived in. On the other hand I had carried out a year's immersion and ethnography at the school and so could relate the young people's conveyed opinions or experiences to my knowledge of the school context.

When working with the young people at the Special School, I had not met them before and knew next to nothing about either the communities they came from or the mainstream schools they had been referred from, except for the accounts the young people offered. Further to this the young people themselves were from different schools and communities and so did not have shared experiences of school.

At the Youth Project the young people knew each other very well, were from the same community and had shared experiences of both school and their lives outside school. I had spent time at the Youth Project and in the town for three years in total. I had worked with two similar groups of young people prior to this group, carrying out research for my undergraduate dissertation with the first group. Despite being an outsider to the town, I had spent a lot of time immersed in the community,

meeting many community members through the staff at the Youth Project (some of whom had grown up in the town), and I had even spent time socialising there. I had had the time, a school year in each case, to develop relationships with the young people. Through this and contact during the previous three years I had met and spent time with several of the teachers that the young people described.

These different levels of contextual knowledge, different methods which had been made possible, and different groups of young people meant that my approach towards material in each setting had to be very different. Each piece of ethnography required different consideration and critical application, and each brought with it different difficulties or possibilities. I could draw on a large amount of material from the young people and my in-depth understanding of the context of the community and educational setting at the Youth Project. However I was aware that analysis had to carefully consider whether there were aspects of my experience and in-depth immersion which might affect analysis adversely. Having previously worked with two groups of young people at the Youth Project for instance, may have instilled preconceptions, quite possibly negative ones before I even met this group of young people. On the other hand I had still not been witness to past events the young people were describing. It became important to critically reflect as I analysed, what effect such deep immersion might have had in both negative and positive ways.

At the High School and the Special School consideration of my subjectivity and how this affected my contextual knowledge often related to reflecting on what I did not know. There were aspects of the young people's lives that I had not been privy to, and so their accounts needed to be considered in this context. When the young

people at the Special School described experiences in their mainstream education I had no accounts from others in that school, such as teachers they had been in conflict with. However, this absence of much context made it less likely I would collude with teachers' or schools' negative opinions or accounts of situations or events.

4.2.2 Critical Reflection

This section describes some of the details of carrying out critical reflection. It was a significantly important part of the sense-making and knowledge constructing process, and is described here to demonstrate the way in which reflection enabled critical process.

As critical reflection was a vital and ongoing process throughout the research, sense-making and reflecting on issues in education began in the field. Writing a diary while being immersed in the field enabled me to reflect on my experiences. Particularly when trying to do PAR with the young people at the Youth Project, reflecting on our sessions served to challenge practice and my decisions in the field, but it also served as an early sense-making stage in relation to my experiences. In diary entries, I was reflecting for example on ways in which I could change my own behaviour during the sessions in an attempt to make them more participatory. I often focused on making changes within myself. Reflecting on barriers I was finding within myself therefore allowed for development later on and construction of an account that considered the institutional barriers which make available very limited ways of acting in an educational environment.

Significantly, reflection was not done in isolation. Ideally critical reflection and analysis of research material should be done in dialogue with research participants.

This was not on the whole possible and is discussed in Chapter 9. This made critical reflection very important, and to do this with others, in particular my supervisor and second supervisor. Without outside perspective, assumptions and taken-for-granted 'truths' relating to education and young people, which I had internalised, would have been difficult to uncover and findings would have been less rich and more problematic from a community psychological perspective. Having others read my research material and provide accounts of issues they felt pertinent, or engaging in my account of the material, allowed for problem posing, critically engaging dialogue which raised issues which became important parts of the sense making process.

Just as I needed to reflect critically on how institutional assumptions in secondary education had affected my research or were affecting my analysis, it was equally important to remember that university as an institution would also be affecting my research with problematic assumptions. Thus critical group reflection between academics needed to be carried out as carefully as possible. In order to attempt meaningful critical reflection which would remain as faithful as possible to the people I had worked with (but did not have an opportunity to involve at this stage), reflection was grounded in my methodological position, my values and assumptions, and the contextual experiences I had shared with these people. In this way there were times when reflection with my supervisors became a process of negotiation. At times their reading of the material was challenged by my contextual knowledge or my position, and equally at times the research material and my assumptions about it were challenged by their problem posing.

Often material was reflected on several times, re-reflecting on the material or on

previous reflections relating to the material. Reflection and material began to inform each other in a cyclical process, using the position I had developed, which in turn had related to the research, and using the lines of enquiry I was developing.

4.2.3 Questions Asked of the Research: Lines of Enquiry

It is important to describe at this stage how the lines of enquiry, in relation to which I was analysing material, developed. As with other aspects of the research process this developed slowly over time as other areas of the research developed and impacted upon each other. Initially I was interested in exploring the issue of school exclusion. As my position developed and I became interested in uncovering underlying taken for granted inequalities, I began to view school exclusion as a symptom of more hidden and core issues in education. I did not feel school exclusion to be unimportant, and in fact I still went on to explore many issues surrounding it. I began however to view some of the core issues in education as problematic and necessary to explore in order to challenge inequalities such as school exclusion. This move meant examining what was most unexpected, or most unjust, or uncovering problematic assumptions, all from my epistemological and methodological positions, always from a standpoint with young people.

4.2.4 Epistemological and Methodological Position

I aimed to construct an account that challenged problems and inequalities rather than colluded with them, and so did not want to draw on epistemology and methodology that was individualising, blaming, positivist or disempowering.

An epistemological position was developed that involved a particular account of discourse. There are accounts of what discourse is or does that involve claims about 'truth', 'reality', what individuals 'mean' or how individuals 'use' strategies

discursively. These accounts tend to privilege problematic psychological and institutional theory (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Ireson & Hallam, 2005), as well as privileging isolated text without context or subjectivity (for example Willig's critique of Grounded Theory, 2001, p. 45).

This thesis views discourses as social phenomena that enact meaning, knowledge, power relations and social practices and create or limit ways of speaking and being: simultaneously discourses are influenced by these processes, and are co-constructed by individuals. Agency is positioned as important and valid in this account: dominant discourse may limit possibilities but these dominant discourses are constantly being re-constructed, and most importantly, are being resisted.

My account of discourse is influenced by a variety of theories, which are reflected upon in the literature section of the first chapter. The writings of Foucault have major implications for sense making and knowledge construction, and are particularly significant for both psychology and education (Hook, 2004; Parker, 2006; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Foucault reflected upon the socially constructed nature of discourse in an attempt to challenge us to consider the ways in which knowledges are inextricably linked to power. In the analysis for this thesis: language is regarded as a social practice; the relation between language and power is explored; the approach emphasises a political and ideological standpoint (concerned with unmasking problematic ideologies); and instances and possibilities of resistance are searched for (Wodak, 2001, in Wodak & Meyer (eds), p. 1-2). Parker's (1992, 2006) approach to discourse was particularly important for theory, methodology and method used in this thesis. Parker frames theories and approaches in relation to discourse in terms of the field of psychology, allowing for both a

critique of psychology itself and a critique of theory that is grounded in epistemology and methodology similar to this thesis, with a particular emphasis on praxis.

Much of the methodology and methods employed conventionally to analyse material qualitatively was found to be problematic in relation to my position and research. The position taken by researchers such as Potter and Wetherell (1987) was problematic, for example, because at times it positions a speaker or author as 'employing' certain discourses. Willig (2001) notes that Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (as she names it), tends to focus on discourse at higher levels such as social practices, rather than interaction between individuals. Indeed Foucault examined laws, 'traditions', news articles, and a variety of social practices, rather than interviews or group discussions. I wanted to ground the analysis in a Foucaultian theory of discourse, but wanted to examine all the discussions, drawings and writings produced by the people I worked with and by me, viewing all as 'texts'. Foucault (1972), describes discourses as present at all levels of communication and society, and assumes it possible to consider relations between 'statements' (his term for a variety of different kinds of 'utterance'), within and between speakers or authors, but also within and between different kinds of communication and different levels of society (p. 29).

4.2.5 Methods of Analysis

This section will describe a summary of the core theoretical and methodological assumptions that contributed to the methods employed in constructing an account of education and of young people's experiences.

The account of the research in this thesis involved analysis that was not limited by

prescribed methods, by limiting psychological theories or by institutional academic practices, but rather drew on a variety of complementary approaches. When reflecting on research material and constructing an account, Parker's (1992) work on 'criteria' for discourse analysis was very useful. Parker suggests that searching for the unexpected and the contradictory, what is different about what is being said, is fundamental to discourse analysis and is more important than searching for continuity. He also describes Bakhtin's work on 'multivoicedness' in language, searching for difference in a given text, for conflicting accounts, contradictory responses or accounts in one discussion, from one speaker, or various discourses present in one context, stressed as "points of contradiction that need to be taken seriously" (Parker, 2005, p. 89).

While searching for the unexpected, assumed and multivocal nature of material, Parker's criteria for analysing discourses were drawn upon. Particular attention was paid to 'objects', which appear as 'truths' or 'realities': ideas, notions or concepts which become constructed through discourse and take on the nature of being 'real' necessary or assumed. It was also useful to search research material for 'subjects': ways of describing people, describing one's own 'selves', or ways of being and acting, which make available certain ways of speaking, thinking and being within particular contexts and discourses. Finally, it was important to consider what identified discourses were *doing*. Discourses and social practices limit ways of being, speaking and thinking, and create performances, possibilities for control, resistance and compliance, and have implications for people and for power, knowledge and dominant assumptions.

I approached each setting, groups of text or individual texts differently, tailoring

analysis to each one depending on what was appropriate. Triangulation was used when appropriate or possible. This included triangulation of data: collecting together different accounts from different people relating to the same issue and collecting together different kinds of material from the same session, same conversation or same individual.

The most important and significant aspect of the process of analysis and knowledge construction was the development of a strong theoretical and reflective basis. The actual practice of processing the research material, grouping texts and statements into particular themes or important ideas was fairly straightforward, once analytic insight had been achieved. 'Coding', deciding a particular piece of text (or other material such as a picture) was important, was not limited to the level of word, sentence or paragraph: sections of text were coded with any surrounding contextual text when and where necessary. Grouping of ideas and themes were continuously developed, so that analysis and re-analysis was an ongoing process in synergy with other aspects of the research process. The flexibility of continual re-analysis was made possible with the use of NVIVO 7. NVIVO 7 allowed for a very complex process of 'underlining' that would not be possible otherwise and meant that analysis could be developed, reflected upon and then reanalysed with relative ease. It was important not to let the software tool affect the way in which knowledge became constructed, but it was a useful tool for handling such large amounts of research material in very flexible ways.

Transcripts used in analysis and which appear in the account in the next four chapters are positioned in the footnotes and the reasoning and implications for this will briefly be discussed here. PhD regulations place a word limit on the length of

the main body of the thesis: in the final stages of writing the main body was considerably edited and cut but it was felt that important information would be lost had it been cut further. One way of ensuring the word limit was not exceeded was to take transcript out of the main body. These constraints have major implications for this work: removing the transcripts from the main body literally marginalises the young people's voice (and the teachers'), totally reproducing their experiences elsewhere. There are many other ways in which thesis conventions marginalised the young people's involvement, for example the need to use 'academic' language, but none more explicit. Conventionally transcript is often placed in the appendix. It was felt this was unacceptable: the young people's accounts would be completely removed from the thesis, and it would also make referring to the many excerpts used very difficult and cumbersome. The decision was therefore taken to place the excerpts in the footnotes and to use the footnotes in an unorthodox, un-academic way. The footnotes are not used to an academic standard; it is necessary in places for example to read the footnotes in order for the main body to make sense, unlike conventional footnotes which should be a 'voluntary' read rather than a requirement. They do ensure however that the excerpts are on the page, alongside my writing, and should be explicitly viewed with greater importance than their position in the footnotes suggest.

4.3 Development of Account

This section provides a summary of the ways in which the account of issues in education developed, as the process of praxis progressed, and makes visible some of the sense making process that went into creating the next four chapters. It describes the journey that was engaged in and the themes which were constructed,

demonstrating in some detail the process of analysis that occurred to construct the final account presented in the next four chapters.

The first material to be analysed and reflected upon was from the Youth Project. At first the sessions did not seem to be as participatory for the young people as I had hoped, and we had engaged in very little transformative action. Furthermore, initially the sessions did not appear to enable the young people to communicate many opinions or experiences. What surprised me however on reflection was the amount of conflict the young people and I had engaged in: often we seemed to be resisting each other and trying to control each other rather than engaging in dialogue. I also reflected on some of the unexpected ways I seemed to be behaving, often attempting to control the sessions, which was contrary to my agenda and often reminiscent of behaviour I would associate with a teacher. This led me to analyse and reflect further: examining the material for the ways in which we were controlling and resisting each other and reflecting on the implications this might have for adult-young person relationships in education.

I began to reflect on my subjective experience in the other two settings. I found that my diary entries were often problematic. As I spent more time away from the field of education, analysing research material, I began to consider the ease with which problematic ways of speaking, reflecting and acting had emerged, contrary to the aims of the research.

This led me to analyse and reflect upon the ways of speaking that had emerged from research carried out with other adults in education. In particular, analysis revealed that staff at the Special School, during recorded group discussion, had not engaged in as much critical reflection as I had expected, and much problematic talk had

occurred. I felt that I had observed these adults working with young people in very respectful and collaborative ways, but blaming and labelling language was still emerging in their discussions. This line of enquiry required me to analyse and reflect on these discussions in greater detail, but also to critique why I had concluded that their interactions with young people were positive.

When examining discussions with the young people, I began to analyse and reflect on the ways in which education may have limited their ways of talking and reflecting. The young people often spoke particularly negatively about their own ways of being, and contradictions emerged in their conveyed opinions of exclusion: conveying they did not care about being excluded while suggesting at other times that they did care.

I also felt the practices and assumptions of education, in particular much of what I had experienced in mainstream school, served to reinforce these ways of speaking and being and limit possibilities for critical speaking or radical practice (even in special education). I therefore began to explore textual material at governmental, local governmental and school levels, and analysed texts, language use and social practices at the High School as a case study. I found that much of the language used by adults and young people was similar to that found in educational texts.

Central themes seemed to coalesce in several places throughout the material and to relate in particular to power and control, inclusion and exclusion, and other problematic aspects of language and practice, in particular individualising and blaming notions. As I engaged in re-analysis and re-reflection I considered these themes at a variety of levels, delving deeply at particular points into significant research material. This allowed for exploration and analysis at various levels, but

also careful and substantial analysis at those points.

The account presented examines governmental and local governmental literature to demonstrate ways in which the key themes of control and power, inclusion and exclusion, and problematic language are embedded at a legislative level (5.2-5.4). School practices are explored by examining in detail, albeit carefully, the High School as a case study (5.5). Ways of speaking available to adults are explored for ways in which key discourses in education limit critical discussion and reflection, and two important group discussions are drawn upon as well as my subjective experience of being an adult immersed in secondary education (Chapter 6). Ways of speaking available for young people are explored, paying greater attention to material from the Youth Project as material was in some ways richer (Chapter 7). Finally, ways of acting and interacting are explored, reflecting upon the limits that educational discourse imposes; what these limits do to interaction, by focusing on the interaction between the young people and I at the Youth Project (Chapter 8). In this way analysis considers resistance as well as limits, and does not attempt to remove agency from the account.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has described a process of knowledge construction where the practice of analysis occurred in a complex relationship with theory, epistemology, methodology, lines of enquiry, context, and subjectivity. The core critical reflection, position and theory that underpin analysis are hugely significant in constructing an account that has major implications for education and young people's experience.

This critical reflection lead to: an emphasis on difference, contradiction and

disparity as well as and often more so than coherence; a focus on unmasking what is assumed and taken for granted and a significant interest in relations of power constructed and maintained by institutional discourse and practice. Particular attention was paid to re-positioning accounts of education, young people's experiences, institutional discourse and practice, from a young person's standpoint.

Chapter 5: Legislation, Policy, Structures and Social Practices in Scottish Secondary Education

5.1 Introduction

This chapter first examines higher level areas of policy, legislation, organisation and the day to day structures, policies and practices of schools. Education as an institution and discourses within education are central to control and the language describing practices in legislation and policy, and norms, practices and structures found in schools limit and control, but are also sometimes challenged and resisted. It is important to consider these practices to examine assumptions, consider inequalities and ask whose interests are served by the current educational system.

This chapter examines the wider, Scottish legal and legislative context and the policy and practices of the local education authority within which the High School and the Youth Project operated. It then presents a case study, considering how much policy and practices may affect the High School's structures, and in turn how these might affect people in the school.

5.2 Scottish Secondary Education

Schooling became compulsory for young people in Scotland up to the age of 13 in 1872, with pupils entering at different ages due to the February cut off point for age. The first four years of secondary education are compulsory, with an extra compulsory half year for younger pupils in the year (termed 'Christmas leavers'), and so young people can first leave education around the age of sixteen.

5.3 Legislation and Government

Scotland has long had its own legislation in relation to education and the system has run fairly independently from the rest of the UK, albeit following many trends and patterns from England and Wales. With the formation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scottish Ministers (MSPs) became responsible for holding the civil servants

of the Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government) to account for education. At the time of the fieldwork, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) was responsible for school and further education, and worked with two other Executive Agencies: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), who carry out inspections and audits of educational standards; and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), who carry out development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications. The other large scale public body is a non-departmental organisation called Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) who support all levels of the education system. Beyond these systems of government, power is devolved to local education authorities, who are expected to ensure policy compliance in schools (to a greater degree than elsewhere in the UK), and develop guidelines in connection with National Priorities.

At the time of the fieldwork there were five National Priorities²³. Education authorities and schools are expected to report on their performance in these 5 National Priorities. Evaluative measurements (such as the 'How Good is Our School' publication, HMIE, 2004), target setting and inspections of schools are designed to gauge 'success' in these areas.

When the Scottish Parliament was formed many inquiries and task groups were set up to examine education in Scotland with a view to making positive changes (Allan, 2006). One of the first Acts passed was the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc.

²³ *Achievement and Attainment
Framework for Learning
Inclusion and Equality
Values and Citizenship
Learning for Life*

(DCYP, 2002, p. 2)

Act 2000 (Scottish Parliament, 2000). The Act stated the right of every child of school age to an education, that authorities have a duty to provide this, in mainstream wherever possible, and that the education authority should have “a due regard”²⁴ to the views of young people. This was partly a response to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a convention ratified by the UK in 1991 but which took some time to affect policy and law. The Act also created the National Priorities, which ministers set from time to time. The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003, was another significant piece of legislation for young people (Scottish Parliament, 2003). Created by the Scottish Parliament, the Commissioner’s job is to hold people to account in relation to the rights of children and young people. In Scotland, unlike the rest of the UK, the Commissioner has legal powers over and is independent from Scottish Government. As groups within the (then) Scottish Executive carried out research and made recommendations to the Parliament and authorities, ideas began to form in relation to education and policy, and a ‘new wave’ of legislation and language is currently beginning in education. Previously there had been a move, from the disciplinary and authoritarian attempts in the 1990’s that led to exclusion rates rising in Scotland, to attempts at reducing exclusion. Special Education has moved from an emphasis on separate specialist schools, to attempts to include all young people in mainstream schooling, with the emphasis still on certain groups receiving ‘special’ assistance in their ‘normal’ schools. For a number of years, young people have

²⁴ *A due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views (if there is a wish to express them) of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person, taking account of the child or young person’s age and maturity.*

(Scottish Parliament, 2000, p. 1)

been identified as having special educational needs if they have a learning or physical difficulty, or (a category which has been hotly debated and often disputed) young people believed to have 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Problems'. All young people identified in this way were given a 'Record of Needs': a detailed file on the young person kept during their education purportedly in an attempt to ensure they had adequate support and that relevant agencies worked together (Lloyd, Stead, & Kendrick, 2003).

The wave of legislation came at a time when many non-governmental organisations and education academics were attempting to change the language and policy relating to inclusion and special education, especially in the minds of MSPs. Allan (2006) describes a process of groups and inquiries charged with advising the Scottish Parliament, attempting to change the way ministers approached education (Allan, 2006). As an adviser herself, and an observer of recent developments in parliament, she describes feeling initially successful in creating more critical ways of speaking and reflecting. She describes a move away from patronising and negative language, and felt that the notion of 'special needs' had been shown to be segregating, individualising and labelling. The system of Record of Needs was reported as being unequal and ineffective in actually meeting needs, and it was emphasised to parliament that for schools to be positive, inclusive environments, legislation needed to support inclusion of everyone without the homogenising and labelling of groups of young people (Allan, 2006).

Reports at the time from the Education Committee show that they were advising the parliament, via a breadth of research and discussion that included young people (to some extent in critical and reflective ways) with innovative and ambitious

recommendations (Scottish Parliament, n.d.). The primary piece of legislation which eventually emerged was the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (Scottish Parliament, 2004). When the legislation was presented as a Bill, the Committee and many other bodies around the country expressed their concerns to parliament that the proposals were problematic and insufficient (Allan, 2006). However, though some minor amendments were made, the Bill became law.

Critics of the Bill felt it was negative from a rights perspective in relation to young people. The Act replaced the term ‘Special Educational Needs’ with ‘Additional Support for Learning’, and replaced the old Record of Needs with a new system of assessment, for young people who require additional support further than the school ‘normally’ provides and remained, despite this new language, inherently exclusionary (Scottish Parliament, 2004). Although young people’s rights are focused on, they are not assured: the rights of adults, both teachers and parents come first. Allan (2006) describes this repetition of excluding discourse and inequality in education, with use of new language: “a reterritorialisation ...in which we are forced to repeat exclusion endlessly” (Allan, 2006, p.125).

As well as the few changes made by new laws, the Scottish Executive Education Department, HMIE, and the SQA carry out research and produce reports on educational issues and recommendations to the parliament, the executive, local authorities, schools and teachers. It is questionable however, given their number, how many teachers, schools and authorities have time to read and reflect on them.

One report that had a relatively large impact on Scottish Education was the Report of the Discipline Task Group, entitled “Better Behaviour – Better Learning”

(Scottish Executive, 2001). The report fails to actively speak out against exclusion, preferring to encourage inclusion and describe alternative strategies for schools and teachers alongside emphasis on discipline and attainment²⁵.

The problematic notion of the ‘behaviour’ of young people being “inappropriate” enters policy and literature at this very high level. The concerns about discipline highlight a common issue in government literature, described by Araujo (2005) as occurring in England and Wales, where she comments that the government is “committed to [tackling] the symptoms rather than the causes”, the standards young people are expected to adhere to rather than the structural causes of conflict (Araujo, 2005, p. 242). The report goes on to describe what the Discipline Task Group found to be the reasons for ‘indiscipline’, even describing “social factors” (Scottish Executive, 2001). These social factors however were all lower level issues and the majority were directed towards young people, again reflecting on symptoms. There was no reflection on ways in which the government themselves may affect conflict in schools, and where there was a reflection on schools and teachers, problems were described very carefully and in a positive non-blaming way. Again Araujo describes similar features in literature elsewhere in the UK, where causes of indiscipline are rooted in the young person, their home and parents, the school, and the community from which the young person comes (Araujo, 2005, p.245). She found that literature did not consider how teachers, schools or governments may

²⁵ *There are growing concerns regarding the level of indiscipline in our schools. These concerns range from the cumulative effect of low level indiscipline displayed by routine inappropriate behaviour in classrooms, to the extremely disturbing behaviour exhibited by troubled young people who face major challenges in their lives*

(Scottish Executive, 2001)

have roles in producing conflict, and noted that some have suggested that the emphasis on individualising and blaming has come from Educational Psychology's influence (Araujo, 2005, p.247).

More recent literature (e.g. a Policy Update entitled Better Behaviour in Scottish Schools, 2004), and a very large report on research done by the Scottish Executive (2006) entitled Behaviour in Scottish Schools, describes positive behaviour as adhering to rules, and negative behaviour as pupils not responding to conventional, controlling methods²⁶. Young people are frequently positioned as not having a right to speak or move when in class. 'Good' behaviours and the use of control and discipline to prevent 'bad' behaviours are portrayed as being necessary for effective learning and teaching. Discipline is seen as necessary and is described as controlling young people and removing education as punishment. Exclusion has been discouraged, but while an emphasis on 'positive' inclusion has been evident in governmental literature, policy still allows for permanent exclusion²⁷. Particular individuals and their actions are generally seen as the root of problems in education. The educational literature from the Scottish Executive also emphasises: a strong emphasis on academic attainment and proof of this attainment through testing and quantifying; and active support and development of policy to create quasi-market,

²⁶ *[Negative] classroom behaviours encountered by school staff... were low level, in particular 'talking out of turn', 'making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise', 'hindering or distracting others' and 'pupils leaving their seat without permission'.*

(Scottish Executive, 2006)

²⁷ *It can be necessary to exclude a pupil from school in the interests of meeting the needs of the majority of pupils and teachers and helping foster an environment in which they can learn and teach with as little disruption as is possible.*

(Scottish Executive, 2003)

business-like structures in schools, emphasising management and leadership and strengthening hierarchical conventions in education (for example, *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*, Scottish Executive, 2006). These are communicated in parallel with focus on how young people could participate in their education; support for inter-agency working (for example, the *New Community Schools' initiative*, Scottish Executive, 2006); and to involve parents more actively and respectfully in schools (*Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006*, Scottish Parliament).

Governmental departments themselves have shifted focus away from young people and more meaningful notions of learning, towards examination, measurable and particular success, social capital, attainment and standardisation as core principles of Scottish education. Qualifications are a fundamental part of education in our culture, but questions can be asked as to whose interests are served by their domination at governmental levels. Measurable targets directed towards education authorities and schools have increased dramatically in recent years, without questioning whether these measures are accurate, and whether what they are measuring is beneficial for young people and schools.

In examining the legislation and language at this level, two particularly problematic discourses, related to one another in some ways, emerge: those of control and exclusion. The literature on 'low-level indiscipline', essentially small resistances on the part of young people that are positioned as being particularly negative demonstrate the level of control sanctioned at this level. Young people are expected to behave in very particular ways and talking or moving in some ways are positioned as acts of resistance which require punishment. Inclusion, rather than a meaningful notion of all people belonging in a learning community, becomes a

conforming and controlling discourse, as young people may be included only if they conform in particular ways. Inclusion in this way becomes the ‘normalising’ process described by Foucault (1977). Exclusion on the other hand is not the absence of a meaningful inclusion, but becomes a disciplinary strategy, the end in a long line of disciplinary practices, in response to either a refusal to comply or active resistance from particular young people.

Within much of the language and the discourses of control and exclusion similar techniques seem to emerge. Conflicting discourses appear together and positive language often masks problematic underlying assumptions and practices, which in turn hinder more promising practice. By blending the problematic and positive, a renaming of problematic issues, practices or discourses also emerges, which Allan (2006) calls ‘reterritorialisation’. This renaming of problematic practice and discourse serves to further mask problems.

5.4 Local Education Authorities

Local education authorities in Scottish education are each different due to differing demographics, sizes and societal contextual factors. This section will examine one education authority, which the High School and Youth Project (but not the Special School) operated within. The structures, social practices and literature will be examined briefly for ways in which they affect schools within the authority, and to set the context for examination of the High School later in the chapter. A total of eight documents were examined in detail, all recent publications made by the local authority relating to education, under the ‘Department for Children and Young People’ (pseudonym, referred to throughout as DCYP). Some of these were collected from the High School, indicating they are distributed around schools, and

some were available online. The excerpts included in this section come from three of these documents: “Standards and Quality Report on Schools’ Performance, 2002/03” (DCYP, 2002); an advice and policy document on “Positive Behaviour” (DCYP, 2003); and the “2004/05 Service Plan” (DYCP, 2004) (see Appendix F for further description). Textual analysis was carried out on the policy and guideline documents, in parallel with other research material. This allowed for an account to be constructed of the textual material relevant to the research carried out with people in the settings I worked in. I do not include a full account of textual analysis here: presented are key aspects of analysis which are particularly relevant from a critical community psychological perspective, relevant to my lines of enquiry and epistemology, and led by research with people (young people in particular) in the field.

Like other authorities in Scotland, the DCYP has some autonomy in creating policy, in particular in choosing which initiatives or guidelines to take up from the government, often having the opportunity to apply for varied amounts of funding that come with new initiatives. However, much of its role is in supporting the schools in the area; providing guidelines, explanation and support on nationwide policy and legislation. An important feature of the education authority is that they, and not the schools themselves, are responsible for employment in schools. This includes interviewing and employing new full time members of staff, as well as providing learning support outreach staff and a large body of supply teachers.

The 2004/2005 Service Plan for the DCYP sets out the vision, ethos and plans of the department, describing how they “intend to provide integrated education, care and support services of the highest quality to meet the needs of children, young people

and their families” (DCYP, 2004, p. 3). The plans are described as being underpinned by many bodies and pieces of legislation above the local authority: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); Scottish Executive policy and ethos; the local Council’s policies and ethos on social justice and social inclusion; and a vision of childhood the department has constructed. This “Vision of Childhood” comes, the document claims, from a period of work with children and young people, although description is not given of the kind of work. It makes claims as to what children and young people want, with one of the eight wishes being “decent schools, equipment and a good education” (DCYP, 2004, p. 5). The department then sets out plans to respond to these ‘needs’, which are mainly related to improving facilities for young people, and infrastructure, including school buildings. This is the only evidence within policy and guidelines documentation that the department have involved young people in decision making, and the short piece fails to describe in what way they involved young people. While buildings and infrastructure are no doubt important to young people, who have a right to accessible and up to date facilities, critical questions can be raised as to whether these would be the only issues young people would have with the area and the department’s role, were they given the opportunity to meaningfully participate.

Much of the language in local authority documentation mirrors ways of speaking in society in general, the Scottish Executive and of Scottish Legislation. Their ethos includes for example, the idea of “putting children first”, but this includes the statement that they “will act in the best interests of children” (DCYP, 2004, p. 6). As noted in the rights literature, questions need to be raised as to whether adults really can act in the best interests of young people.

There is a strong emphasis on inclusion in policy and guidelines, and often what is written appears positive towards young people: “We will promote respect for children’s cultural, social and ethnic diversity and values as well as supporting children to respect the values and rights of others” (DCYP, 2004, p. 6). At first glance statements like this one sound promising, and this extract is a good example of typical language in authority literature. However, as with many statements like this one, problems arise on closer examination: what if a young person’s values or cultural practices are at odds with those of education or their school? If a young person values ‘speaking out of turn’, described previously as low level indiscipline, or speaking out against school rules they disagree with, will the authority respect those values; will they protect that young person? At this level of education, we can see promises to ‘include’ and ‘respect’ all young people conflicting with conditions placed upon young people.

A further example of these conflicting discourses emerges in the document on “Positive Behaviour” (DCYP, 2001). Writing on positive behaviour has become more prominent in recent years. Ideas surrounding positive behaviour include rewarding what schools view as good behaviour, in a move away from punishing ‘negative’ behaviour, and are seen as positive and inclusive ethos and practice²⁸. Again, in some ways this excerpt can be viewed as meaningful and positive. However, the use of the words ‘positive’ and ‘behaviour’ can be argued to be

²⁸ *Positive behaviour is about looking out for each other. It is also about building relationships and being responsible for the way we treat other people whether we are pupils, teachers or parents. All schools try to bring out the best in their pupils by rewarding good work, encouraging good behaviour and helping those who find the going hard.*

(DCYP, 2001, p. 1)

reinforcing more controlling and discipline led discourse in relation to young people in education. Again the use of the word ‘behaviour’ is negatively blaming and individualising towards young people. Despite introducing parents and teachers into the discourse, it is clearly aimed towards young people; the next sentence only describes ‘good’ behaviour in young people.

The use of the word ‘positive’ to describe particular behaviours is powerful. Value is added to certain behaviours, which education labels as ‘positive’; completing work, attaining and generally conforming to the values and ethos of the school. ‘Negative’ behaviours are not mentioned, deliberately in part as the notion of rewarding positive behaviour is in some ways to ‘ignore’ negative behaviours. This technique however serves to strengthen the idea that there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviours, and to strengthen the control and discipline laden language that particular values and particular social practices from young people are viewed as ‘negative’, not to be tolerated. Finally, by “encouraging” good behaviour and “helping” those who are not ‘behaving well’, the excerpt seems to be using soft, positive, ‘respectful’ language, but which can be argued as being very controlling, forceful, and suggestive of discipline. The principles of Positive Behaviour laid out by the document include those in the extract below²⁹. Again critically positive language such as respect and rights are introduced, and claimed to be for all pupils. However, again the dichotomy between this language and the idea that certain

²⁹ *Respect for the rights and dignities of all pupils.
Opportunities for all pupils to learn self-discipline.
Schools should be a safe and ordered learning experience.
All behaviour difficulties should be dealt with quickly.*

(DCYP, 2001, p. 2)

pupils labelled “behaviour difficulties” will be “dealt with quickly” is problematic. Opportunities to learn “self-discipline” seems controlling and somewhat ominous.

Much of the language examined in the local education authority’s literature was very similar to that of higher bodies such as the Scottish Executive and wider discourses in education and society. An account begins to emerge even at this level, of patterns, of language and expected social practices. Control of young people, despite attempts at respectful and participatory language emerges as a core assumption of educational discourse. The language surrounding inclusion and exclusion is equally complex and can be seen to be grounded in problematic assumptions around which young people can be included. Somewhat in conflict with this is a strong discourse of attainment and success, in particular academic subjects and to particular levels: some types of and levels of attainment are valued over others, which conflicts with notions of equality.

This section reflected on some of the problematic material from education at a level of local government, in the policy and guidelines created for schools. Individualism and blaming of young people is firmly embedded in texts, raising questions about how meaningful the involvement of young people (that the department claims) might be. Preoccupation with control and exclusion are evident in the documents and are expanded upon with problematic policy and guidelines for schools. In particular the language used to describe ‘positive behaviour’ employs language which appears meaningful and positive but serves to mask very controlling practices, creating very particular actions for which young people will be praised.

Having explored discourses evident in policy and legislation, I will now move on to construct an account of the social practices, structures and policies of a mainstream

secondary school, considering research carried out at the High School as a case study.

5.5 Case Study: The High School

In this section the High School is taken as a case study of mainstream secondary schools, and an account is constructed of some of the social practices within a mainstream school emerging in relation to problematic educational discourses. The account of policies, practices, assumed norms and mechanisms of schooling serves to construct a context for accounts in following chapters, of ways available to people of speaking, thinking and acting within education. Research reflected on in following chapters was often carried out with people somewhat removed from mainstream schooling; for example the staff at the Special School and the young people being educated at the Youth Project. However, all young people and most teaching staff at least begin their experience of education in a mainstream school, and the taken for granted practices of a school are likely to have effects. Social practices in schools are in part created by the educational discourses I have reflected on so far and will continue to build upon, but they also simultaneously affect and co-construct those educational discourses. At the same time it is possible to examine their effects on people within education, and on ways of speaking, thinking and acting. In this way a reflection of the practices in schools at this stage will aid in construction of an account of the ways in which adults and young people are limited by problematic educational discourses.

The High School was a mainstream school in which I spent a long prolonged period of immersion and research. Epistemologically, this thesis is not attempting to make generalisable ‘truths’ about education, nor is it attempting to state ‘facts’ about the

High School. What this section does is construct an account that draws on my analysis of multiple areas of research (textual material collected; interviews; fieldwork diary). My account of issues in the High School is considered for its applicability to my account of educational discourse in general, but much reflection during analysis also involved thinking what made the High School unique and the implications these differences might have for my account and educational discourse generally. A description of the school itself can be found in Chapter 2 (2.4.4).

5.6 Social Practices

Some social practices are implicit, not reflected upon in speech or texts, primarily because they are taken for granted. There are also explicit social practices, described in texts such as policy documents and in speech. These descriptions affect practice and are also affected by practice. This section examines and reflects upon the practices described, and the language that emerges in textual documents from a school. It also explores to what extent claims about practices and structures seem to match or conflict with actions and practices, from further research material such as the discussions with teachers and young people of the High School.

Textual analysis of literature and textual material collected from the High School was carried out in a similar way to that of the textual material from the local education authority. It was possible to collect much more literature from the school, and the following documents were analysed: the High School Prospectus (2005); the High School Staff Handbook (2004); a copy of slides from a staff training day called “Promoting Positive Behaviour” (n.d.), and a report written by a Depute Headteacher on a recent period of significant change in the school, namely planned changes aimed at improving learning and teaching (2004). These are described in

detail in Appendix F. In relation to this section the research material was analysed for relevant social practices: policy; practice; structures; school rules and so on, and descriptions of these practices. These mechanisms were reflected on for their relevance to the account I was constructing. This was done over time, simultaneously with other areas of analysis, as key themes developed.

The High School Prospectus (2005) details the ethos and focus of the school, structures and school rules, and performance results for 2001-2004. A second piece of literature I refer to is the High School Staff Handbook (2004). The first section of the handbook contains 32 detailed policies of the school, which are reviewed periodically. The second section contains details about the organisational structure of the school for staff.

The PowerPoint slides from a staff training day are titled “Promoting Positive Behaviour” and are written by a Deputy Head Teacher to facilitate a session on positive behaviour strategies with teachers (n.d)

The report, written by a Depute Headteacher, reflects upon the management team’s introduction of several major changes to the school (2004). One of the main aims in the school’s changes was to shift to a ‘whole school’ approach to inclusion and pastoral responsibilities. Where previously responsibility lay with staff employed to solely be guidance or pupil support staff, the structural changes brought in meant that the ethos of the school became directed towards all staff working to include all young people, and that social issues as well as learning and teaching were the responsibility of all in the school.

See Appendix F for a detailed description of the material.

5.6.1.1 Problematic Language

One of the most prominent pieces of literature, that tends to be read by young people and adults, at least on entering the school, is the High School's Prospectus (2005). One of the foremost pieces of text within this document is the introduction by the Headteacher, which is entitled "A Message to Pupils and Parents", and excerpt of which is shown below³⁰. This extract demonstrates powerfully some of the problematic aspects of language present at many levels of education. What primarily emerges is dichotomy, which serves to appear positive while at the same time masking more controlling language. The excerpt is aimed directly at pupils, apparent in particular in the mention of "dress", or uniform. There is a positive, engaging language that tends to emerge at the beginning of each statement. In particular in the final sentence, young people are encouraged to challenge the school and to participate, suggesting dialogical and negotiative practices of reflection and action. However, at the same time language emerges to suggest more controlling discourses and practices. In the final sentence, after encouraging dialogical language, two ideas are presented, "dress and attitude", as practices young people must follow in order to "belong to the school". This is not unconditional inclusion: it may be possible to 'ask questions', but perhaps not when it comes to the school's ideas of what dress and attitudes are expected. The positive language seems, by its prominence at the beginning of statements, at times to be attempting to mask the more controlling language. The notion that the school 'wants' the young people to

³⁰ *We want to give you every opportunity to do your best, to gain knowledge, skills and values to equip you for life. The more enthusiasm and effort which you put into your school life, the more you will get out of it. Ask questions; take an active part in school life; show, by your dress and attitude, that you belong to the school and are part of it*

(High School Prospectus, 2005)

achieve as much as possible, sounds positive, but also suggests that if this does not happen, the young people will be to blame, rather than societal factors, problematic discourses, or the school. This excerpt is important, as it condenses much of the language which follows in the prospectus, on rules and uniform and what the school ‘expects’ of young people. Use of positive language in problematic ways here serves to mask somewhat the more controlling language: that young people can “belong to the school”, but only by acting and dressing in particular ways.

As well as these conflicting discourses emerging, this extract demonstrates an individualising and blaming focus of language at the school level. The language used in the policy documents and literature, as well as ways of speaking at the High School were often individualising and blaming. In the prospectus, the rules are set out explicitly and descriptions of practice are included describing what happens if these rules are not adhered to. Though the rules are introduced to begin with by stating “Everyone can help by showing respect for each other and behaving in a responsible and considerate manner”, they go on to refer solely to young people, with nearly all of the rules referring directly to “pupils”. “All pupils are expected to wear school uniform” for example, but there is no explicit evidence of what staff must wear. The assumption is that rules must be followed by and will be broken by young people, unsurprising given that the explicit rules are directed solely at young people.

Another piece of policy that can be argued to be individualising and blaming, involving ethos as well as practices described, is the High School’s policy on bullying. There are several texts that describe the policies and practices in relation to bullying: a descriptive section in the prospectus; a copy of the official anti-

bullying policy at the back of the prospectus; a copy of this same policy in the Staff Handbook; and a handout from the Department for Children and Young People entitled “Let’s stop bullying: Advice for young people”. A full detailed analysis of the language in relation to anti-bullying is not included here: there is not scope and the issue is not as relevant as others included. However, what is significant and very apparent from a critical community psychological perspective, about all the material describing bullying, is the fundamental assumption that a bully will be a young person, and that all bullying issues will be between young people. The notion that only young people will be both victims and bullies is not explicitly stated, but various practices strongly demonstrate this assumption, for example the policy that parents of both bully and victim will be involved in a process of action. There is a list of “common forms of bullying”, in the official policy statement, which includes verbal, non-verbal and physical forms. Some of the verbal and non-verbal forms which are included are interesting if they are considered in relation to conventional teacher-young person relationships. “Ignoring”, “threatening looks”, “writing notes”, and “taking things” are all included, but could be framed as conventional disciplinary practices used in classrooms by teachers to maintain control of the class. “Talking behind back” is seen as a form of bullying amongst young people, but is something often practiced by teachers who frequently discuss individual pupils without that young person’s knowledge.

5.6.1.2 Control

From a standpoint with young people, the practices and literature of the school were examined for controlling language in relation to the disempowering of young people. When examining the High School Prospectus contradictory areas of language and meaning emerge: at times language and description of practice seems

positive, but this conflicts with language elsewhere in the prospectus and elsewhere in the research material from the High School. Two words are used very often that seem to challenge notions of control and that seem to reflect this research's community psychological epistemology, and these are "mutual respect" and "co-operation". They are both introduced often, as the prospectus stresses that people throughout the school should respect each other and that practices and interaction should involve co-operation. The focus however is always directed towards the young people, in that statements involve the young people co-operating and respecting rather than adults, for example in the statement "Points [merit points] are awarded for good time keeping and co-operation" (High School Prospectus, 2005).

This emphasis in relation to practice is strengthened in particular by comments from the young people at the High School, in particular a conversation between me and Cammy (pseudonym)³¹. In this extract the words co-operation, responsibility and respect stand out from surrounding text as the kind of words not often used by the young people themselves, and they are introduced as words used by 'them' rather than the young people themselves. There is a sense that the young person doesn't convey ownership over these words, or even a clear understanding of their meaning, for example co-operation is likened to respect, both usually very different concepts. Both this excerpt, and the emphasis placed in texts like the High School Prospectus, suggest that these words are used at times to describe rather one-sided processes. Although it is suggested by me, Cammy agrees with a more controlling and

³¹ C: *aye cos they're always talking about co-operation and responsibility and stuff. And then, you're not*
I: *co-operation, what do you mean by co-operation?* *Doing what they say*
C: *like, cooperating with them, like respect*
aye

(HS1)

disempowering definition of the words that would otherwise involve negotiative, two way practices.

The Staff Handbook (2004) also mentions mutual respect in a section on the school ethos, which aims to “help maintain a climate of mutual respect and concern among all members of the school community”. Unlike the prospectus, language here is inclusive of adults and young people, but equally, in a handbook meant only for adults, it is not directed solely towards adults, and a clear statement like ‘staff must respect and co-operate with pupils’ is not present.

Thus words like ‘mutual respect’ and ‘co-operation’ appear at times, as in the handbook, to describe positive social practices that the school are genuinely trying to implement, and that are described as being core elements of the school’s ethos in meaningful ways. At other times a word like co-operation is positioned within text to suggest control: that pupils must ‘co-operate’ with the rules of the school is a reconstruction of the original dialogical meaning of the word that makes controlling practices sound more positive, and furthermore that places responsibility with the pupils to follow rules rather than elsewhere.

In a similar way, a strong feature that emerged as significant in the language of the High School Prospectus, aimed at the pupils, was use of words like ‘expected’ where the word ‘must’ might be anticipated³². Language like this seems to have changed over the last few decades in education, from authoritarian language stating pupils ‘must obey’ to less authoritarian language involving ‘expectations’, but control still remains. The school sets out what it wants from its pupils, who are

³² *Pupils are expected to complete and hand in homework on time*
All pupils are expected to wear school uniform throughout their school career

(Excerpts from High School Prospectus, 2005)

‘expected’ to follow certain practices, but one of the implications is that pupils have a choice, that there is agency involved. The social practices within a discourse of control in education, that young people must follow rules, wear school uniform, act and speak a certain way in education still remains. This change in language serves to mask the level of control, and create the notion that practices have changed and become more ‘mutually respectful’. Young people are positioned in individualising ways as having the power to choose to obey, when in fact ‘choosing’ not to ‘co-operate’ ultimately results in practices of discipline, and failing that, exclusion.

5.6.1.2.1 Positive Behaviour

The practices and language used to describe them that involve “promoting positive behaviour” are influenced by the legislative discourse and policies at local authority level on ‘positive behaviour’ as described above, and emerge in language at a school level. The section in the High School Prospectus that describes ‘positive behaviour’, comes under “Standards of Behaviour and Good Order”, and precedes a description of the school rules and disciplinary procedures (High School Prospectus, 2005).

The school also has an official policy entitled Behaviour Support Policy in which it discusses positive behaviour³³. Again it can be argued that conflicting styles of discourse emerge that serve to mask the controlling nature of practice in relation to young people in schools. On the surface what seems to be being implemented is something ‘positive’ in place of more authoritarian controlling practices, comparing

³³ *As a general principle, we believe that the use of praise and encouragement will be far more effective in creating a happy and positive atmosphere, than the imposition of sanctions*
(Behaviour Support Policy, High School Staff Handbook, 2004)

favourably ‘present’ notions of praise and encouragement with ‘past’ notions of sanctions. The use of words like “praise”, “encouragement”, “happy” and “positive” can be contrasted with the “imposition of sanctions” which seems a more domineering and controlling practice. However, the positive language used can be positioned as conflicting with the actual practices themselves. The first point to make is that focusing on behaviour in young people is again blaming and fails to take into account the many other factors that cause conflict in a classroom. The language surrounding ‘positive behaviour’ serves to mask the issue that the school, and education more generally has particular ideas of what constitutes ‘good behaviour’ and ‘good order’, with the word ‘order’ suggesting more controlled notions of interaction in school. So as long as young people follow these ideas of acting and being in school, and conform to what the school expects of them, praise and encouragement should be expected. Re-positioned, the practice of encouraging positive behaviour can be seen as another way of adults maintaining control over young people, in which young people are seen to have ‘a choice’ to behave in certain ways in order to be included in school and presumably to be ‘happy’.

Were these practices and notions of what constitutes positive behaviour co-constructed between adults and young people in school, then at least dialogical negotiation would be involved, and there was evidence that the High School was trying to implement participation in formulating these ‘standards’³⁴. This excerpt is taken from the section entitled “the role of pupils”. Here the notion of co-

³⁴ *Through the Pupil Council and PSE classes [pupils] can contribute to school policies, including behaviour support, uniform and awards systems. They can help create a positive school ethos by participation in assemblies, house activities and other school events.*

(Behaviour Support Policy, High School Staff Handbook, 2004)

construction emerges, with practices such as a pupil school council specifically designed for participation in creating practices, policies and school ethos. This is a move towards dialogical and negotiative practice, but is still limited and problematic. Explicitly describing where, when and in what way young people can participate makes the notion of participation less meaningful and empowering. The practices themselves can also be critiqued for the level of participation and power that they afford young people. The Pupil Council for example, can be positioned as being very inclusive for young people in the school. Representatives from every class in the school at every year make up the council, chaired by the Head Girl and Head Boy, and the council is expected to meet once every three weeks. However, though policy states the council can “debate any aspects of school life”, and “make recommendations” to the Headteacher, the council can go no further and engage in direct actions (other than raising money) (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). However, the Headteacher can effectively ‘veto’, “any matters deemed inappropriate”. Thus limitations are embedded in the explicit texts on policy, firstly by limiting ways in which young people can co-construct the policies, and secondly by limiting the possibilities within the ‘inclusive’ practices themselves. In undermining these already small possibilities for participation, the language describing young people’s involvement in a ‘positive behaviour’ ethos makes social practice additionally problematic.

5.6.1.2.2 *Reconstructing Practice: Control and Resistance*

One of the policies included in the first part of the Staff Handbook interested me in particular in relation to control, and in relation to constructions in education of new practices. At the end of the section on policies is one on mobile phones, stating that they must be turned off and not used at any time during the school day and

throughout the school campus. The policy is a very new one, added at the back of the handbook, and suggests by its presence several possibilities. The assumption, based not just on this document but on spending time in education and listening to teachers talk and taking part in classes, is that young people are using their mobile phones in schools, and this practice from young people is positioned as being 'disruptive', negative in some way, for example when a young person uses it while the teacher takes a class (policy states one aim is "to avoid disruption to learning and teaching", Staff Handbook, 2004). This can be positioned as the 'correct' thing to do: assuming an imbalance of power to be necessary, young people should not be distracted from a lesson or distract others and especially should not interrupt a teacher speaking (an increasingly popular act for pupils is to play a ring tone or sound in the middle of the lesson). My account of what is interesting about the need for a policy on mobile phones however is it suggests resistance in young people and an opportunity for subversion. This example of ever changing practice is common and with new technology is ever increasing, as adults in education must create new rules to tackle pupils using the internet, mobiles, cameras and so on in ways adults and education disapprove of. There is a sense of increasing pressure on the side of adults, to exert control in new ways and maintain what is assumed positively as an 'orderly school'. On the 'other side', there is a sense of resistance from young people, who find windows of opportunity to defy practices of control and to fight back, especially with technology they are more familiar with. This notion of resistance, of young people taking control of a classroom when there is opportunity emerges at times in conversation with the young people I did research with, for

example the excerpts below from the group at the High School³⁵. What is useful to consider here are practices by young people, of using a mobile phone in class or being cheeky, at points in a lesson, that are described even by young people in problematic ways. These practices can be positioned somewhat negatively and diminishing as ‘cheeky’, but they can also be repositioned as subversive and resisting, and as constructions by young people of their own social practices with which to gain control in their school.

There is much evidence then to position adults as exerting control over young people in mainstream schools, and to describe much of the practice that ensues as problematic. This section on control has examined language and practice at a school level and found words such as ‘mutual respect’, ‘co-operation’ and ‘responsibility’ suggest dialogical and collaborative practice but, in the context in which they are used, serve to mask more one-sided, controlling notions where young people must respect and comply. Language such as ‘expected’ and ‘choice’ again appear more positive but place blame with young people, problematically assuming they are in a position to act in a particular way and that they should choose to do so. When examined many school rules appear arbitrary, unnecessarily authoritarian and imposed rather than negotiated. In the literature on ‘positive behaviour’, seemingly positive language conflicts with context and practices, where notions of positive behaviour are imposed upon young people, who must either

³⁵ *Ji: see if the teacher's just a push over, it's well easy to.. just take the mick out of really
I: gang up against?*

(HS1)

R: you are tempted to be cheeky to some teachers cos they've just got a face like oh that's so bad.

(HS1)

comply to receive praise and reward or face sanctions. Evidence however, that these controlling practices and policies are being resisted by young people, emerge in literature and policy at a school level, as new rules are required in response to young people's disruption of order.

5.6.1.3 Inclusion

As described in the sections on Scottish legislation and local authority literature, there is a strong focus on a discourse of inclusion at governmental levels. This has a great effect on the policy in place textually in schools, and the High School is no different. When examining the literature and practices at the High School in relation to inclusion, I wanted to explore in what ways a discourse of inclusion affects policy and what this means for practice, to examine to what extent notions of inclusion might become practice.

The High School, in line with the National Priority of inclusion and equality, were very keen to communicate to me that practices of inclusion were very important to them, and were keen for me to evaluate the inclusive practices that they had been implementing. For management staff, the definition of inclusion was communicated to me as very clear and a complex issue. In the excerpt below a Depute Headteacher defines inclusion³⁶.

³⁶ I: how would you define inclusion, what would you

A: inclusion for me is not just about including those pupils who have a you know a particular learning difficulty or a, you know social or emotional behavioural difficulty it is about everybody within the school, because we have to recognise that at some point, every child will encounter some barrier to learning, and you know for me it is about addressing all of those barriers it could be attendance, it could be, the fact that their parents are struggling to you know get them in their uniform that can be a barrier to learning and it's really about addressing that as an issue you know making sure that everybody, not just the managers but you know everybody in the school is aware that, you know it's our job to include everybody all of the time, to not just

(Anne, High School)

In this extract inclusion is tied in with learning, and the holistic language that was described by Allan (2006) as an initial movement in the Scottish Executive is prominent, as Anne describes a wish to view the ethos and practices of the school in relation to inclusion as including “everybody all of the time”. The notion that young people “encounter barriers to learning”, seems to sit half way between an individualising language and an understanding of social causes. For example, though most literature directs focus of problems towards young people’s behaviour, Anne states that becoming more inclusive is about “changing teacher behaviour as much as pupil behaviour” (Anne, High School). This statement still focuses on individuals, and uses the problematic psychological discourse of behaviour; it also communicates a desire to move away from some problematic discourses and practices in education. In the above extract Anne also makes a distinction that involves recent changes to practice: where previously only key members of staff were involved in the social support side of developing relationships with young people, and only certain people advocated inclusion, the school has been attempting to move towards all the adults in the school seeing inclusion as their collective responsibility. This notion of how to include young people can be argued as problematic as responsibility is placed with adults to act, rather than adults and young people to interact and collaborate, but for the school it seemed a positive move that they had spent much time implementing. So, the ethos of the High School in relation to inclusion seemed to have three main themes. Firstly that the school should focus on inclusion, rather than exclusion; secondly that all young people should be viewed as having needs and as having a right to be included; and thirdly that all adults in the school should see themselves as responsible for including young people.

The practices that seem to relate to this ethos of inclusion range from general classroom culture to specific practice designed to make young people feel part of the school. General classroom practice related to including all young people in learning. The school's ethos of inclusion for all seems to stem from a meaningful discourse that no young people should be left out, and is further evident in their equal opportunities policy which appears at the forefront of the Prospectus and in the Staff Handbook. In lessons practical aspects of inclusion seem to become about keeping young people in the lesson. Teachers have been discouraged, both by schools and by more general discourse in education not to send pupils out of their lesson, but to deal with any problems, conflict or difficulties within the class³⁷. At times this seems to translate into less meaningful practice. While the ethos is a positive one, it seemed in some cases to lose something in its translation to teachers and classes, and become a rule without meaning: simply that teachers would be disapproved of if they sent pupils out of class, with little reasoning or change in culture behind the 'rule'. This seemed to stem from the conflicting and more negative discourses and practices that still remain core in mainstream schooling, for example that the teacher must be in control and discipline those who resist.

As well as general classroom ethos there were other, usually 'extra-curricular' activities that seemed in part designed to make young people feel part of the school. The pupil council for instance allows participation (to a point) for some pupils, although there was no evidence that young people feeling excluded were particularly encouraged to get involved in the council. The High School, like many

³⁷ A: we try to have that whole idea, try to move the culture on from one where, people said that child's got a learning difficulty that's nothing to do with me that's the support for learning department they'll deal with it so, there's a big cultural change involved

(Anne, High School)

other secondary schools takes the young people entering first year on a residential week away, with many of the teachers so the young people get to know the staff, school and each other at the beginning of their time at the school. Older pupils are very involved in supporting younger pupils in quite a few ways, and as they enter their final two years can become prefects and be given responsibility in the school. Part of the prefect's responsibilities involves 'policing' the school, such as monitoring corridors at break time which is problematic. However it also involves joining younger classes at registration to act informally as mentors, and every new first year pupil is introduced to a sixth year "Buddy" (High School Prospectus, 2005). Senior pupils also run a drop-in service for "advice on personal medical problems" (High School Prospectus, 2005). In addition to this the school like other's has many extra-curricular clubs it runs, including sports, arts and drama and music. Most activities run during lunch times as many pupils live so far away, and in addition there was evidence that much thought had been put into activities and extra curricular areas, as well as the residential trip being affordable for all young people and their families. All these practices relating to exclusion can be argued to have both meaningful and problematic aspects. A lot of the activity related practice can be argued to contribute to a sense of community in the school. However, what can also be argued is that positive practice is limited by more problematic taken for granted problems. Young people are still expected to behave in particular ways in order to be included. Furthermore, to an extent young people could be excluded from these activities as further sanction and discipline. There is also a sense that the particular way young people are expected to behave is reflected in the kinds of activities that are available: yoga, debating, woodwind, a creative writing group. The activities communicate a particular sense of what one should be participating

in, that may not relate to all backgrounds and communities that the young people come from.

When considering the ethos in relation to inclusion and the policy the High School wished to put into practice, it was important to consider how much teachers in the school emulated these values. Accounts from teachers I spoke to of ways in which they defined inclusion suggested some, but not complete accord. The first extract below is from a teacher describing their definitions and opinions of inclusion³⁸. The notion that all young people should be included in some way comes across in this extract, and a lot of the teachers I spoke to felt the same. However, not all teachers agreed that all young people have a right to learn in class³⁹. Here a discourse of conditional inclusion emerges and is similar to the discourse described earlier where particular actions by young people are described as ‘disruptive’, in particular for other pupils, which legitimises their exclusion from class. This excerpt demonstrates that although the school may construct a particular ethos and policies relating to including young people, at times in meaningful ways, there is no guarantee these expected practices will be agreed with or taken up by individual teachers, especially with problematic conflicting discourses evident in governmental literature.

³⁸ *E: well, I tend to think of inclusion as, basically, I know it sounds obvious but including everybody erm, those who find coming to school difficult, erm that includes race, social erm, background, ability background abilities, generally. There should be somewhere for everyone in the system*

(Emily, High School)

³⁹ *J: well I think it's fair enough inclusions fine but, at the end of the day, if they're gonna cause disruption for the class then I don't think they should be in the class*

(John, High School)

Furthermore it was important to explore the effect practice or ethos in relation to inclusion had on young people in the school. Young people I spoke to seemed to feel included in some ways, but there was a sense that inclusion was particular. The very fact that I was speaking to these young people in school was a factor, which on the one hand suggested they might be included, but also that they might speak conventionally about school, and so I approached the notion of the young people being included with caution (their ways of speaking are described further in Chapter 7). These young people seemed to have experienced conflict between teachers and their school in much the same way as the permanently excluded young people at the Youth Project, but were still in school. Furthermore most (five out of six) were taking part in extra-curricular activities and trips, something other young people I did research with tended to have been excluded from or had self-excluded, and spoke of very negatively. The extracts below are from the first group session with the young people⁴⁰. Again there were conflicting accounts both within and between the young people in the group. It did seem positive the young people were participating in their school community despite any conflict, and they communicated that they were usually not excluded from activities as a sanction. However, difficulty remains in what the young people were included into. The classroom expectations, as well as the nature of the activities provided, all suggest a particular way of acting for the young people, and fundamentally inclusion can still only occur if the young people conform to these actions. Furthermore the activities

⁴⁰ *C: I play in the school orchestra*
M: I can sing, play guitar
Ji: aye I do the football

(HS1)

one can get involved in reflect that expected behaviour, and do not perhaps reflect the backgrounds and communities all young people might come from.

Although a lot of the language in policy is inclusive in nature, such as the schools equal opportunities policy, inclusion is not written about explicitly. Exclusion is written about however, in the school's prospectus. Under the section entitled "Standards of Behaviour and Good Order, after the description of school rules, the prospectus describes practices in relation to discipline; the disciplinary procedures in place when young people do not obey rules. These include "minor breaches of discipline" and "more serious breaches of discipline", which involve interaction between the pupils and members of staff such as the Headteacher, and punishment such as written exercises. Finally, "school exclusion is regarded as the last resort in a very serious situation, and it is one of the school's targets to reduce the number of exclusions" (High School Prospectus, 2005). Here we see that the term 'school exclusion', is used in a literal, physical sense of young people being excluded from the school building for a fixed or permanent period. My notion of school exclusion would tend to be much wider, including young people being sent out of class or even excluded within a lesson from taking part in the learning process. The school's definition of exclusion can be placed within an institutional context, where excluding young people officially has been challenged greatly in education, with for example the introduction of school exclusion tables which make public the number of times a school has excluded in this way. This narrow sense of exclusion as a measurement can be argued to make reflection on wider notions of exclusion difficult, and places pressure on schools to perform in specific but problematic ways. Indeed the High School was working very hard to keep all its pupils in school, and very rarely excluded young people permanently. This can be contrasted

with the school the young people from the Youth Project attended that physically and permanently excluded them from their school. However, I would argue firstly that creating practices in schools of never expelling young people does not mean that young people do not then experience exclusion from a learning experience or from their peers. Secondly, the practice in the High School of reflecting on inclusion, inclusive strategies and 'positive' practices solely, with no reflection on possible problems, creates a masking of any problems in relation to inclusion and exclusion, and does not amount to critical reflection and practice.

The account of inclusive ethos and practices reveals positive areas and problematic issues, due fundamentally to the conflicting core assumptions of education that schools are limited by. Though great effort seems to have gone into creating a meaningful inclusive policy and practices that are intended to make all young people feel part of the school, there are issues with the underlying nature of inclusion. Inclusion can be framed as a response to the 'positive behaviour' and compliance discourse, and has a core relationship with control in subtle ways: young people can be included conditionally, when they act in particular ways that education deems acceptable. Exclusion can also be framed as a response, but of one to resistance rather than conformity. Where young people are resisting attempts at control, disciplinary procedures begin, and can result in young people being excluded from lessons or from schools. Exclusion can be positioned as going much deeper than this however: whether for example young people are meaningfully included just because they are in the classroom, and even whether 'inclusive practices' might be excluding particular communities or backgrounds and the young people that come from, and must go back to, those communities.

5.6.1.4 The Role of the Teacher

It is important to examine in what way the role of adults are described in policy within a mainstream school, to explore what kinds of practices are expected from them in texts, in particular to consider what effects the social practices conveyed for adults might have on their ways of speaking and acting in education. Here, and in many places throughout my account of analysis and reflection, I only refer to the adult role of teacher. There are other adult roles in schools: classroom assistants, cleaning staff, catering staff and so on, and all these roles are interesting from a community psychological perspective. However, there is not scope to fully explore this line of enquiry in this research, and there are valid reasons for focusing on the role of teacher. In a learning and teaching environment, it is teachers that spend the most time interacting with young people and significantly, while an assistant may be participating in the lesson (not always the case in secondary schools), it is the teacher that holds the power in the classroom. Teachers were the adults most referred to by the young people I worked with, and indeed it can be argued teachers play very significant roles in young people's lives. Though management staff roles, Principal Teachers, Depute Headteachers and the Headteacher, hold the most power in a school, they learned first and foremost to be teachers, and most of them still take lessons.

When examining policy and literature from the High School, by far the largest document is the High School Staff Handbook. As well as a large section on explicit policies of the school and a large section on the organisational structure and practices of the school, the handbook contains the "Conditions of Service" and "Job Description" for teaching staff. Most of the policy in the two texts are taken directly from governmental and local authority policy, from Council Guidelines, for

example the “Council Framework Agreement”, and in particular from an agreement drawn up by the Scottish Executive entitled “The McCrone Agreement” (High School Staff Handbook, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2001). The McCrone Agreement involves a national restructuring of teachers’ pay, promotion structures and conditions of service, and encourages schools to make some major changes to the roles of teachers, which the High School did by introducing these explicit policies on the roles of staff.

The section on Conditions of Service focuses on: curriculum and assessment; professional development; and working with other adults. Significantly young people and teachers’ relationships with them are mentioned rarely. Where relationships are mentioned, the role of teacher is positioned in a one sided way, for example “offering advice and guidance to pupils”, and “promoting and safeguarding the health, welfare and safety of pupils” (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). Extracts like these demonstrate that the role of teacher is to impart and for the young people to receive: there is no collaborative language in the description and no mention of what young people might give or teachers might receive. The explicit, clearly defined policy on the role of a teacher that places responsibility and control firmly with that teacher, serves, from a community psychological perspective and from a standpoint with young people, to strengthen power inequalities between young people and teachers, and so to hinder any opportunities for collaborative or respectful interaction. Interestingly the following is stated as a principle of the role of teacher: “trust and mutual respect among teachers and employers will be paramount” (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). Here mutual respect between adults is stated, but the notion that there should be mutual respect between adults and young people is absent, conflicting with the information conveyed to young

people that all in the school should respect one another.

The document following on from Conditions of Service is that of “Job Description of Teacher” (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). This lists thirteen “duties” expected of teachers. The majority of duties relate to curriculum, assessment, preparation of classes and administration duties. Language tends to relate to a banking, one sided approach to teaching. Not until the tenth listed duty does a mention of relationships with young people, or language other than curricular and banking related practices emerge, when the teacher is requested to: “maintain good order and discipline among pupils and to safeguard their health and safety” (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). The emphasis here is again on control and protection. More positive language emerges in the final three duties, advising and guiding pupils, developing positive school ethos, and to “take responsibility for the pastoral care of a group of 20 S1 pupils”. Language here remains problematic however as control is positioned with the teacher, responsibility is assumed and dialogical interaction or collaboration is absent.

The final duty, to take pastoral care of a group of twenty first year pupils reflects the introduction of the role of Form Class Leader for teachers. Prior to the McCrone Agreement and the changes made in the High School (which will eventually be made in all schools), form teachers in secondary schools across Scotland did not have a ‘pastoral’ role. The role of the form teacher in a morning was primarily to take attendance of pupils and issue any announcements. Plans for the role of teacher to include this new role were being phased in during my time at the High School. The introduction of Form Class Leader is a move for each group of twenty pupils to develop a close personal relationship with their form teacher.

The main duties of a Form Class Leader are described in the extract below⁴¹. Here the role of a teacher does focus more on relationship building, although the language limits the possibilities of this relationship to only interacting and discussing issues about school and education. Social practices which were in place or were being phased in, in relation to this role included: developing closer relationships with parents; supporting older pupils to develop relationships with younger pupils; and teaching the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme to their form class, throughout the classes time at the school. Possibilities of critical practice can be argued to be limited by these developments, with little time in a morning for teachers and young people to develop relationships and considering the other limiting practices that act upon teachers. The introduction of these practices however, and the developing of the role of teachers as a result, can be viewed as more positive from a standpoint with young people, and as steps towards more positive, collaborative interaction between adults and young people in education.

5.6.1.5 Role of Young People?

Generally, examining literature and language used at a school level raises a number of issues in relation to young people. Young people are always referred to as pupils, students or children, despite ages ranging up to 18 years. There are many expectations of pupils, in relation to being part of the school and provided young people act to include themselves, in particular conforming ways, they can expect to be included in some way. Problematically and in very similar ways to discourse

⁴¹ *Spend time building positive relationships with the children in the class; encouraging them to talk about their experience of school; giving general and individual advice on how to deal with issues which arise in school*

(High School Staff Handbook, 2004)

throughout education, the practices and policy tend to place responsibility for change, learning or for problems with young people, rather than structural or institutional issues.

When constructing the account in this chapter it seemed obvious to include a section, similar to the last one, on how the role of young person as pupil is defined in the practices and literature of a mainstream school. What became apparent however, is how little the role of young person and their involvement in school is documented explicitly. While teachers have a 200 page handbook, a formal contract and a job description the young people have very little explicit material. The “Role of Pupils” is described once, but this is within policy on the schools behaviour support, available primarily to teachers (High School Staff Handbook, 2004). The prospectus is an important document in that it is the only published piece of literature available to the young people, and describes expectations the school has for them, but it is still relatively short. The pupil council for example is described in much greater detail in the staff handbook than it is in the prospectus for pupils. The policies created for the school are not readily available to young people, nor are health and safety procedures or the fire drill. There seems a particular difference in the way adults and young people are communicated to about their roles, a difference that highlights issues of control and dominance. While teachers are directly communicated to on the structures, policies and practices of the school and what is expected from them, in textual documents, the main method of communication for young people is through adults. Teachers will demonstrate to pupils how they are expected to act: the prospectus offers some textual communication of practice, but the conventional assumption if a pupils wants to understand, is to ‘ask a teacher’. In this way teachers are positioned in education as

being responsible, not just for the transfer of subject knowledge, but for the transfer of knowledge about how to act for a young person. This serves to heighten the relationship of power and the expected role for a young person becomes undefined and subjectively reliant on the teacher they are with at the time. Even if a teacher directs a young person to do something that does not appear part of the rules or the role of a pupil, compliance is still expected. There are numerous accounts from the young people I worked with and others of unfair situations or inconsistency: for example completing a task for a teacher that is not related to learning, perhaps organising some sports equipment. In this way young people are controlled and are expected to comply with policy and practices, with their role of compliance being communicated primarily through teachers: possibilities found by young people for resistance inevitably then involve resisting the role of compliant young person and resisting the teachers' required attempts at control.

5.6.1.6 Critical Practice?

While new practices like the change to Form Class Leader were being implemented at the High School, care was being taken in how they were implemented, and some practices were also being attempted that do not appear explicitly in the policy. The Depute Headteacher for Pupil Support wrote a reflexive report on the implementation of these new procedures and the changes the High School was attempting to make. The document reflects on the Depute's effectiveness during this time, and some of the processes they went through trying to make the changes both meaningful and effective. One of the most important issues that emerged from the document was the Depute's focus on changing teaching practice to involve more critical reflection.

The extract below is from the beginning of the report, describing some of the aims the Depute felt were part of the changes the school was making⁴². I found the document as a whole really rich in information, much of which I felt resonated with community psychology. Much of the account challenges the problematic assumptions and practices I have described in this chapter. The aim to “encourage staff” to reflect is suggestive of conscientization, and recognising that something other than young people might be to blame for issues with learning or conflict in classrooms challenges dominant discourse. There are still limitations within the account: core problematic assumptions relating to control are not addressed, nor are any notions that school practices might be to blame. What seems to have been aimed for however is a change in culture in the school, a move away from very powerful problematic assumptions, that young people can be blamed, and furthermore that teaching practice is private and that there is neither time nor need for critical reflection. Part of the document reflects on ways in which the Depute Headteacher changed their practice and actions to enable these changes.

⁴² *The aims are not so much about the implementation of a procedure as they are about engendering confidence, reflection and a willingness to share and benefit from the practice of others within the staff. In order to achieve this effectively in any large secondary school, there is a need to be flexible and adopt a multi-layered approach, and this project highlights this fact. As can be seen from the original project plan, I originally defined the aims as:*

To improve the experience of learning for all of our pupils in all subject areas, including offering all pupils more of a challenge, whatever their level of ability.

To encourage staff to recognise that the curriculum, their own teaching methodologies, classroom management and interaction with pupils may be causing a barrier to learning and enable them to take action to address this.

To build up a network of support within and across departments to share good practice in teaching and learning and try to re-energise the teaching of some staff, by sharing strategies and solutions.

To address a lack of willingness on the part of some members of staff to accept that they have a responsibility for the learning of all pupils, including those who have difficulties of any nature

This included: being the first one (and encouraging other management staff to follow) to speak out and describe the difficulties they themselves found in their teaching practice; enabling others to form groups and take initiative, to “support and empower”, rather than more conventional controlling approaches; and continually speaking with staff and being consistent in their approach⁴³. In some ways here the Depute seems to be referring to other teachers when standing their ground against resistance. However the account can also be described as the Depute standing their ground against problematic educational discourse and practices, against powerful institutional assumptions about teaching and learning that maintain the status quo. Against a variety of barriers, such as structural norms of teaching time as well as teachers themselves, it becomes possible to imagine the isolation described, and the difficulty and time consuming nature of the process as described at times in the document.

This document suggests in some ways that there were instances at the High School where problematic, powerful institutional practices and discourses were being challenged, and indicates some ways in which mainstream schools can contest the status quo. Nevertheless there were issues with the changes made and the account given. To begin with the account of the impetus for change and the aims can be problematised: there were specific changes the school had decided to make right from the start, which makes meaningful participation and enablement much more difficult; indeed there was evidence to suggest many teachers had felt threatened by

⁴³ *I recognise that I must continue, at all times, to act in line with my ethical values and principles. Sometimes backing away from a vision, showing cynicism or privately saying the opposite is the easy option, which leaves us feeling less isolated, but I have learned that taking this easy way out is never the right option*

the approach and had resisted. Though there are obvious differences between teachers and young people, not least in power, it is difficult to argue against people who are resisting changes and practices that they do not feel empowered by but rather oppressed. There may be conventional thinking caused by institutional discourse behind the resistance, but conscientization is clearly not occurring.

Though the Depute clearly had a powerful desire to challenge the status quo, there seemed to be many teachers who did not share the values and principles, who wanted to just carry on teaching their subject for instance. The process of change described seemed very positive, but it required an individual to have particular values and principles: the rest of the school not necessarily possessing the same values is a huge barrier. Challenging problematic practice seems to require individuals to make changes as structures, assumptions and policy or legislation change so slowly and in problematic ways. Finally, core, fundamental and from a community psychological perspective inherently problematic assumptions, fail to be challenged even in this case when an individual has more power to make changes, more opportunity to reflect and more critical values and ethics. The notion that adults should control young people and that resistance to this control should be met with discipline and failing that exclusion from learning remain core, unchallenged assumptions.

5.7 Summary

A core, assumed position by education is that adults should be in control of young people, and that adults are superior. Literature arguing for young people's rights compellingly questions this assumed position. The idea that young people need control is a pervading, powerful societal belief which is fundamental to most adult-

young person relationships and is meaningfully questioned by few. It is unsurprising then that it is one of the most significant assumptions in education. However, not only does education not challenge this idea, it also reinforces and perpetuates it. For young people education is a huge part, even if temporary, of their lives, and as we are all young once, we all learn while in education, that adults should control young people.

This assumption then affects every area of education. Adults make policy, write curricula, decide which young people will be educated where and decide what they will learn. Policy written suggesting that schools might allow young people to participate in decisions, holds no power and has no effect on such a fundamental notion. Coupled with the idea that one group must exert power over another, is the idea that that group is superior. Often common notions such as: ‘but you have to have school rules’, show the social practices of problematic educational discourses have become assumed: it is necessary to have school rules for young people if adults are attempting to exert control over young people, in particular a minority number of adults over a large number of young people. The practice of exerting control only has to be practiced if the assumption that adults must be in control of young people and young people must obey adults is taken as a fundamental belief, similarly if it is taken for granted that education must involve the one way passing of knowledge from one adult to a group of young people.

Young people then are expected to behave in very particular, ‘orderly’ and controlled ways, which teachers are expected to enforce. What does not feature in the literature and policy on education is, firstly, the many social and institutional factors that limit and make it less possible for all young people to conform to these

particular expectations. Furthermore and perhaps most importantly, there appears no questioning as to why young people should conform to these particular behaviours and why adults should be in a position of enforcing and coercing, and where this does not work, disciplining.

The assumption of control is powerful, even in the discourse and practices surrounding inclusion. Despite a strong emphasis on the rights of young people, inclusion can be positioned as conditional and as a technique of control, as young people are expected to behave or act in particular ways in order to 'merit' inclusion. These particular actions and ways of being can often be in conflict with the background and community of young people. Exclusion then is positioned as a result of resistance to control: discipline and sanctions, including various forms of inclusion are practiced when young people resist controlling practices and refuse to (or are not able to) conform. Though a focus on inclusion and a determination to exclude less are meant to be positive, they do not necessarily eradicate exclusion and may instead serve to mask it. Young people remaining in class or school does not necessarily equate to meaningful exclusion or well being.

The language and policy examined at school level from the High School seemed to include extensive descriptions of the role of a teacher, but very little on the role of a pupil. Interaction and relationships between teachers and young people did not feature in literature available to teachers; rather their role seemed heavily structured and directed towards a banking notion of education rather than collaboration. The introduction of Form Class Leaders was a positive step by the High School to strengthen relationships between adults and young people, although it should be noted that closer relationships do not equate to more collaboration and less

domination. Without challenging the core issue that young people require being controlled by adults, one can envisage that a closer relationship might be more oppressive for young people, involving more subtle practices that would still involve coercion and control. The role of young people did not seem clearly defined and was not documented explicitly. Rather what emerged from examination was that young people's roles seemed to be communicated through teachers, thus serving to strengthen a banking approach and adults control over young people.

The final section in the exploration of the High School language and practice, on critical practice, described several ways in which the school was addressing these issues. While not focusing on young people and the assumption of control, the school was putting much effort into for example, enabling critical reflection between teachers in an effort to bring about more changes. These practices are positioned in this account as a challenging of problematic educational issues and as a form of resistance and re-negotiation by the school, despite the limitations and barriers they are faced with.

This chapter has described some of the educational discourses, language and practices that emerge at a governmental, local governmental and mainstream school level. These problematic dominant educational discourses influence adults and young people and limit possibilities; for speaking, reflecting and acting. In some ways then this chapter constructs a context for some ways of speaking, reflecting, acting and interacting and the educational discourses that emerge and limit, from the adults and young people I worked with, which are described in the next three chapters.

Chapter 6: Ways of Speaking and Reflecting Available to Adults in Education

6.1 Introduction

The legislation, structures and social practices described in the previous chapter place limits in education that make critical reflection and practice difficult. Assumptions in secondary education, legislation and policy in Scotland, and the case study of the mainstream High School were examined and an account was constructed of an institutional, educational discourse in the wider sense, which is problematic from a critical community psychological perspective. This chapter explores the ways in which these assumptions, social practices and institutionally dominant discourses within education all make possible and place limits and barriers on ways of speaking and reflecting available to adults in education, primarily teachers.

Though I use the term 'teachers', I also often employ the term 'staff' or adults in this chapter, to reflect the management staff (many of whom were still involved in teaching in classrooms) and classroom assistants I worked with throughout my research.

The conclusion that ways of speaking and reflecting for adults immersed in the institution are limited by dominant discourses, emerged gradually from analysis and reflection. Early on in the knowledge construction process my own experience of engaging in the educational settings was a starting point for this line of enquiry. Spending time away from the settings, I began to reflect on my experience, the ways of speaking I had been engaged in, and the diary entries I had produced. Much of the language that emerged in my diaries was problematic and contrary to my position as a community psychologist. I reflected on how difficult it had been, while immersed in the institutional settings, to act, speak or think in ways that

challenged rather than colluded with problematic, dominant, educational ways of speaking. I therefore analysed my fieldwork diaries, beginning by reflecting on what was problematic and why, gradually developing themes, in relation both to the diary material and other aspects of my research. Thus the first section of this chapter presents this reflexive analysis of my subjective experience of immersion in education and the effects this had on my ways of reflecting.

I then moved to examining transcripts from the teachers and staff I worked with and exploring their ways of speaking. I was expecting in some ways to analyse material from adults and find problematic language and so it was important to critically reflect on these expectations themselves. A lot of my expectations were themselves problematic: initial analysis for example focused on the inclusive strategies teachers employed in the classroom, but over time this was critiqued for its assumption that 'inclusion' as a practice is unproblematic. What did emerge as particularly surprising was problematic language that emerged from discussion with staff at the Special School, as I had expected more critical and meaningful dialogue given the more critical practice I felt they were engaged in. Material from other adults in my research was analysed and reflected upon, but gradually the group discussions from the Special School became more important. The dialogue from the group discussions seemed to reflect much of the analysis elsewhere, but also provided the most rich and useful insight. The second half of this chapter therefore moves on to present an in-depth analysis of research carried out with staff at the Special School.

6.2 Ways of Speaking and Thinking: Reflexive Analysis

During my second year of the PhD I was engaged in fieldwork and was immersed in educational settings for much of the time. Re-emerging from that intense period, I

began reflecting on how hard it had been to maintain a critical perspective, both in practice and reflection. I felt I had often engaged in problematic dialogue, such as negative and blaming language towards young people. Reflexive analysis of my actions and ways of speaking I had been engaged in led to an exploration of the ways of reflecting that had emerged. During immersion in the three fields I kept a fieldwork diary. Interaction, such as the sessions at the Youth Project was relatively spontaneous and thus harder to perform critically and to resist problematic performances and institutional expectations and ways of speaking. Field work notes on the other hand are written somewhat independently of actual interactions, in this case often away from the field and by their very nature are intended to be critically reflective, written carefully and thoughtfully.

In analysing my diary entries, what was significant was the problematic nature at times of my reflections and language. There were differences between the entries for different settings, in part due to the structural nature of each setting: I was rarely reflecting on teachers or staff at the Youth Project for instance. But there was also a relationship between the problematic nature of my entries and the inherent structural problems of each setting. The institutional nature of the mainstream school I was in resulted in my diary entries for the High School containing by far the most evidence of institutional, conventional, educational discourse, and it is no coincidence that much analysis below features extracts from that diary. My entries for the Special School do not tend to feature institutional discourse, but I often slip into using patronising language towards the young people, who were younger than others I worked with. However I appear able to use more critical language in describing my interactions with the young people and in reflecting on their experiences and lives. My intense relationship with the young people at the Youth Project on the other

hand, and my position as researcher (as opposed to classroom assistant) meant that I was often drawn into negative and blaming language. The following analysis of entries is centred around key areas which emerged as important from the diaries themselves, as well as other areas of the research: control, always emerging as a central theme; my subject positioning of young people; and my subject positioning of adults, in particular teachers. Significantly, perhaps due to my role as community psychology researcher there are not as many problematic entries in relation to structures, policies or social practices, and so these are not explored here.

6.2.1 Control

Problematic language relating to control could often be found in my diaries. In particular some of the most significant research in relation to power and control came from the Youth Project. As described in Chapter 3, the young people and I were often engaged in conflict and our interactions with one another often became problematic (3.2). I was aware of this and was engaged in much critical reflection on how, as a community psychological researcher I could change myself to act in ways that diminished my power and tendency as an adult to want to control, as the excerpt below demonstrates⁴⁴. In this extract I am reflecting on ways in which I need to practice less control over the sessions and act in ways that allow for participatory and dialogical communication. There was often a dichotomy in my entries however that reflected my contradictory actions during sessions: at times I

⁴⁴ *So I think I need to keep going with a few adjustments:
Talk about issues they are interested in
Watch out for things they tell me – LISTEN more to what they're saying and write them in here
Change myself – I need to stop thinking like a teacher/youth worker and stop getting so frustrated – have more compassion, work in their boundaries.*

(YP Diary)

reflected in useful and critical ways like the first extract, but a few pages later problematic language would emerge⁴⁵. Here I write that I do not agree with the young people who do not want to take part in the session. I legitimise this opinion with ‘moral’ and ‘logical’ reasons. Moral in that I argue, uncritically, that I respect the young people and so therefore they should respect me. Logical in that I make sure I have reasons for them taking part: these reasons are not alluded to here, but often reasons appeared logical within the structure of education, but could easily be found problematic on reflection (the notion that ‘some work’ had to be done during sessions, despite the fact that conversation was of primary importance to me as a researcher). Having legitimised with ideas of logic and moral reasoning that the young people should take part, I write of moving away from participatory notions towards a language of control and power. I write that I have decided, prior to ‘dialogically’ discussing it with the young people, what they *will* take part. Finally I bring in a contradictory discourse of choice, very similar to language in policy at the High School, and use it in problematic ways to justify me taking control and forcing the young people to take part. This is a short extract from the Youth Project but demonstrates some of the language which emerged. On initial reflection during analysis writing like this seemed to come from another person and resonated with

⁴⁵ *My contact with the young people today began at lunch. I asked them what activities they would like to do after our session. 2 gave some ideas but one [Y] said he would not be joining in this week, and the 4th person seconded that. Currently I feel that their reasons for not taking part (especially the 4th one, [Mark]) are not very valid, that they’re taking the piss. I realise that this is a personal judgement, but I think for the group to work they need to respect me as much as I endeavour to respect them – when I give them a logical reason for everything we do, and I ask them rather than tell them, saying no without consideration is disrespectful I feel. So I had already decided to calmly but firmly put my foot down, to insist that we would all take part today, that they had total choice over what they did, but that they had to do something.*

(YP Diary)

ideas I had of how teachers reflect on maintaining control of a class. My account currently, after a long period of reflection on theory, literature and the research is that the powerful institutional discourses, assumptions and social practices of education make it very difficult to think, speak and act in critical ways. In addition to this it becomes very hard to resist and easy to ‘slip’ into problematic, individualising and blaming language: what is meaningful to construct from extracts like this one is an account of the problematic and uncritical educational discourse which has emerged.

In other settings, in particular the High School I had less opportunity to exert control. As a Classroom Assistant when immersed in the setting I was in some ways under control of the classroom teacher. There were areas, as an adult in the school however, where I was expected to exert control and the extract below describes the uncomfortable feeling I had towards this role⁴⁶. Here I reflect on my frustrations with situations I observe in classrooms that I feel are unjust but that I am powerless to change. I write of attempting to move away from strategies of control, in not disciplining the young people as much, but I am still uncritical of the notion that I should be ‘telling pupils off’ at all: even if I am finding ways to be less authoritative, I am nevertheless limited in my role to exerting some sort of control.

⁴⁶ *It's interesting when bad situations occur and I'm in the class, how often the pupils look to me to save them. It's a nightmare because I have no power to stand up for them against the teacher. It's an ingrained rule that the adults side against young people; the classroom assistant with the teacher. I know for a fact that if I even facially expressed a wish to side with the young people the teacher would get very angry. I still refuse in my own way though. I never tell the pupils off in the same way, I help them a lot and am as fair as possible. When they come to me looking for approval over the teacher I just remain neutral – “that's not my decision”, “you'll have to ask the teacher”. I just don't know what else I can do. It's a very frustrating situation, one I'm sure most teachers and student teachers would agree with too.*

(HS Diary)

My reflections become particularly problematic when discussing ways in which teachers I observed were controlling. In the extract below I am describing a teacher who was very authoritative, and exerted a large amount of control over the class⁴⁷. In describing the control of the class in this way, I am not reflecting on the notion of control itself, what might structurally cause such a high level of control to become possible in a classroom, whose interests are served by the young people being silent and compliant, or what is problematic about this level of control for the young people. The overwhelming theme here is one of awe: I convey that I am impressed with the performance of the teacher, that they are skilled at maintaining control and I position the teacher as being responsible for the young peoples' quiet behaviour that day. It may be the case that I wished to observe these lessons as I believed they highlighted issues with education, but the account nevertheless positions power and control as a positive thing.

6.2.2 Positioning of Young People

In an extract below I am reflecting generally about my experiences of the young people at the High School⁴⁸. To begin with I place blame in quite negative ways

⁴⁷ *I assisted a particular teacher for the 1st time today. I've had their class before, but the teacher has always been away. The class was quite hard to manage previously and resisted work voraciously.*

Today, there are more present than before, and it was non-uniform day and the end of half term – they silently got on with their work and never complained – most pupils have been trying to watch videos all day!

This was amazing to watch – will be very interesting to get to know this teacher and how they work.

(HS Diary)

⁴⁸ *A lot of pupils have a very obvious lack of respect for staff, and it is difficult to remain on their side. I guess my argument is that their environment has caused them to behave like this without question and that society/schools/education etc needs to change. But it is difficult when one is always (90% of the time) fair and is still treated unfairly back! I guess that's something us adults are no longer used to, but has always been a feature in young people's lives...*

(HS Diary)

with young people and not myself, other adults, or more critical societal issues. I go on to argue that it is the situation and not individual young people that are problematic, but I trivialise this argument by beginning the statement with “I guess”, suggesting I don’t really believe this argument. I further trivialise again using the phrase “I guess” when reflecting that young people experience a lack of respect daily. I state, without reflection on whether this statement could ever be possible, that I am 90% fair with the young people I am working with. Referring generally to times when “one” is fair distances myself from the statement, but nevertheless refers to my actions. I appear to construct in this extract, a rhetorical argument that although there are other reasons for conflict in schools, pupils are primarily in the wrong and I and other adults are in the right. I furthermore seem to suggest that adults are not used to and should not expect unfair treatment. The issue here is not that adults should receive unfair treatment, but that there is a separation between how adults and young people should be treated and how they should treat each other.

In my field work diaries I often seem to blame young people, individualise, dehumanise and objectify them, despite this being in contrast with core assumptions I hold that young people have rights and that they should be central to this research. In the extract below I describe one of many lessons I participated in as a Classroom Assistant⁴⁹. I use problematic words like “cheeky”, as well as “aggressive”,

⁴⁹ *Had a few very cheeky pupils this morning. It is really difficult to stay rational – they seem to do it deliberately in a way, to wind you up etc, but it brings on a fairly aggressive reaction in you if you’re not careful*

(HS Diary)

“unreceptive” and “rude”, a number of times in my diaries. In this extract I go on to blame further by suggesting young people cause aggressive behaviour in adults, and suggest my efforts to “stay rational” are courageous, positioning myself as superior to the young people I am interacting with. Blaming myself for conflict in a classroom would be equally problematic: what is absent is reflection on what it is about education as an institution that could create conflict between the pupils and me in a classroom.

6.2.3 Positioning of Adults

The use of this negative language and problematic ways of reflecting was in marked contrast with the language I used to describe teachers. While I seemed to succumb to using negative language towards the young people, I found it very difficult to use negative language to describe teachers; so much so that at times my descriptions were uncritically positive, and I would begin making excuses for teachers or siding with them in problematic ways, in for example the extract below⁵⁰. In this extract I am describing some very problematic events I observed in classrooms, and here as well as elsewhere I described with frustration being asked to collude in disempowering situations and the feeling of powerlessness I felt as a classroom assistant. This reflection changes however, in a statement that backtracks somewhat

⁵⁰ *I have heard classes repeatedly being told to ‘shut up’, pupils publicly humiliated – being told they are behind in the class, or if they can’t answer a question that they are clearly not paying attention. Sometimes it is very obvious that the teacher has low expectations of a pupil or class, and sometimes the teacher will discuss these things with me (expecting me to collude) in front of the class. Irrational emotions like these lead to mistakes – often the wrong person is told off, or not the worst behaved, and so injustice creeps in. I feel I really have to bite my tongue in these situations. I want to make it clear however that these teachers are a very small minority – maybe 1 in 20 good teachers at most from my experience.*

(HS Diary)

and weakens previous frustration by legitimising actions when they are practised by a “small minority”. I use uncritically positive language again in another excerpt, where I am describing teachers’ reactions to my being a researcher at the High School⁵¹. Here, what is in part important is the assumption that adults should not necessarily engage in too much dialogue with young people, as well as an instance of a teacher using my presence as some sort of disciplinary tactic. What is significant for this section however, is that when writing I somehow feel the need to add that “both teachers were nice”. Whether or not the teachers were ‘nice’ people is a totally irrelevant reflection to the description of events between myself and the teachers, but it seems as though there is a need at this point to add something positive about the teachers to make up for the previous description. In both these extracts I employ a kind of ‘backtracking’; negating a perceived negative statement with a problematically positive one.

This section of reflexive analysis has considered the effect my subjective experience of immersion in educational setting had on my written reflections. In relation to control, I find myself problematically reflecting that my exertion of control over young people was at times necessary and right. The norms and taken for granted assumptions of education make it possible to argue on logical and moral grounds, despite these being inherently problematic. I often reflect in positive ways about controlling actions of teachers, failing to meaningfully reflect. Furthermore, though I am reflecting in my diaries on ways to resist my controlling role as an adult,

⁵¹ *One advised me not to tell pupils what I was doing, while another jokingly pretended I was researching exclusion and that the pupils who had been excluded would get watched by me – both extremes, and both teachers were nice!*

(HS Diary)

education places major limits on possibilities to resist, and so accordingly I often succumb to controlling language in my reflections. Blaming, individualising, derogatory, patronising language emerges at times in relation to young people. I find it difficult on the other hand to be critical of teachers, with uncritically positive language emerging, where I side with teachers and make excuses. Problematic reflecting also emerges when I ‘backtrack’: when I make a statement which could be perceived as negative, and then negate it later, retracting the statement or masking it with a positive statement. All of these problematic ways of reflecting in my diaries demonstrate how difficult it was to reflect critically when immersed in an educational context, in particular when considering the nature of problematic language in each diary in relation to setting and context: my problematic ways of reflecting emulated the problematic nature of the settings themselves.

6.3 Ways of Speaking as an Adult: Special School Staff

Having analysed and explored an account of the ways I found myself limited when reflecting this chapter now moves on to examining spoken language emerging from adults who work in education. Early on in the reflection and analysis process, as well as reflecting on the ways in which I felt I had been limited, I was reflecting upon what I had found surprising about research I did with the staff at the Special School. In recording discussions between the staff, I had expected language and ways of speaking to emerge that complemented a critical community psychological perspective. However, what was unexpected about the conversations was some of the problematic ways of speaking that emerged, and it surprised me, based on my experiences with the staff, that they would speak in this way. This section begins therefore by considering the context of the Special School, and aspects of teaching

practice that led me to believe the staff held values and assumptions similar to my own. The section then moves on to consider the language that emerged from group discussions with staff, focusing on the following themes: Control; Inclusion; Positioning of Adults and Positioning of Young People. The discussions were recorded during one afternoon, with the staff split into two groups of four. I divided my time between the two groups intending to raise questions and facilitate discussion, but in fact I rarely featured in dialogue of either groups.

My account of ways of speaking available to adults in education does not come solely from the material from staff at the Special School. As well as the previous section there was much in material from the High School to suggest significant issues. It is not possible to present analysis and reflection on all material however, and there are aspects of the two sessions at the Special School that make it compelling and very important to explore here. One reason is that these discussions took place almost without intervention by me. I also found the two discussions to be rich in both critical and problematic dialogue: ways of speaking that offered significant contributions to a critical way of thinking, as well as problematic language that raised questions, all of which allowed for a deep consideration of ways of speaking in education.

6.3.1 Context of Special School

The context of the Special School is briefly described here in relation to the analysis that follows: description of the structure and practices of the Special School can be found in Chapter 2 (2.4.2), and a more detailed description of my observations can be found in Chapter 3(3.3.1.3).

When working as a classroom assistant, I felt the teachers at the school, several of

whom I worked with for prolonged periods, often engaged in unconventional practice that seemed similar to the dialogical, collaborative and humanising style of pedagogy Freire advocated and I note this in my diary⁵². I also felt the changes the school had undergone; from a full time special school to supporting young people while they remained in their mainstream school, was a positive step.

In the extract below I reflect on this, as well as some of the problematic practices of the school⁵³. The notion of “managing” behaviour was something the school did focus on in relation to young people, and can be positioned as a limitation placed on them by working within education. The school did work in many different ways, but its ethos in relation to young people seemed often to focus on changing the young people. In a policy document detailing some of the ethos of the school, the dichotomy between more positive practice and problematic educational practices is apparent⁵⁴. Here the nurturing more positive language such as “caring”, “warm”

⁵² *The afternoon teacher I am with is very patient and very considered – not forcing things – and definitely practices ‘negotiation’.*

Did relaxation for first half of morning – was really good and I reckon would benefit a lot of young people. Starts with breathing in and out, then tensing and relaxing muscles – can move on to visualising calming situations or even stressful ones and how to calm down.

(SS Diary)

⁵³ *The school seems to have a really good grasp of good practice, what they want, what mistakes they have made.*

Did occur to me though that the things they do with the young people are all (I think) about managing their behaviour, not acting to change others, which is of course a near impossible thing to do – I guess they are about changing others too – seminars, outreach and the closeness they have with parents.

(SS Diary)

⁵⁴ *[The Special School] seeks to be a caring community providing for the personal, social and educational development of its pupils. A community where, in a warm and accepting environment, pupils can examine/analyse their personal difficulties and with support seek solutions to their upset and disturbing behaviour*

(Policy document entitled “Supporting Inclusion”, 2003, Special School)

and “accepting”, conflicts with the blaming language that assumes young people are solely responsible for conflict in schools with “personal difficulties” and “disturbing behaviour”. The difficult position the school seemed to find itself in, between more positive ways of speaking, reflecting and acting and the educational norms and social practices they were limited by are reflected upon by exploring their ways of speaking during discussion in the section below.

6.3.2 Control

As explored in the previous chapter, adult control and power over young people is so assumed and fundamental in mainstream secondary education that it is rarely reflected on and usually taken for granted. When initially reflecting on the conversations recorded from staff at the special school I found much critical discussion, but the way in which control was still assumed to be a necessary part of learning and teaching was problematic.

There were instances during discussion where critical dialogue and reflection emerged in relation to control. For example below staff are discussing what they feel is the focus of their work with young people⁵⁵. In this extract the emphasis is not on controlling young people or on exerting power, but on enabling young people to have “a voice”, on listening to young people and developing a respectful

⁵⁵ *J: we're trying to give them a voice, and give them a way of using that voice let them,*
E: uh-huh

J: be heard, rather than, shout at them *you boy!*
S: mm-hmm
E: call them by their second name *mm-hmm...erm*
J: respect

(SS Staff 1.1)

relationship. In another extract below being authoritarian is positioned as a negative thing and education is blamed for trying to control young people⁵⁶. Here it is unclear whether autonomy for young people is a positive thing or not. However it is schools that are positioned as not being “accommodating” and changing the way they work with young people, rather than blaming young people for not complying. In an excerpt below the same staff member discusses control in problematic ways⁵⁷. To begin with in this extract, the idea emerges that young people should be controlled by adults elsewhere in society, suggesting that parents should control their children. Within this idea education can be framed as reproducing the practices of control in society more generally, rather than being responsible for it. In the second section of dialogue, a contradictory discourse surrounding young people’s rights emerges. Here the rights of young people are stated as being important, but are diminished by surrounding statements. The idea that young

⁵⁶ *H: I mean some children are given a lot of autonomy as well and its, er, and they’re given so much autonomy at home that they, when in school, they don’t have the boundaries, or, you know people telling them, they don’t like being told what to do because perhaps they’re not in other areas of their life, so, and that just schools are not very accommodating of children who won’t be doing as they were asked or, erm*

(SS Staff 1.2)

⁵⁷ *H: now parents will openly admit and even very young children even like, a mother of a primary school kid that I was at a meeting a couple of weeks ago, erm said her son was out of her control. And there are so many children, without parental control even at the primary school age now, in that erm, if they don’t get their own way they trash their rooms, they, destroy things, they can’t be,*

I: why has that happened, why is that?

H: I think children have more power now. I mean they have, I’m not saying that it’s wrong that they have, that children have rights I think they should have rights, but, I think that, it has constantly, it’s like, you know you need to, ask the child’s permission for them to have an injection now, its not, you know they have the right to refuse. And I think you know on one level, sort of parental, control’s not a word I like to use, but you know the, their instinct would be, you need the injection for your health. A child refuses it, then you can’t actually make them

(SS Staff 1.2)

people are 'out of control' is firstly attributed to young people having more power, which thus frames the idea of young people having power as a negative thing. The rights of a child or young person are then introduced, but are conditional: young people should have rights but only with conditions. The examples used to highlight this reasoning are problematic and narrow but serve to justify these notions. Firstly using the word 'child' rather than young person invokes a younger age making it easier to argue for less rights and more control from adults. Secondly the example drawn upon is a medical one, which is easy to frame as straightforward and justifiable: the child must be forced to have an injection as it benefits their health in ways they are too young to comprehend. This in itself is problematic, but it also further justifies other areas of social injustice and control, such as control of teachers over young people. A further justification for the need for control of young people was that children and young people want to be controlled⁵⁸. Here the implication is firstly that in society, in a young person's community and perhaps also in relation to their parents, certain young people's "lives are out of control", a statement often directed towards young people. Here a contextual, socially derived emphasis is placed on a lack of control: that social practices around young people are not controlling enough. The excerpt then suggests that young people would choose to be controlled if they had the chance to make an informed decision. The idea that young people both need and want control is furthered in the excerpt

⁵⁸ *H: but for some children it doesn't suit them either. You know some children who, whose lives are out of control we've had a lot of children whose lives are out of control, don't actually like it, but they don't know, they don't know any other way*
D: any other way

(SS Staff 1.2)

below⁵⁹. Here the discourse of control and power is strengthened with the use of the words “structure” and “organisation”. In the context of an institution, and indeed society more generally these words invoke positive images and less obvious methods of control and power, justified by the suggestion again that young people (or ‘kids’) both want and need this control.

In the next extract a teacher has described a situation they observed in a school where the Deputy Head Teacher was waiting by the school entrance for late pupils who were then immediately reprimanded on arriving late⁶⁰. The teacher seemed frustrated by the way conflict was immediately created by a staff member shouting at a pupil, but the situation is not reflected on critically. The issue in this dialogue seems to be how it can be possible to maintain control of young people without being oppressive or unnecessarily authoritarian. This was a very important and problematic distinction that emerged often in my research, but particularly from the staff at the Special School: that control is fundamentally necessary in schools but that the level of control and the ways in which it is administered need to be reflected upon and changed.

⁵⁹ *J: our kids, by and large they like structure organisation and they need it*
E: oh very much so uh-huh
(SS Staff 1.1)

⁶⁰ *C: but it didn't have to be this, attack on the pupil, I think as they walk in the door, you know there's ways of there's ways of controlling, that don't necessarily involve,*
H: speaking to people

C: going straight in at the deep end, and shouting I mean, you know these kids, where they're coming from what they've had, they're maybe 5 minutes late because of, you've no idea what it is
(SS Staff 1.2)

Below another extract takes this idea a step further by assuming that because education is an institution, it must have rules, and thereby control and authority⁶¹. There is an admission that adults, teachers or staff working in education, do not want to exert authority, but that they have no control over what must be present in an institution. This discourse resonates with the idea that aspects of systems like the institution of education are so powerful and pervading that social practices within them are assumed to be core constants rather than practices to be challenged. The extract moves on to demonstrating quite clearly an outcome of the taken for granted notion of adults controlling young people. In the final sentence the young person is positioned negatively and as being at fault for speaking when he chooses, as he has experienced this ‘luxury’ outside of education, and is not conforming to being more silent and subservient within education. The idea that young people must be silent and not interrupt is justified by the assumed position that young people must be controlled and so follows on naturally and becomes spoken of as if it were not a problematic position. This piece of dialogue resonates with the discourse created by the governmental policy documents described in the previous chapter, where various ways of young people speaking in a classroom were highlighted as examples of “low level” indiscipline (Chapter 5, 5.3).

⁶¹ *L: it is an institution and you have to have rules and whatever and although you don't want to, have a it crushes creativity I know someone who because he was a, pain in the neck that, adults would stop, the conversation to listen to the gentle wisdom of x because that was what he was used to*

(SS Staff 1.2)

Below the institutional system is raised again, this time with a temporal element to reflection⁶². The dialogue begins with the more critical statement that systems rather than young people should be reflected upon as having changed and perhaps as being at fault. This line of argument quickly changes however and in fact this initial statement serves to partly legitimise what follows. The problematic way in which the past is compared with the present serves to justify control. In a very similar way to that described by Foucault (1977), “corporal punishment” and “fear” is attributed to the past, and current realities are then compared and positioned far more favourably, using words such as “negotiation” and “agreement”. It can be argued, as Foucault does in relation to the penal system that punishment in education has moved from the physical to the mental, to control without physical punishment. This however calls for a reflection on control in itself. By bringing in ideas of “negotiation” and “agreement”, the suggestion of the discourse, particularly when compared with the past, is that there is no controlling of young people now, only dialogue and equal decision making. A further technique is then employed by the discourse, and that is to use these seemingly critical and positive ideas of “negotiation” and “agreement”, but to use them to further legitimise the discourse of control. Young people ‘agreeing’ that they must behave a certain way is a contradiction, as is “getting children to understand”. Here the more positive notions of understanding and dialogue between adults and young people are combined with

⁶² *D: I've got to say I think, the kids haven't changed the system's changed dramatically in a number of ways, and our parameters of dealing with children, have changed dramatically, before there was corporal punishment, and there was, rule by fear, whereas now there's negotiation and erm, agreement, to have an agreement with children that they must behave like that because it's to their general benefit, and erm, I think in some situations it's about getting children to understand, that they have to do that or, it's not in their best interests, sometimes you know*

quite forceful discourse which negates any critical ideas of negotiation and dialogue.

This analysis demonstrates how powerful the assumption that adults should be in control and should dominate young people is, and how limiting and problematic it makes dialogue and reflection. As with literature at a governmental and school level, there is no argument or critical reflection on whether adults should be in control; this is assumed as essential and fundamental to teaching, learning and education. This assumption is legitimised by stating that education is simply reinforcing, but not perpetuating or itself creating, a societal practice of controlling young people; that young people want and need control, and that educating practices must be done within an institutional system which must have rules and authority. Various ways of speaking then further strengthen these statements, for example by comparing favourably with the past and by using critical language in problematic ways, which was similar to the language examined in Chapter 5. Finally, dialogue becomes limited, to discussing how much control, and what kinds of control are appropriate and less problematic, rather than reflecting critically on control itself.

6.3.3 Inclusion

The issue of inclusion and exclusion is discussed extensively by the Special School staff during recordings. In part this is due to my lines of enquiry at the time and my topic guide (Appendix C), which focuses on these issues. It is also due to the fact that the young people they work with have all experienced school exclusion, and by the very nature of the school itself: young people are attending away from their mainstream school and so are in some way being excluded from their normal

classrooms. Critical ways of speaking surrounding the issue of school exclusion often emerge, with the staff having complex ideas about what it means for a young person to be included or excluded. Both groups begin by discussing inclusion, noting that as well as being excluded from a school physically, there are issues surrounding “internal exclusion”⁶³. This extract conveys how complicated the issue of school exclusion is, and how overlooked some forms of exclusion are, especially by government as emphasis is placed on statistics of official exclusions. In a structural way the Special School was colluding with exclusion of young people from mainstream school, but staff were clear that they felt this was not an ideal situation. When asked how they would like to see young people being included, they are clear it should be with peers⁶⁴. Here, the dialogue highlights the negative labelling of young people that occurs when they are separated physically from their peers, and the suggestion here seems that inclusion should be assumed and that all young people should be part of their “learning community”.

⁶³ L: *so you're talking about people who are not being excluded, per say*
D: *well aye, they're in the building right they're internally in the mainstream education you know*

C: *it's kind of internal exclusion whereas, ...there's kids who are going to school like that, and are just given work sheets*

H: *is that not a term that's actually used as well isn't it internal exclusion*

L: *aye, yeah*

C: *it actually doesn't go down in the statistics as an exclusion but, cos they're still in the building*

(SS Staff 1.2)

⁶⁴ J: *I think they should be included somewhere, within, the building in the learning community so they feel part of the community, they're not taxied away like a, yeah*

E: *a leper*

(SS Staff 1.1)

When asked what would make mainstream school more inclusive, staff reflect that it is a complex issue⁶⁵, that there are many levels which affect change, not just people at a school or the resources in place, but that change needs to occur at all levels, particularly with regard to wider, societal issues. In Chapter 5 the notion of inclusion and inclusive practices was examined in mainstream schooling and reframed as a controlling practice, given that young people must act and speak in certain ways to be included. Staff at the Special School did engage in these problematic notions of inclusion at times, but the assumptions and ethos they communicated in relation to inclusion seemed much more rights based and grounded in critical ideas.

These critical framings of the issue of inclusion are insightful and valuable to my research, and demonstrate that with opportunity to reflect critically and space and time to do this, as the staff sometimes had at the Special School, issues can be reflected on in meaningful, critical ways.

⁶⁵ C: *but how could you, how, is there a way of, making mainstream schools more inclusive?*

H: *I think there is but I mean it is about resources and making sure there are people there to support it, not*

D: *no, no there's more it's more than that, it needs an entire culture change I think*

(SS Staff 1.2)

At the same time however, different positions emerged, contradictory to this way of speaking and powerful dominant language around exclusion emerged⁶⁶. Here young people are ultimately blamed for being excluded, for their “extreme” and “unacceptable” behaviour. In direct contrast with inclusive and participatory language elsewhere during discussion, here the primary schools are also blamed for not excluding young people enough. This problematic framing of school exclusion and the individualising and blaming of young people that occurs as a result is furthered later on in discussion⁶⁷. Here exclusion is positioned as necessary, that there is “no alternative”. A powerful discourse that emerged often in other areas, and is present here is the ‘logical’ arguing that legitimises exclusion; for example that the teacher, school and other pupils are given “a break” from the young person who is excluded, presumably temporarily. There is some ambiguity directly after this reflection, where the dialogue seems to backtrack from being positive about exclusion, that it does no good and that the speaker has sympathy for the young

⁶⁶ L: *primary schools and not all but most there's a real willingness to work with these children... there is, an understanding of parents in difficult circumstances, and they are very willing to move the goal posts and, try not to give them things, they try to hang on to these kids, and sometimes you wonder... And then the kid moves up to secondary school still behaving in this, unacceptable level, you know the secondary's will, do a wee bit but very quickly that's you finding yourself, excluded. And the amount who've never been, I mean you look at kids, who've never been excluded from primary, whose behaviour has been, quite extreme*

(SS Staff 1.2)

⁶⁷ L: *that's the other thing about the schools when we're talking about, you know all the, inclusion side of it, sometimes in some pupil's own school there is no alternative but to exclude them to give, the rest of the class, the teacher the school or whatever a break from them and I don't think it does any good, and they don't come back, you know I'm sorry if they're not gonna turn over a new leaf. I think maybe for some kids, who are going a wee bit off the rails, one short sharp exclusion and if their parents are strong enough to back it up and they're kept in or whatever might make a difference and they'll think that was all from that that's never gonna happen again, but the run of the mill ones are, it's a wee break for the school.*

(SS Staff 1.2)

person. Finally, having argued that exclusion is fundamentally necessary, reflection centres on how exclusion should be carried out, in ways that are more effective and, it seems, ‘less’ excluding. Exclusion is firmly positioned as a disciplinary technique rather than a removal of learning and an unjust act. The phrase “one short sharp exclusion” is particularly important: the words short and sharp usually precede physical actions and the phrase is indicative of physical punishments.

In this section ways of speaking about inclusion are examined, and staff discuss and reflect about inclusion in complex ways, considering social causes and in this way speak in ways that reflect a community psychological approach. During the same discussions however, and often from the same speakers, a conflicting account emerges of exclusion. Contrary to discussion about inclusion and in similar ways to discourse previously considered in Chapter 5, young people were often blamed and their ‘behaviour’ was assumed at fault for exclusion more often than societal and ideological factors. Arguments emerge in relation to exclusion, positioned as ‘discipline’, which serve to make it a ‘logical’ and ‘necessary’ action and practice. These arguments are logical and seem necessary only within the problematic boundaries of education, for example assuming young people are to blame and assuming adults must control young people. That these adults, who were often engaged in meaningful practice and spoke of more rights based notions of inclusion, would still discuss how necessary and important exclusion was as a disciplinary practice, is testament to the power of these fundamental and problematic assumptions in education.

6.3.4 Positioning of Teachers

Staff conveyed that they often felt frustrated when observing some teachers and

staff in mainstream schools. They described many events they had observed involving conflict between teachers and young people, where they felt teachers had exacerbated the conflict, had been unjust in their actions, and tended to describe these events as eventually leading to exclusion of the young people involved. Despite the experiences they conveyed of observing unjust situations, they nevertheless had difficulty in discussing issues relating directly to teachers in critical ways.

In particular they seemed to be uncomfortable saying anything that might appear to be negative, and often retracted statements made⁶⁸. This excerpt moves very quickly from describing unfair situations and demonstrates the backtracking the staff often did when describing issues relating to teachers, moving from critiquing an important issue to resolving it in very problematic ways. The spoken process begins by highlighting examples of dominating conflict where teachers might shout for unacceptable reasons. A critical reflection of this issue would not need blaming discourse directed at teachers, but what does occur is that the argument begins to side with the position of teacher. There is a somewhat confusing argument that difficulties faced in seeing “the bigger picture”, in critically reflecting perhaps, somehow admonishes behaviour from teachers. Then the discourse moves into denying that teachers might not be able to critically reflect, withdrawing from any criticism entirely, and the reflection seems to rest on suggesting that teachers are powerless and that it is reasonable to expect them to shout.

⁶⁸ *J: and then to be shouted at, you know, er for, kids who don't have a pencil or, a rubber or, you know, their gym kit. I don't know what it would take to, for mainstream teachers, they can't be all things to all people to see the bigger picture. I'm not saying they don't see the bigger picture but what can they do about it?*

In the extract below a similar process emerges in discussion⁶⁹. The idea that teachers should be “personable”, friendly and respectful towards young people is raised by one of the classroom assistants. It is then argued that this is not possible with thirty young people, but another teacher goes on to argue that it can be. Again, when mentioned that teachers should “give more respect”, backtracking follows as reasons are voiced as to why this may in fact not be the case. As is noted in this excerpt, interactional strategies like greeting at the door are problematic and avoid discussing core problems, and in relation to this research some of them could be argued as being patronising. This excerpt demonstrates a duality and inconsistency in the discussion at the Special School, and the multivoicedness that was present; on the one hand positioning themselves different and ‘other’ in relation to other teachers, but on the other hand being limited in how far the teacher position can be critiqued and problematised, often retracting any negative statements, and often failing to reflect on core issues such as the power a teacher has.

⁶⁹ I: you think other teachers in mainstream school should be more, more, like you? What’s the difference?

A: I’d say more personable, maybe, I mean more of, maybe give more respect, well I say respect but, I think it’s the fact that we’ve got the opportunity, because we’ve got the smaller numbers we can do that where as...

E: I couldn’t imagine a teacher in a mainstream school with 30 odd kids, trying to be personable with every one of them, you know like a lesson in maths or history

S: I mean you can set the tone, even things like standing at the door and greeting them when they come in... a lot of people do that you stand at the door, you’d greet them as they came in and then when you took the register you’d ask each one individually how they were, or even it could be a check you know what was the best thing you did at the weekend, or, what’s the best film you’ve seen recently so there’s things you can do, at the beginning and the end of a lesson it just takes a few minutes either side, so I think a lot, a lot, more teachers are becoming amenable to that still a long way to go but there’s things you can do to check everybody in a big class.

(SS Staff 1.1)

A dichotomy in the accounts from staff at the Special School emerged, of being teachers (or classroom assistants) but also describing mainstream teachers as other and different, as they are described below⁷⁰. Here mainstream teachers are positioned as being other and different, and the discourse becomes critical and interesting when it is argued that it is teachers that need or are used to the structure of mainstream education, rather than elsewhere where young people are positioned as needing institutional structure.

In the next extract, staff are describing a very problematic situation where it becomes possible for a group of young people to be targeted by more than one teacher and to become excluded⁷¹. The situation being described is a particularly unjust one, with the argument that curricular constraints divert teachers' focus away from building relationships. The dialogue then becomes problematic however and

⁷⁰ J: well we've had teachers coming from mainstream who were desperate to get back they preferred the mainstream. They preferred, setting a task, and the task by and large, the kid responded to it. They didn't want to have to humour, cajole, er, you know reinforce it
E: they liked having structures as well as

J: uh-huh uh-huh they didn't want the hassle, being shouted at, you know

(SS Staff 1.1)

⁷¹ J: [in a] mainstream secondary school, there was, maybe third years, class, boys, a quite difficult er, group to teach, and there was a quite a lot or a few of the teachers, would say to you, if you go into that class anything they do, make sure you get there, get it logged get it sent down, to the guidance teacher, all the teachers wanted was to teach the majority,
S: oh yeah, cos they didn't want

J: and get them excluded they wanted them out the system,

E: that's what I was meaning

J: and I think there's still a lot of teachers who have that mind set, cos they have to, deliver

E: yep, mm-hmm

J: their curriculum, and it's just, upsetting for them, in the classroom to deal with that, they see behaviour, as a separate department and it's not for them to deal with

(SS Staff 1.1)

the issue becomes diminished by arguing that the ‘behaviour’ of the young people is the issue. In using the emotive word “upsetting”, the dialogue moves to empathising with teachers in a problematic way that then serves to justify the exclusion of young people. Instances where critical dialogue transformed into the uncritical were common, as well as instances where particularly unjust examples of teacher’s behaviour towards young people were excused or justified.

Below an example is being described of a young person a school appeared to want to exclude, who had learning difficulties, struggled with literacy, but was then punished with ‘lines’⁷². For a young person to be given ‘lines’ as punishment when they struggle with writing is unjust and absurd, and demonstrates what becomes possible in education. It is suggested that it might have been done deliberately, and this was an important issue to reflect upon. However, the discussion ends soon after, as the problem is negated with the notion that the majority of teachers would not do this. There was no suggestion to begin with that all teachers would, and it demonstrates how difficult it seemed to be to highlight unjust events and then move on to discussing core issues in relation to those events.

⁷² L: *But they had come to, the conclusion that, she did not fit in and they weren't gonna work with her any more. So she got lines and didn't do them and they doubled and so on until*

I: *so they knew she wasn't going to* *they literally went*
C: *aye, I think that was part of it as well*

I: *through, ways of*
C: *oh I'm sure that happens. But I mean, I think 80% of teachers probably don't, have*

The difficulty in critically reflecting on teaching and the multivoicedness that emerged during the staff discussions is demonstrated in the next excerpt⁷³. Here what emerges are different discourses in dialogue with one another, the different focuses in education that direct teachers and that the speakers here struggle to reconcile. As staff discuss an example of teaching, an account emerges whereby some of the staff feel there are simple and practical problems that are caused by the teacher. This account is problematic as it individualises the teacher, failing to consider for example in what way the education authority might have placed the supply teacher in the classroom, possibly at the last minute (education authorities have control over employment in schools). This account is then resisted by a more problematic discourse, where various ‘strategies’ emerge that appear to attempt to

⁷³ L: *I will describe to you the worst ever, the supply teacher, not enough worksheets, and had issued coloured pencils, last period of the day ... And I was, there was no wonder they were noisy, and there were.*

D: *but it is hard being a supply teacher*

L: *I know Dave but I mean if I'm a supply teacher, I do not rely on somebody giving me activities, I have in my bag, at least some, some worksheets some, I don't know word searches puzzles, or some lessons up my sleeve, that I can do* no

D: *I know but you get into a comfort zone*

H: *I don't know I think that's*

L: *that can't be*

D: *I think you do though I think you do I mean and if you gave pencils out as you came in through the door you'd get through a box every day*

C: *no you don't*

D: *yes you do*

L: *you just get them to put them back*

H: *no, well*

C: *you have a system I mean I'm not saying that, kids should be, airy fairy and allowed to do what they want, what I'm saying is there's ways of, giving pencils out to kids, there's ways of having, control without, haranguing kids*

D: *and I agree with you but, I think we have to be a bit more realistic about expectations of the mainstream schools because, of the sheer volume of numbers*

C: *but teachers just don't do*

L: *I think, not at all*

H: *no*

(SS Staff 1.2)

diminish the criticism of teaching. The supply teacher is sided with in problematic ways, arguing the difficult nature of teaching and that it becomes possible to become used to problems: here responsibility and even agency is diminished. The two opposing accounts move on to engage in dialogue ultimately problematic and uncritical from both sides. The idea of giving pupils equipment is discussed, whether or not teachers should hand out pencils every time a pupil needs one, on the one hand arguing they should, and on the other arguing equipment would become used up, implying the pencils would get ‘stolen’ and that this would be a negative thing. Disagreeing over a low level, small and practical issue is problematic and totally diverts attention away from wider and more fundamental issues, though the ‘control’ of pencils was something I often observed being negotiated in classrooms. The issue of control is then raised again, using the example of pencils, but reflecting on what kind of control should be exerted rather than whether it should be exerted at all. A final example of problematic language then emerges in an attempt to diminish any previous critiques, with the suggestion that expectations from schools should be lowered due to volume of numbers of young people: interestingly, this argument is strongly disagreed with and ‘cut off’ by other voices.

This section has considered how the staff at the Special school describe the role of the teacher and what kinds of subject positions they construct for teachers. The nature of their own roles, in some ways challenging problematic assumptions about teachers, but most still teachers themselves, is reflected in the multivoiced accounts that emerge. Whereas young people tend to be blamed for issues related to their role (examined in detail below), the Special School Staff find it very difficult to blame teachers. Blaming is problematic, but they also find it difficult to meaningfully critique. Instances occur where quite oppressive actions from teachers

are described, but what often follows is a 'negation' of the problem, a kind of 'backtracking'. This was not a feature found in Chapter 5, but tends to be more associated with speech rather than writing, as sentences are re-constructed as they are spoken. So for example the oppressive situation is described, but then negated as the speaker or group backtracks, by 'making excuses'.

These ways of speaking suggest an affiliation with teachers in mainstream as well as the power of education limiting possibilities for critical reflection, but at other times the staff at the school positioned mainstream teachers as 'other' from themselves. The extract where teachers are positioned as 'needing' the problematic structure and domination that education provides is an unusual way of reflecting on a teacher's subject position and is similar to dialogue describing young people as needing control.

6.3.5 Positioning of Young People

Whereas teachers were often positioned as having too much pressure to be able to change, young people were often positioned as being expected to change as the extract below demonstrates⁷⁴.

Here the teacher is positioned favourably and unable to interact positively, where as the young person is expected to learn: how to “cope” in the classroom situation; how to change their behaviour to fit in and to think carefully about how they interact with the teacher. Though it could be argued this gives the young people agency, by removing any expectations from the teacher, this way of speaking is blaming and individualising towards young people. As is noted towards the end, the expectations here placed on young people are difficult, and yet similar expectations for teachers are not spoken of. The idea that the school was enabling young people to ‘cope’ in school, rather than the school challenging problematic

⁷⁴ J: you can't expect a mainstream teacher when they've got 28 30 pupils in front of them, to be, as, you know, they can't give eye contact and, reassurance all the time, in the same way that, with 6 kids in a classroom there are things a teacher can't do so in mainstream it's not,

S: I think it's more about trying to teach the kids isn't it, how to cope in that kind of
J: aye the kids how to cope

S: environment and how to approach the teacher and be assertive, in a nice way
J: yeah mm-hmm, that's right

S: when they need help or they need to ask. And to learn about empathy teaching them the fact that the teacher is struggling with all this and it's maybe not personal, and, they shouldn't be short tempered but, again you can be and, just to try and, not to take it personally all the time cos it could just as easily be someone else
J: that's right it's quite a difficult thing for them to do isn't it, you know but

(SS Staff 1.1)

practices in schools and education is a problematic one, and was a strong theme evident in a description of what the school does for the young people⁷⁵.

Here the staff conveying that their job involves teaching young people how to 'cope', is a very blaming and psychologising position, as is the "brain tool box". The last statement uses agency but in a blaming way, placing responsibility with the young people who must use these 'coping skills' rather than the school or other teachers. In the next extract the idea emerges that there are certain skills required to 'survive' in school, which could be interpreted as skills needed to conform to the norms of education⁷⁶. An interesting account begins to develop: parents are positioned as not having the skills needed to fit into a mainstream school either, or that they don't or can't pass on skills required. There is an ambiguity in this reflection on 'skills' needed, the idea that a person needs to be "really robust to survive" in school. There is an uncertainty as to what these skills are, although loving and being loved does not appear to be one of them. Whatever the skills required, what emerges as an account is that certain young people, and also certain adults do not have these skills, suggesting perhaps that there are whole communities

⁷⁵ E: we try to give them like a wee tool box, of coping stuff, that they can use

S: yeah

S: skills that they can transfer back so that they can mm-hmm

J: I think that

E: it's like a wee brain tool box

A: yeah

E: whether they choose to use them or not and maybe use them in a later time

(SS Staff 1.1)

⁷⁶ L: I think like to be in a mainstream school, they need an awful lot of skills, and er an awful lot of the children just aren't, I mean a lot of ... them have very caring parents who love them, but they maybe didn't learn these skills themselves they don't have the ability to, pass them on you need to be really robust to survive in a mainstream secondary school

(SS Staff 1.2)

for whom (using a more critical positioning) schools and education work against rather than with.

This problematic idea of deficiency is furthered in the extract below⁷⁷. To begin with in this extract young people are positioned negatively, with the idea that conflict in a school or classroom is due to the behaviour of a young person, rather than other contextual factors or people. The behaviour of the young person is then attributed to a deficiency in learning ability, which is a strong theme in education that is often framed as being positive, that young people should not be blamed for their behaviour as they are ‘deficient’. This kind of language still directs attention towards young people, is no less blaming, and fails to reflect on what it is about education that it fails to teach young people. This deficiency is linked with background and circumstances, while language relating to attainment such as “average intelligence” and “average learning ability” enters. There is an assumption in this excerpt that resonates with attainment: that young people who have a different learning ability are deficient, and that this deficiency is not due to social practices in education or school. It is linked to background however, in a similar way to the idea of parents lacking certain ‘skills’ in the previous excerpt. Context is important of course, but in these discussions we see problematic notions of context emerging, with ideas of particular backgrounds, circumstances and parents being the cause of what is positioned as behaviour problems in young people. An

⁷⁷ *L: and I can see quite a lot of mainstream schools, quite a lot of the behaviour problems that children pose, are because of learning difficulties, you know that same child, erm.. maybe had a, background and set of circumstances, but there’s all erm, average intelligence or average learning ability, there’s an awful lot of kids who have, you know, behaviour problems as we know have, deficiencies in their behaviour sometimes*

(SS Staff 1.2)

alternative and more critical argument could be that the background a young person experiences is pre-empted by education, and so certain young people are treated differently in education, which causes conflict between them and adults, as a result of which they are denied education and have difficulty with conventional academic subjects, mainly due to being excluded from classrooms.

There is some critical positioning in the following extract as the “system” is discussed as being at fault for conflict in schools⁷⁸. Here the account focuses on examining social practices in a more critical, but not unproblematic way. Again the young people are individualised and blamed in some way, in that they do not fit into education rather than education failing to fit around different young people. Class related discourse begins to enter in this excerpt, not openly, but with the introduction of differences in the social experiences of young people, inequality, and a suggestion that particular young people’s experiences do not ‘fit’ with ways education operates. The critical aspect of this discourse is that the system and education itself are critiqued as being at fault rather than the young people, and that the conflict in interactions in classrooms (still termed ‘behaviour in young people’ here), can be attributed to the frustrations these social practices and inequalities cause, creating, as is finally stated, learning which is “just not a meaningful or positive experience for [young people]”. There is more class related language in the

⁷⁸ C: *oh yeah I mean a lot of the things, we’ve got a lot of good stuff already, but, it’s never really teased out of them or, and because they don’t necessarily fit into that, you know they can’t do, the bit at kind of exam time, because they’ve, not been socialised in that kind of way, whereas some other kids, are advantaged right from the start, and then the system just exacerbates that, and then, some kids just get fed up with it and, they start misbehaving because they’re not getting good marks so why should they try, and then just, by the time they get to secondary school*

L: *it’s just not a meaningful or positive experience for them*

(SS Staff 1.2)

idea that there are socialising differences, ending with critical and insightful language with an alternative argument similar to my account, that the system causes differences in young people and so conflict.

This section has examined ways the staff spoke of young people. Despite a complex understanding of the social factors and contexts that affect young people they work with, a surprising amount of individualising and blaming language emerged from discussion, demonstrating further how education places blame with young people. Young people experiencing exclusion are positioned problematically as being deficient in 'social skills', and the school is positioned as attempting to provide the 'coping skills' required, offering young people a chance to change so they learn, in some ways, to comply with mainstream education. It is also assumed that once taught young people can use these skills, and that they have a 'choice' to put them into practice. These are similar to issues described at a mainstream school level in the previous chapter, as value is placed with conforming and young people are problematically positioned as having the power to do so.

6.4 Summary

To begin with this chapter drew on my reflexive experiences in educational settings, exploring the difficulty I experienced in resisting dominant discourses, even when reflecting and writing away from the settings themselves. My account then moved on to show similar features in adult ways of speaking in education, constructed from discussions between the special school staff. In a space and environment such as the Special School, with time and opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning practice, ways of speaking critically and reflecting on core issues in education have the opportunity to emerge, in synergy with more critical practice. The construction

of my account however finds that even in the nurturing environment of the Special School I did research in, the powerful dominant discourses of mainstream education, the problematic social practices and limited, uncritical ways of speaking, thinking and acting, prevail over the adults engaged in teaching and learning.

Multivoiced accounts emerge from the staff, in relation to all the issues discussed. At times language was critically reflective, considering societal causes and multi-level issues and inclusion was positioned as a rights issue rather than a technique for control. However, problematic language also emerged. Features of the dialogue included: comparing the present favourably with the past; directing focus towards micro-level, problematic issues and away from more fundamental problems; backtracking and negating serious issues; and constructing arguments that are logical within a problematic educational paradigm. The rationalising of arguments using problematic educational assumptions is noted by Willis (1977), who argues that teachers often use 'moral' or 'logical' arguments to maintain control, arguments that are based on and only make sense within an educational paradigm that is itself problematic (p.64).

Though the rights of young people were often spoken of, there remained a fundamental assumption that adults should control young people. This was elaborated in part by comparing favourably with the past and suggesting that young people have more power and control now, reasoning that this is a negative thing. At other times a conflicting account emerged, suggesting young people are 'out of control' and that they need and want structure and order. These contradictory arguments serve at different points to suggest that young people are either vulnerable or incapable, in ways described by literature on rights (Goldson, 2001;

Lansdown, 2001).

The account emerging from the staff in relation to inclusion was somewhat different from that described in Chapter 5. The notion of inclusion was described as a right and less as a method of control. Inclusion into a 'learning community', with peers and towards a notion of unconditionality was more similar to an idea of inclusion I would interpret, based on my assumptions, as meaningful.

Exclusion however was still spoken of as a disciplinary strategy, with the assumption that discipline was necessary, conflicting with the ethos of inclusion and was similar to notions of exclusion described in Chapter 5. 'Logical' arguments adhering to problematic assumptions of education emerged, and the behaviour of young people was often focused on instead of societal causes.

Ways of speaking that emerged from both me and the staff at the Special School positioned teachers more favourably than young people. It seemed difficult to be critical of teachers, and speech often involved a 'backtracking' away from negative statements made.

The staff at the special school have all been included in the above analysis in the same way. However, it was interesting from analysis that the staff members who had spent the least amount of time in mainstream, arguably more institutional and problematic education, could reflect and discuss in the most critical ways. It was the classroom assistants who had spent no time in mainstream classrooms who were clear that their relationship with the young people was of utmost importance, and that it involved respecting the young people and treating them differently to how they were used to being treated by adults. Classroom assistants tended to invert the dominant discourse, for example arguing that young people are excluded from a

classroom because the teacher can't cope. On the other hand teachers who had spent more time or time more recently in secondary schools, as well as teachers in management positions who were having to deal with many of the structural and problematic social practices tended to be more limited in their ways of speaking. They tended to find it harder to reflect critically on mainstream education or teachers, and tended to be more limited by educational discourse, with problematic, blaming and uncritical discourse emerging more frequently.

Finally, it is interesting and significant to note here that I returned to the Special School with this analysis, to discuss with the staff how they felt about my account. The discussion between us was not recorded, but an important focus of our conversation included staff describing how difficult they did often find speaking in less problematic ways, and in particular how heightened this became when they were immersed in more mainstream education or had spent prolonged periods teaching in mainstream schools.

This chapter constructs an account of the problematic and powerful nature of educational discourses and practices, and the effect they have on ways of speaking for adults in education. If they hold such an influence over adults in education, what influence do they have over young people's experiences and ways of speaking, thinking and acting, and what influence do they have over relationships between adults and young people? These questions will be explored in the next two chapters.

Chapter 7: Ways of Speaking and Reflecting Available to Young People in Education

7.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an account of some of the ways of speaking and reflecting that emerged from the young people with whom I did research. Analysis and reflection of group discussions, artwork and contextual material from all three settings, examines ways of speaking and reflecting available to young people experiencing school exclusion, within education. Research material from the young people is examined with regard to the deployment of power within education, although some of the young people I worked with were no longer 'inside' mainstream education (Youth Project), or were away from their mainstream school at the time (Special School). However, all had at some point been immersed in mainstream secondary education for significant portions of their lives and the questions I had raised with the young people were related to education and their experience of it. Furthermore though the settings and research carried out varied, they were themselves influenced heavily by education.

Issues communicated by the young people are not examined for 'what they mean', i.e. not about young people's 'inner thoughts', but rather for what they reveal about ways of speaking which are made possible and limited by education, and are simultaneously co-constructed, re-constructed and resisted by the young people. As in other chapters, I am very much offering my own interpretations and accounts, based on the questions I asked of the research material and the theoretical and epistemological assumptions on which my research was grounded.

More than any other previous chapter this one aims for a standpoint with young people and analysing the material from the young people really challenged the notion of how to meaningfully and critically develop a standpoint. I am not a young

person and I have never experienced school exclusion of a similar nature. Furthermore, as discussed elsewhere it was not possible due to external constraints to perform a process of analysis with the young people I worked with.

My reading of theory and literature influenced me in terms of how to create a meaningful account from a standpoint with young people. I did not want to make claims of the material that were individualising or blaming, and I wanted to avoid knowledge construction that was heavily influenced by problematic, institutional or adult-centric theory, aiming to avoid “partial and distorted analysis” (Harding, 1987b, p. 4). I also wished to avoid claims that positioned the young people as ‘vulnerable’ and without agency (Boyle, 2003; Harding, 1987b). In addition to these issues, I did not feel it would be valuable to uncritically ‘take sides’ and accept what was said by the young people without analysing and questioning.

The context of the research material was very important for analysis and included: my own subjectivity; the environment and institutional setting in which the material was created; the process which went into carrying out research; and the contexts in which the young people were located themselves. The young people’s context varied between and within groups and is described in Chapter 4 (4.2.1.2). Despite differences, all the young people I worked with had experienced some kind of exclusion from school, from being sent out of class on a regular basis to being expelled from a school altogether (usually in relation to ‘behaviour’), and this has considerable implications for the account in this thesis. Their accounts are particular and different from other young people and they belonged to some of the least powerful and least listened to groups in schools.

I was originally interested in school exclusion but it became clear that exclusion

was in some ways a 'symptom' of wider problems in education. This was not a huge move as work with the young people had not focused on school exclusion. Many times it had not even been mentioned by young people or me and though it was a term teachers were used to coming across, it was not one that was used by the young people. Thus it was necessary to explore school exclusion with young people via the issues salient to them.

When approaching the research material for analysis, it was not possible to fully analyse all of the information, or to follow all lines of enquiry that emerged from analysis. Research done with the young people alone created 156 pages of transcript, 67 pictures, 1 film, 54 pages of fieldwork notes and 19 pages of preparatory topic guides. Thus choices had to be made, based as described on my epistemological assumptions, lines of enquiry and the material itself. Reflection, analysis, re-reflection and re-analysis were carried out repeatedly. Initial analysis involved what had been said by the young people. This account was then problematised and reflected upon, for points where there was contradiction or disparity in the research material and for readings and analysis that were problematic. Where the material, individual young people, or groups of young people, seemed to have multivoiced accounts, the accounts were considered carefully and for several convincing interpretations.

Control and power are particularly important to this thesis, especially in relation to the young people and so particular attention was paid to these issues. Analysis in this case involved examining discussion for ways that the young people spoke about control and power, and the way the young people described issues related to being in control, experiences of being controlled and notions of changing power relations

(actual action, interaction and performance of power and control are analysed in the next chapter). In the section on school exclusion, the experience the young people had of it are analysed and reflected upon. The section on teachers examines the ways in which the young people spoke of the subject of 'teacher'. Finally, the last section examines particularly significant material from sessions at the Youth Project. It constructs an account of the ways of speaking and reflecting about the young people's 'selves', or subject positions that are constructed and limited by education, but are also resisted and reconstructed by the young people.

7.2 Control

There were points in the research material where the young people challenged conventional assumptions of control in education. In the excerpt below, I am asking the young people at the High School what having more control in school would be like⁷⁹. The notion that young people are not capable of taking control over other people or of their own lives and decisions that affect them, is resisted here. Though a lack of capability is assumed by adults and education, here what is reflected upon is that a lack of capability comes from a lack of *experience*: being in control is possible for young people, but contextual factors and dominance of adults prevents it. The laughter which emerges in the last line in response to the critical framing by Mitchell could be due to a variety of reasons, such as something else occurring in the room. After listening to the audio recording however, my interpretation in this account is to suggest that the comments made by Mitchell are laughed at because they seem so absurd, so unlikely, in such a dominating institution as education. The structures and social practices that disempower the young people limit ways of reflecting and limit what seems possible.

⁷⁹ *I: what do you think would happen if you were just in control tomorrow? Would you just go mad* *if you were just in control like if pupils were in control*

M: what do you mean if I was

I: of schools more instead of teachers

C: I dunno

M: well obviously we'd just go mad but just because, it'd probably be the only time we'd be allowed to do it

I: right, that's a really good point actually, if you'd always done it then like

M: if it was a regular thing then, I think at first we'd take it as a joke (everyone laughs) and then we wouldn't, what you laughing at!

(HS1)

An issue that relates closely to control, and was often spoken about, was one of 'choice' in education, whether or not the young people had or would want more choice. I discussed with the young people at the High School what they would like to change in their school⁸⁰. Here the limiting nature of the discussion partly emerges from my initial question, where I assume that rules are necessary in school, and then go on to ask about change. Ideas of what to change then become somewhat limited to lower level ideas. However, the ideas that emerge from the young people are very different to educational discourses where choice and being involved in decisions might involve limiting social practices like the school pupil councils described in Chapter 5. In this excerpt the limiting discourse of choice for young people is subverted, particularly in the notion of choosing teachers. Conventionally there is a dominant and powerful assumption surrounding the notion that schools and teachers 'choose' pupils: pupils are organised into classes; can be sent out of classes; and schools can choose to exclude young people from the building. Here Richard subverts this idea, by suggesting young people should be able to choose which teachers attend their classes, and this was an idea that emerged more than once between the three different groups. Jimmy then returns to the notion of rules, and suggests young people should have some control over the construction of the

⁸⁰ *I: so what would you like to see changed then, the rules? (Ji: aye) what would you like them to change to?*

R: that we get to choose our own teachers, like we can

Ji: see if

I: ah, so instead of them choosing you get to choose

Ji: see if like they put down something like standard rules, we'd follow them but see if we could have an input, to the way school runs cos it's for our benefit and

I: do you think you'd feel more part of the school if you

Ji: uh-huh, I'd enjoy it more

(HS1)

rules, and gives reasons for this: that the rules affect and have potential to benefit the young people; and that he would “enjoy” school more, agreeing that he would feel a greater sense of belonging to the school. Again, a critical reflection on rules themselves is absent here, but Jimmy proposes two justifiable arguments as to why they should have some control over rules that affect them. Here the assumption that the school and adults within it should make rules is challenged, as is the claim in policy that rights of young people are a priority and that pupil councils “give young people an opportunity to be involved in decision making at [a] school level” (High School Prospectus, 2004, pg5). The claim that some control and choice would make Jimmy feel part of the school is only affirmed from my questioning, although Jimmy seemed animated and in agreement at this stage. This notion that a sense of ‘belonging’ comes from some sense of control and empowerment, challenges the statement made by the Headteacher of the High School in the prospectus: “show, by your dress and your attitude that you belong to the school and are proud of it” (High School Prospectus, 2004, Pg7). This statement suggests belonging will only come if pupils follow rules of dress and behaviour, whereas Jimmy’s statement suggests the opposite, that this kind of controlling practice might create a feeling of alienation.

In all three settings there were discussions about changes the young people would make if they had the opportunity, to their school and education in general. In the final session at the Special School the young people discussed changes they would like to make, and also made brochures to describe their ‘imaginary schools’ (SS4). At the beginning of this session we began by discussing rules the young people would make and these were made as a group and written on the white board. The

first 4 are shown below⁸¹.

The idea of creating rules the young people would like to see in schools was suggested by the classroom teacher and me, and again can be seen as problematic as the need for a list of rules is taken for granted. The rules can be seen however as responses to typical rules in schools and as challenges to dominant educational discourses. The first, a rule relating to social justice, is present in policy and legislative literature, but equality was discussed by the young people in this group as being absent in education for them. The “bully box” was something James described as his school having, a box where pupils could confidentially inform of bullying occurring. However, as a social practice the bully box assumes, as does the language surrounding bullying (explored in Chapter 5), that young people are the ‘bullies’. Here this notion is challenged by James feeling that teachers bully too. James did not want the box to be one for everyone in school, only teachers and in this respect it mirrors and challenges the problematic notion that only young people can be ‘bullies’. It also shows that controlling behaviour, discipline, control and exertion of power by adults over young people in education can be represented by young people using and subverting educational dominant language, as forms of ‘bullying’. This was further emphasised by the group suggesting there should be “rules for teachers as well as pupils”. It is unclear here whether the group would have preferred separate rules for teachers, or as other groups suggested that teachers

⁸¹ *Everybody's equal*
Teachers bully box
Rules for teachers as well as pupils
More control over what you want

(SS4)

should follow the same rules as young people. There are of course limitations placed on teachers, and in some ways these could be regarded as ‘rules’. However, the young people themselves do not see teachers as being bound by rules, and highlight for us that the limits placed on teachers are not ‘rules’ as such (guidelines, requests, a teacher’s employment contract, reflected upon in Chapter 5). These limits could be interpreted as less controlling and disempowering, not to mention the difference that an adult can *choose* to be a teacher or not. The fourth rule made by the young people at the Special School is a straightforward one: that they wish to have more control and possibilities for choosing “what [they] want”.

The young people at the Youth Project also spoke often of resisting school rules, and of disliking the control exerted over them in education. Craig was often very negative towards school and outspoken against rules and control. However, when discussing an imaginary school Raul was designing, he and Craig explained that ‘bad’ people would be excluded. When I suggested I didn’t believe people should be excluded from school, Craig responded with the extract below⁸². The language that emerges from Craig’s statement is very authoritarian: if pupils don’t do as they are expected, carry out homework and arrive on time, they should simply be ‘chucked’ out. This again places the responsibility upon the young person, assuming they are to blame as well as assuming timekeeping and homework are unproblematic foundations of education. This statement was unexpected at the time

⁸² *C: no cos ... they check their school record and if, they’ve not done homework for a couple of months, er, they’re always late, they’re not very good at timekeeping, just chuck them out*

(YP4)

and so I posed further questions to Craig⁸³. Despite admitting times when he didn't do homework, Craig rejects all alternative ideas, other than that carrying out homework is essential, that young people must be 'told' to do it, and that if it is not completed the strongest form of discipline, exclusion, should be exerted. Rather than homework being framed in notions of learning and teaching, here it is grounded in controlling language, that no matter what its purpose (in education for example it can be argued as being viewed as an aid to learning and teaching), despite the many reasons that can be constructed for homework not being carried out, and despite the fact Craig often resisted homework, young people should be excluded for not completing it.

The account in this section describes some of the ways the young people problematised their experiences of control and domination. A lack of capability of young people to make decisions and have control over their lives is challenged and reframed as young people having a lack of experience of being in control in education. The assumption that adults control structures in education is challenged by the idea that young people should have some control, for example over which

⁸³ *C: no you have to do your homework, its part of your education, but I never done it, couldn't be arsed*

I: so do you think you should get thrown out of school for that?

C: well, if it keeps going on you should aye

I: do you not think someone should help you

C: I'm obviously here the now cos I did get kicked out the school

I: right ok so if it keeps going on but what do you do to try and persuade someone to do it first before you kick them out you can't just kick them out for

C: just tell them to do it, that's it but they're not going to they just don't

(YP4)

teachers they work with. The language and practices in education that seem to advocate equality for young people and control over decisions that affect them are challenged by the young people, who suggest they are positioned unequally in comparison to adults. Assumptions that only young people should follow 'rules' and that only young people might be 'bullies' are questioned: emergence of similar language to describe adults and problematic practices in education serve to subvert the taken for granted and highlight problematic ways that young people experience powerlessness.

However, at other times problematic language in relation to control and power emerged and dialogue became authoritarian, and individualising. Language emerged which centred on the idea that particular 'behaviours' in young people are unacceptable in education, that young people must be controlled and that in response to resistance, discipline should be implemented, often involving practices of exclusion. The extent of authoritarian language which emerged was surprising: it often seemed to be more problematic than legislative language or adult ways of speaking in education. As least powerful in education, young people seem to be most subjected to problematic, educational discourse, are afforded less space to problematise their experiences and are enabled least to critically reflect and to act. My interpretation, informed by this research and a standpoint with young people, is that given the opportunity the young people I worked with can and would speak more critically of issues of control in education. However, the powerful, problematic, educational discourse around control and power, often aimed directly at young people like these, emerges acutely at times and limits ways for these young people to speak and reflect.

7.3 Framing of School Exclusion

Inclusion and exclusion were explored in the last two chapters, and were repositioned respectively, as a method of control and as a disciplinary response to resistance. Language relating to inclusion did not explicitly emerge when talking to these young people. The policy and practice relating to inclusion is not directly communicated to young people in education generally, and it can be argued as having little relevance to the young people I worked with, who were often engaged in resistance rather than compliance.

The young people at the Youth Project were the only group with whom I worked who had been physically excluded permanently. Furthermore their ways of describing their experiences of exclusion, as well as their opinions of it and their subsequent positions on school and education, were at times unexpected and as a constructed account of exclusion, very significant. The extent of contextual material I had in relation to this group and the quantity of recorded discussion, also allowed for deeper and richer analysis. Thus the group at the Youth Project and their account of school exclusion is explored in the following section.

7.3.1 School Exclusion: Youth Project

A particularly important conversation relating to school exclusion occurred in the first session we recorded at the Youth Project (YP1). The discussion begins with me raising questions of what it was the young people didn't like about school, moving soon after to what the young people felt had caused them to become excluded from school. The two people who dominate dialogue are Raul and Craig whose ways of speaking are at times similar and at times conflicting, both between and within their accounts and multivoicedness emerges, which is considered below.

To begin with in this first session my questions are somewhat leading towards negative aspects of education, and the young people were complying with this line of enquiry, explaining rules or structures they disliked or found unfair in school.

At the end of this discussion, slightly different dialogue begins to emerge⁸⁴. At this stage, after spending some time being quite negative about education, a rather unexpected statement emerges: that Raul wants to return to school. The only answer given as a reason for wanting to go back seems a little unusual, and in fact the young people go on to describe other things they like at school, including certain subjects and certain teachers. Some time later however a further unexpected statement comes from Raul. In the extract below Craig wants to move from discussing 'unfair' things to creating something⁸⁵. At the beginning of this excerpt when listening to the tape as well as reflecting on the transcript, Raul answers back to my question very quickly and seems very resisting, refusing to comply with my

⁸⁴ I: did you like any of the rules ...so this is stuff you
M: nah

I: didn't like you want to go back to school, what did you like
R: yep, I wanna go back to school

I: about school?
R: er, winding the teachers up

(YP1)

⁸⁵ C: can I do that web page now?

I: well we've got to decide what we're putting in it we don't even know what was it that was unfair about school? Remember what I said about, but why did they only pick on you why were you guys

R: (a bit angrily) they never picked on us why did we even come here?

I: right so you disagree you think they didn't pick on you, you got on just fine

R: aye

R: they loved me

(YP1)

rather leading question. His claim that they (presumably the school or staff) “never picked on us” is in direct contrast with descriptions he gives earlier on in this session, and his questioning of why they were excluded seems aimed away from the school or staff. He then goes on to comply with my somewhat sweeping statement, perhaps agreeing too with the notion that no conflict was experienced, but certainly contradicting earlier accounts that he had been punished unfairly, before stating that “they loved me”. What is significant about Raul’s statements is that he backtracks so vehemently from a position of describing both negative and positive aspects of school, to refusing to say anything negative about the school. Reflection in the previous chapter constructs an account of adults backtracking in discourse, finding it difficult to criticise education, schools or teachers. Here the account in this chapter suggests that the dominant and problematic discourse in education that has positioned schools and teachers and the structure of education as unproblematic, limits at times with even more force, ways of speaking for young people: even young people who have been rejected by that system.

What follows directly after in the excerpt below is an attempt to make sense of their exclusions⁸⁶. At the beginning of the extract the young people conclude a particular teacher ‘sent’ them to the Youth Project. With further problem posing Raul concludes he was excluded for not doing work, or for not being able to do work, suggesting he required more intensive learning support, and later goes on to reflect on whether they were excluded for behaviour. As described in Chapter 2 in relation to the Youth Project, the alternative curriculum was aimed by the school and the Youth Project at young people they felt were experiencing ‘learning and behavioural difficulties’ (2.3.1). Both these ideas emerge in what is spoken in the above extract, with some confusion over notions of both learning and behavioural ideas. In relation to learning, a blaming and individualising discourse dominates as

⁸⁶ I: *so why did you come here then?*

C: *Miss X sent us here*

I: *well explain to me I can't*

but why did they want you to come, like

R: *she sent us here*

cos we wouldn't do our

M:

she sent people who

I: *if you got on with everybody and you were doing your work and stuff why behind?*

R: *work that's why*

I: *what was it that they wanted you to come here for?*

R: *probably catch up on my work*

I:

right...

R: *but I did do the work that they told me to do*

C:

didn't behave at lunch time

R: *if I went back to school all I would want to do is, the stuff that we do here, just in classes with, some lassies...*

I: *so you feel like there's absolutely no reason why you're here (R: mmm) but, what I'm asking you is I agree with you but what I'm asking you is why did they decide that you would be coming here*

above other people like

R: *because*

...I dunno...we were never the worst eh we would never run about swearing and that well to the teacher eh we wouldn't go about like, panning windows and all that shite we would just barm them up and that there was worser people than us

M:

and people like X

(YP1)

Raul suggests it was 'refusal' to 'do work', which could be interpreted as refusal to learn or to comply in class. This then conflicts however with his statement that he did comply in class and did the work he was 'told to do', conveying confusion as to why this then would be grounds for exclusion. Craig raises the notion of 'behaviour' being the reason, again with blaming language directed towards the young people, and again Raul begins a sense making process. In this excerpt values are placed on various actions in school which are deemed to be most negative and deserving of punishment. These are: running around; swearing directed at a teacher; and breaking of windows. Raul concludes these young people did not do those things, but rather would "barm them up", which can be interpreted as 'winding up' the teachers, or resisting rather than complying. There is a resonance in this extract with discourse on discipline elsewhere: despite the young people having almost certainly never read Scottish Executive literature, the actions Raul first describes are remarkably similar to actions which are described as "extremely disturbed behaviour", while the casual resistance Raul describes more favourably is described as "low-level indiscipline" in a classroom, and is positioned in literature as being grounds for exclusion (Better Behaviour Better Learning, Scottish Executive, 2001, p.11). These ways of speaking blame the young people and legitimise exclusion for particular actions, causing confusion when the young people do not feel they acted in these particular ways.

The young people often spoke of school and education very negatively and at times seemed glad to be at the Youth Project. However, each one of the young people expressed at least once during the year a desire to go back to school. During this first session Raul carries on resisting any discussion of negative aspects of school

and again expresses a wish to return⁸⁷. The firmness with which Raul conveys a wish to return to school is suggested in the repetition of the statement, and in his refusal to criticise the school, perhaps lest he might not be able to return. At this stage in reflection questions can be raised as to why Raul would want to return to a school which had rejected him, and which he describes earlier in the session negatively. The question can also be raised as to whether Raul would have been able to return, and later in the session he enters into a conversation with a staff member (included below as X) that demonstrates Raul was attempting to return to school⁸⁸. There is no evidence in my diary or elsewhere, but from my memory Raul did make attempts to go back to school but the school did not allow him. Anecdotally, as someone who spent time working at the Youth Project, when the young people raised the issue of returning to school the Youth Project would take them seriously and we would facilitate meetings with the school, but there was an underlying understanding that frustrated us; that the school despite claiming the

⁸⁷ *I: You can at least let them know, what it was, they did unfair, you can devise a plan, that shows*

R: you're just making us turn against the school

I: no I'm not making you turn against the school. I don't want to try and make you do anything I want you to decide for yourselves....[later] the main thing you keep talking about is that you didn't like the fact that people picked on you, or that it was unfair

R: I wanna go back and that's it

I: you would rather go back. (people laughing about something else)..Raul, you would rather go back

R: yep. I wanna go back

(YP1)

⁸⁸ *R: did X phone to see if I could go back to school? ...what? Could I be like, what if I phoned them today which is, Wednesday could I be back by Monday?...no I'd be back like a couple of weeks*

(YP1)

young people's move to the Youth Project had been voluntary and that these were not official exclusions, never facilitated return for the young people.

This account can be strengthened by Craig's account. Unlike Raul, Craig rarely said positive things about the school and tended to be the first to make negative comments. In the following extract, still from the first recorded session, Craig is describing the beginning of the year at the Youth Project, and a teacher who convinced him to voluntarily leave school to attend the Youth Project for his final year⁸⁹. Having experienced fairly absolute rejection from the school, Craig conveys an opinion which was often voiced; that he is now certain he prefers being away

⁸⁹ C: *I came here for 2 weeks and Mr X said if you don't like it you can come back up I said ah I don't like it I want to come back up to school and he went no you're staying,*

R: *exactly!*

C: *[others look doubtful] aye, he did, we were in a meeting all of us were sitting round the table I said I didn't want to go and he went can you not try it out for a, week to 2 weeks and then see, and I said aye and in 2 weeks I said no its pish I wanna go back to school and he went nah*

I: *so basically, there was no chance to go back, as far as the school was concerned that*

C: *he forced me to stay here*

I: *really annoyed you*

C: *I wouldn't go back any way*

I: *but how's it make you feel, knowing, that, X, Craig, how's it make you feel, knowing that that school, even though they're meant to legally take you back, erm have got no intention of doing so*

C: *cos they're a bunch o' wankers*

I: *yeah but how's that make you feel*

C: *how's it make me feel? It doesn't bother me man*

I: *yep* *icky, emotional feelings!*

C: *nah cos I'll leave here at the end of the day, with, and they can stick it up their arses*

I: *but if you're not annoyed about it I mean*

I: *even, being annoyed about it is a, emotion you're obviously annoyed about it to some extent or else we wouldn't be talking about this....*

C: *dunno*

(YP1)

from school and would now reject the school if they offered to have him back. This defensive position is backed up by negative and individualising statements about the school, a refusal to be drawn into discussion on emotional feelings and a determination to demonstrate to the school he can succeed without them.

From the two accounts from Raul and Craig an interpretation can be constructed that demonstrates the influence of dominant education discourses and social practices that limit possibilities for reflection and action for the young people. In this context, and no doubt in other areas, the exclusion of these young people seems to have been framed in some way by education and the school as being a 'positive choice', and there is a sense that some sort of problematic agency was placed with the young people. Having being removed (or having left 'voluntarily') social practices of education, whereby young people have very little meaningful control over their educational experience, while schools have much powerful control, result in the young people being irrevocably excluded, despite their wishes to return and their claims that they do not 'deserve' the 'punishment' they have been given. Within this account other problematic discourses emerge. A discourse of discipline and the notion of behaviours that are acceptable and unacceptable are to an extent challenged by the young people, but also often emerge in dialogue in problematic ways limiting their reflections to whether or not they performed certain behaviours while at school, rather than problematising social causes. A discourse of attainment also arises in dialogue from the young people, and is co-constructed between education and the young people as an idea that on some level their removal from school was due to their ability in academic subjects and that responsibility for any difficulty in learning they have experienced lies with them.

The account in this section on exclusion concludes that dominant discourses in education and the very problematic social practices that allow for some possibly quite oppressing situations to occur, in some ways limit the ways in which young people can speak and reflect on their experiences. The experience of being excluded seems to have been a particularly difficult one for these young people and dominant discourse describing schools positively and them negatively has influenced their ways of speaking about school exclusion and their experiences.

7.4 Teachers

Teachers were the only adults in education the young people tended to mention. This may have been due to the questions asked by me that focused on teachers, and the fact that conflict that had resulted in forms of exclusion would tend to be between the young people and teachers, more than other staff. Individualising, blaming and problematic language often emerged in relation to teachers. In the two examples below, the young people, Craig and Steven, from the Youth Project and Special School respectively, are speaking about teachers⁹⁰. Discriminating language like this was common, and emerged often in relation to teachers.

⁹⁰ I: [say] that he's imagining all the things he could say to his teacher if he could what do you think he would say?

C: yer a big fat, fucking, tosser, and all that

(YP3)

I: do you like PSE or do you hate it? Why do you hate PSE?

S: no I don't like the, gay teacher

(SS4)

In the next extract Craig from the Youth Project is responding to being asked why he didn't get on with teachers⁹¹. Here Craig and I are engaged in dialogue of some reasons why using blaming language is problematic. My account from analysing extracts like these positions the language as emerging from education. Individualising language like this is found in this research at a number of levels throughout education, and can undoubtedly be found in other areas of society. The excerpts serve to demonstrate the ways of speaking that have been available to the young people; available as a dominant way of speaking for all but also as something directly experienced by the young people I worked with as they were blamed and individualised. I also find that much of the language like this used by the young people could be positioned as being 'more extreme', individualising or more overt than blaming language used elsewhere in education. I feel this further signifies education's influence: becoming more toxic as it filters down the hierarchy. I feel what is problematic about this individualising and blaming language is that it limits the young people and inhibits them from describing the no doubt justifiable reasons why they are frustrated and angry with the education system. Having never been afforded space and opportunity to reflect and speak critically education has only made available individualising and blaming ways of framing issues.

⁹¹ C: *cos they're a bunch o' wankers*

I: *can you remember why I said that we needed to, look a little bit deeper that just saying teachers are all teachers are*

C: *because er, er, just saying they're wankers isn't giving you a reason for it*

M: *wankers* (laughs)

swat!

(YP1)

There was a multivoicedness to the positioning of teachers, within each setting but also between settings. Within the Youth Project, Mark and Craig positioned teachers very negatively, more so than Raul and most of the other young people I worked with. Mark was the only young person I worked with who so rarely described teachers positively, demonstrated in the extract below⁹². Here Mark positions teachers as being disliked by everybody, claiming nobody gets on with teachers, and when asked why he doesn't get on with teachers, the idea of shouting is mentioned, suggesting it is the conflict in interactions that Mark dislikes. This is raised by Mark, despite my suggestions of other reasons.

When asked to elaborate, Craig describes the teacher's role⁹³. Here teachers are positioned primarily as being authoritarian, with Craig conveying a lot of frustration, anger and disillusionment in his statement. The job of a teacher is described as being easy, and above all related to directing orders at young people.

Though there was less negativity in discussion at the Special School, the majority of teachers were still described unfavourably. Similarly to Mark above, the young

⁹² *M: nobody gets on with teachers*

I: well some people get on with teachers were there no teachers you ever liked? erm...you just don't like them cos they give you work what there's other

M: nah

I: reasons why you don't like them you don't like them cos they're old and sad?

M: not really

I: well what is it you don't like about them then?

M: like some people shout something at you other people don't

(YP5)

⁹³ *C: they get paid for doing what, sitting on their arse and telling us to, dae that and dae this and dae that and that's it. Or then, turn to page 3 and that's it and then they sit and do, nothing and get paid for it*

(YP1)

people mentioned shouting a lot, and in rules they made for their ‘imaginary schools’ in Session 4, they made a rule that “Teachers should be more calm” (From a list drawn on class board, SS4). Teachers were also described many times as not listening, and not “giving a second chance” to the young people (from rules drawn up on whiteboard, SS4). In sessions with the young people at the High School, comments about teachers were even less negative, with any negative comments usually balanced out with positive comments very quickly, either by one speaker or a number of speakers.

The extract below is an example of the balanced and elaborated ways of speaking the young people at the High School tended to use when describing teachers⁹⁴. The subject position “bad teacher” is introduced, but is balanced with “good teacher”, and the pattern is repeated balancing “alright” with the notion that some teachers complain unnecessarily. Finally, descriptions of teachers are further elaborated, positioning younger teachers as adults the young people might identify with or who might be more empathic, and the dialogue moves to a particular example of a teacher who is positioned as being “brilliant”. This balancing of positive and

⁹⁴ *I: so you think it's like lessons some lessons are alright and that makes it better for school
C: depends if you've got a good teacher, or a bad teacher*

I: you think a good teacher do you think that as well? Mitchell do you think a good teacher makes it, important

M: aye some of the teachers are alright and some of them are, annoying, they just moan at you for nothing

I: so what makes a good teacher? ...

M: erm, the younger ones seem to be better, they understand you better

I: cos they understand you better, so cos they remember what it was like to be a teenager. Or because

M: see the new English teacher Mr X he's brilliant

(HS1)

negative, and elaboration of reasons for positive or negative subject positions are not interpreted here as being 'better' than the ways of speaking that emerged from the Youth Project. Reflecting that younger teachers are more understanding teachers is still problematic, as is an uncritical way of speaking that introduces a positive for every negative; reminiscent of the difficulty teachers themselves seemed to have in the last chapter of critiquing the profession.

Counter to the prominent theme of a negative positioning of teachers, was the description by most of the young people I worked with of at least one teacher they had liked, got on with, or felt was a 'good' teacher⁹⁵. In this extract each one of the young people from the Youth Project names a teacher they liked or got on with. My interpretation of these instances of positive positioning of teachers is not concerned with whether in fact the young people did get on with these teachers. However, this dichotomy between positive and negative descriptions of teachers suggest that it is possible for young people like those excluded in the Youth Project and teachers in mainstream education, to interact in some positive ways and to maintain positive relationships. The positive descriptions of some teachers by these young people serves to challenge the assumption in education that young people like these do not 'get on' with teachers, that there is no alternative but to physically remove them

⁹⁵ *I: was there any teachers that you liked were there any teachers that you got on with!*

R: aye er Mr Miss Miss er X

I: so you did like some teachers [all shouting and laughing]

M: Mr X

C: guess who my favourite teacher was? Mr X

(YP1)

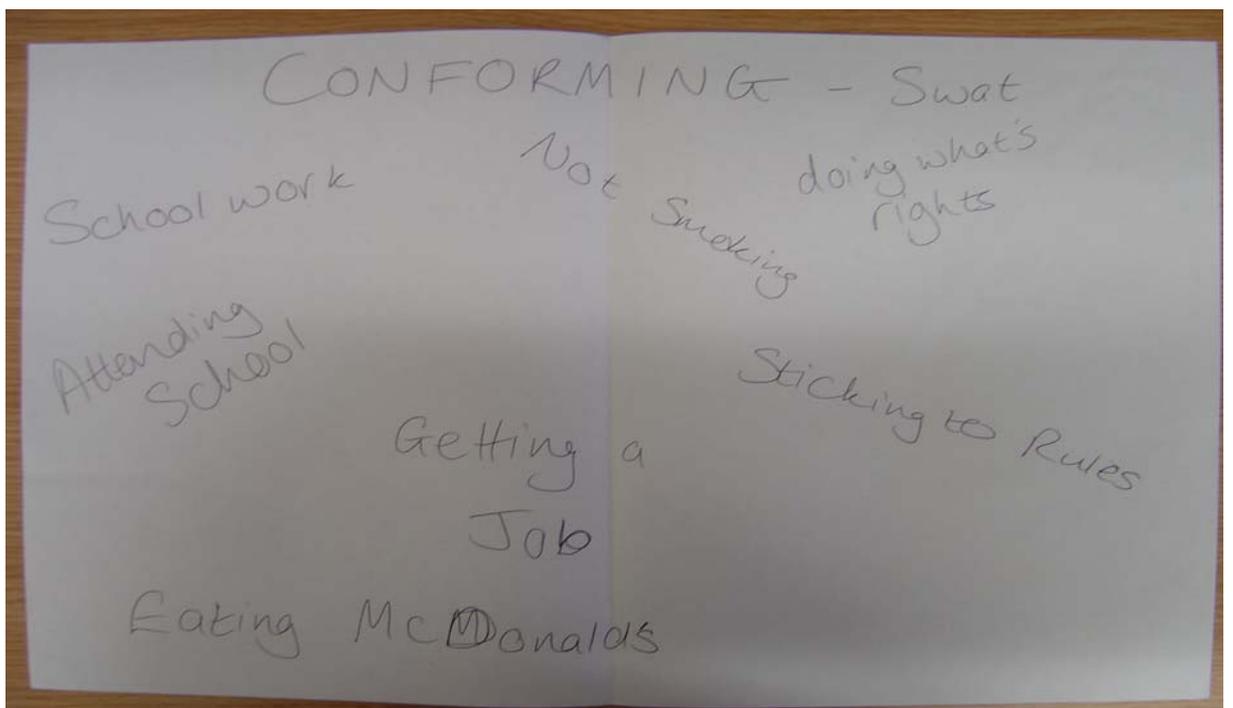
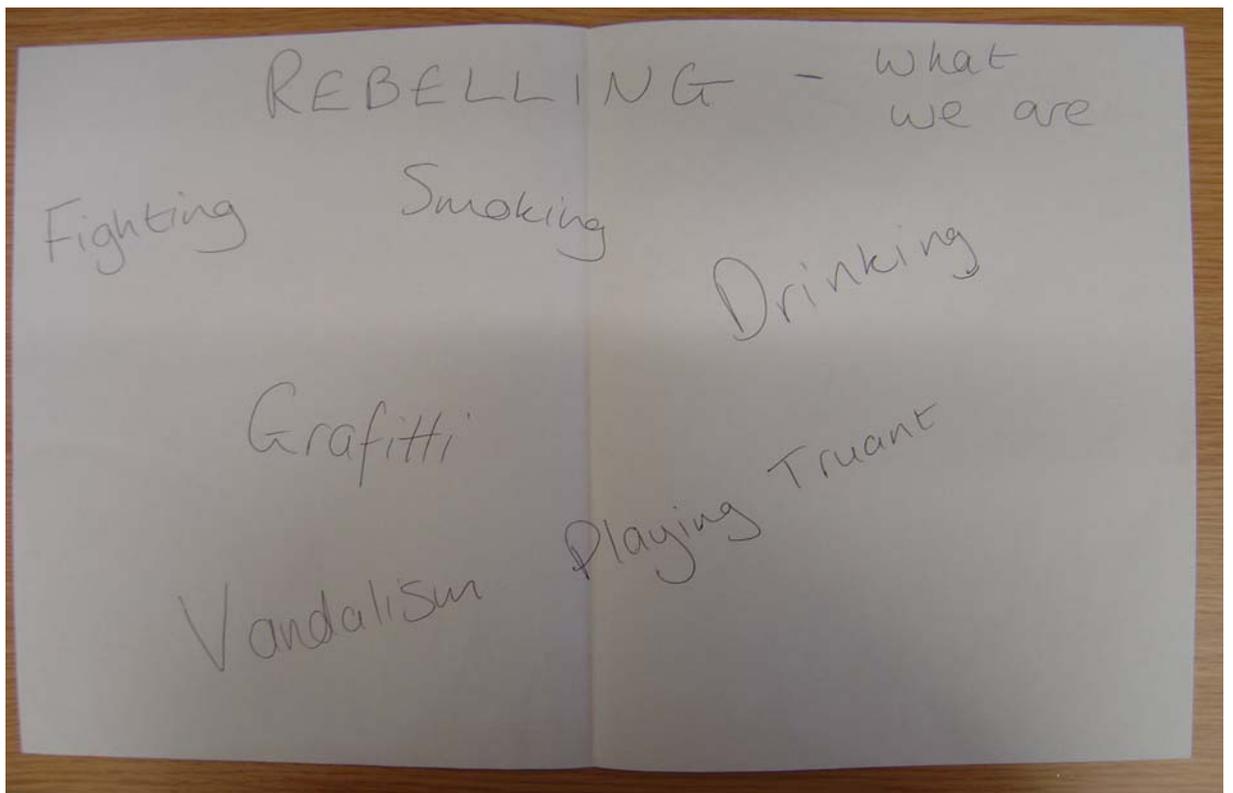
from the classrooms of those teachers and challenges the notion that the young person is always to blame.

In this account the blaming and individualising language is constructed as stemming from dominant and problematic societal and educational discourses. The individualising and blaming language and social practices that are directed towards young people such as those at the Youth Project serve in turn to limit those young peoples' ways of speaking and reflecting: what education puts in it gets back. Having had negative experiences in education, and at the same time having not had the opportunity or space to critically reflect and speak; problematic, individualising, blaming, negative subject positioning of teachers in education can be expected. The balancing of subject positions and elaboration of reasons that seemed to occur with the young people at the High School can be interpreted as emerging educational discourses that seem at first to be more critical ways of speaking and reflecting, but in fact limit the young people's ways of reflecting on the subject position of adult as teacher. Though the young people at the High School discussed a wider variety of opinions in relation to teachers, they were still limited by dominant educational discourse and confined to speaking about teachers in particular ways, reminiscent of the ways teachers seemed to be limited. Finally, the positive subject positioning of some teachers suggests hope and possibilities for change. The assumption (given their exclusion from school), that the young people I worked with were to blame for any conflict between them and teachers or their school, is challenged by their claims to have liked and got on with some teachers.

7.5 Young People: 'Them and Us'

This section explicates an account of 'selves' that the young people appeared to convey, focusing on the young people at the Youth Project. This group is focused on exclusively in this section because, as explained previously, I spent the most amount of time working with them, created with them more research material than with others, and have more contextual information to construct a meaningful account of the subject positions they spoke of. It is important to note that analysis here of 'selves' that the young people described is grounded in the theories described in Chapter 1: that subject positions are socially constructed and make available ways of speaking, reflecting and being, are in some ways constructed for us by discourse, and are also simultaneously resisted and re-constructed (Hall, 1996; Parker, 1992, Roseneil & Seymour, 1999).

During an early session prior to the recorded research, ideas of who the young people were began to emerge. The pictures below come from the very beginning of the year, during a session that was designed (by me; not with the young people) to discuss critically ideas of rebelling and conforming, and to problem pose conventional ideas of the concepts (see Appendix B). During the discussion I copied key ideas that we were discussing in relation to how the young people viewed the two ideas, onto A3 paper:



YP: Session on Conforming and Rebellng 22/09/04

Questions typically discussed included: 'what do you think conforming or rebelling is' and 'who conforms or rebels'. The ideas of conforming include "schoolwork;

sticking to rules; attending school”, all very conventional ideas of what it means to be a school pupil. These are core ideas in education and can be positioned as dominant assumptions of a pupil’s role. Conversely, the ideas the young people put forward for rebelling included: “drinking; fighting; smoking; vandalism; and playing truant”. Only truancy is explicitly opposite to attending school, other actions seeming to be unrelated to school: itself a significant issue. However, all these actions are in direct opposition to the rules of a school, some even in contrast to national laws. Similar ideas might have been attributed to the two concepts by other groups, for example teachers, but what is significant here is that the young people strongly conveyed that they identified with the rebelling ideas. When discussing who might belong to each idea, they were quite firm, and wrote: “rebellious – what we are” and “conforming – swat[s]”. There is a contrast between ‘us’ by using the word “we”, and ‘them’, using a generalisation in the word “swat” and demonstrates something which was conveyed passionately over and over again by the young people: that they would not conform, and would not follow rules. Furthermore, the negative feelings they conveyed towards young people they felt were conforming and were following rules was considerable, as strong if not stronger at times than their opinions of teachers. A few weeks after this session, I reflect in my diary on what the young people had generally conveyed about those who conform⁹⁶. I make the distinction here that “swats” or those who conform are

⁹⁶ *As for the included, these young people have an extremely negative opinion of them. They loathe the ‘swats’ of the school. Whatever we might surmise is the root of this; they display an obvious dislike for them, and claim to never wish to be like them. When we were talking about conforming, they had a real image of someone who never breaks the rules, always wears their uniform, does their work, and seemed to have a real hatred for them.*

(YP Diary, 01/10/04)

the young people were offering these subversive or dangerous actions to see my reaction. Rather than consider how 'accurate' these statements were, my account focuses on the fact that these claims were offered, and offered often. The way in which the young people presented their position might have been exaggerated, but if so it was exaggeration of rebellion and resistance, not for example exaggerating how much homework they completed at school or how many rules they followed.

It also cannot be inferred that an account of the subject positions conveyed by these young people says something about: the other young people I worked with; young people who experience exclusion; or young people in general. This group, having been rejected by their school and physically excluded were likely to hold strong views and positions which would have been shaped by those experiences, which would be different to other young people in different schools experiencing different forms of exclusion. However, the actions they described in relation to rebelling, and the strong way in which they seemed to associate with them did seem to me to be a theme I found with all the young people I did research with and those I have worked with over several years, all of whom had experienced some form of school exclusion. The contrast between actions of rebellion and those of 'swats' often seems quite marked. What becomes a very convincing reading of a way of being for these young people is that of defiant 'other' in education. If we infer this it becomes important to critically question why the young people are positioned in this way, and to question some core assumptions of education. I had reflected throughout my work on what affect the experience of exclusion from school must have on a young person. I began to construct an account which looked not only at the exclusion but on the strong positions the young people conveyed, which together could be described dialogically: exclusion creating strong oppositional

subject positions, which in turn makes exclusion more likely. Dominant discourse in education would often have us believe that these actions are chosen by the young people and that therefore there are moral reasons for disciplining, disapproving of and excluding these young people. But a more critical standpoint would first question whether the position and actions described by the young people deserve exclusion. The second critical question arising would be whether it is education itself, by labelling these young people as 'other' and by rejecting them, that has given the young people no other option but to fight against, resist. Finally, it is important to consider what effect this 'other' position might have on young people.

Analysing this dichotomy between strong affiliations to their alternative subject position, and the way education establishes it as a minority, a negative 'other' group, ways of speaking begin to emerge that problematically describe the young peoples' subject positions. During the second recorded session, I suggested a number of things the young people might like to do to express their opinions about education. One of them chosen by Mark and Raul was to draw a 'good' or 'bad' pupil. Both of them chose to draw a bad pupil. The ambiguity of the idea of good and bad was deliberate in that it enabled discussion as they drew, in particular focusing on what made their pupils bad, and who would view them as such. Raul

drew the picture below of a bad pupil⁹⁹. The central figure is the 'bad' pupil Raul

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Figure: Drawing by Raul, YP2

has drawn. The character is wearing ‘trackies’ (branded sportswear), and is drinking a bottle of VK Blue and a bottle of Buckfast. The young person has stabbed another person with a knife, saying to them “You fucking deserved it ya pri[c]k”, and is running away from the police, saying to them “fuck off pig[g]y fucks”. What was very striking immediately to me at the time was the similarity between this ‘bad’ pupil and the group of young people at the youth project: the clothing and choice of alcohol, for example. Aside from stabbing, the rest of the characterisation struck me even at the time as seeming very similar to the young people in the group. I thought perhaps Raul was depicting what teachers think of the young people; that adults believe they are ‘bad’, and so I attempted to clarify¹⁰⁰. Here, Raul seems to be distinguishing the ‘good’ pupils who wear uniform, and the ‘bad’ pupils, who wear ‘trackies’. Indeed, the young people had conveyed in the past that they would refuse to wear school uniform and would instead wear clothes similar to those in Raul’s picture. But what emerges as unexpected, is Raul’s insistence that this pupil is bad *in his opinion*, which he reiterated during the session. This unexpected claim from Raul led me to problem pose the drawing he was making and raise questions.

¹⁰⁰ R: so you, could draw a good pupil with a uniform and draw everything like, trackies

I: yep, but what makes them that way what makes them good or bad and who would think they were good or bad would it be you that thought they were good or bad or would it be teachers,

R: us

Constructing an account of positions using discussions and drawings related to 'good' and 'bad' is difficult and is why this analysis (and much re-analysis) involved prolonged critical reflection, with others, drawing on theory and literature and triangulation of research material. These terms are very ambiguous; indeed there seem to be many times when the young people viewed their identity as 'bad', but also that this was a positive thing and something to be proud of. The character depicted in Raul's drawing appears to be an extreme version of the kind of identity the young people had conveyed to me. My account would be that stabbing a pupil at school was not something the young people would aspire to. This is significant, however, in that Raul seems to be demonizing his own way of being, and is reminiscent of the stereotyping one might see in tabloid media.

There are equally times when the young people may have been conveying what they thought other people believed to be bad, for instance drawing what teachers think are 'bad' pupils. Mark also drew a picture of a 'bad' pupil, during the same session. It is remarkably similar, and so it is important to note that Raul and Mark were

seated side by side drawing these pictures¹⁰². Here the pupil is sat at a bus stop, drinking and taking drugs, again with 'trackies' on, and is carrying a knife. The writing at the bottom says "the teachers don't like it" (the 'I' is scored out). The teenager in the picture is wearing very similar clothing to the young people at the

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Figure: Drawing by Mark, YP2

youth project, so much so that Raul makes a remark of the likeness¹⁰³. Again there is little to link this pupil with school, and I was interested in asking why Mark believed this was a bad pupil, and for whom¹⁰⁴. Mark seems to construct a different account to Raul. Here, I was really questioning why the young people had chosen such similar characters to themselves to portray as ‘bad’, especially given Raul’s account. Because of this my questions become rather insistent, keen to know why Mark thinks the pupil is bad. He appears to agree that he believes some of the character’s identity is “cool”, and is not as keen as Raul to say the drawing conveys his opinion. Later in the session he wrote on the drawing at the bottom “the teachers don’t like it”. An initial “T” (don’t like it) is scored out which makes interpretation difficult, but together with the excerpt below where Mark says “it’s

¹⁰³ I: *I like the drawings though they’re very good...*

R: *he’s got the same top as you [Mark] and everything*

(YP2)

¹⁰⁴ I: *So what’s bad about yours? Drinking, stoned*

M: *he’s smoking hash he’s stoned he’s drinking he’s got a knife in his pocket,*

I: *in school? He’s at the bus stop he’s not in school*

M: *aye yeah he’s just setting off*

I: *ok, erm, right, so this is the worst pupil that you can think of. Why is it you think this is bad though, is it just cos you’ve been told that’s bad? Cos you seem to think that’s pretty cool*

M: *just cos no*

M: *yeah I know so, that’s*

I: *well, maybe it’s not bad then maybe that’s, alright*

C: *it’s not bad. To walk around with a couple of cans in your pocket and a wee bit of hash*

M: *it’s not bad but it’s just*

(YP2)

Problematic psychologising notions emerge of personality, attitude, ways of speaking, resisting my suggestions of social causes. The actions described by Craig were usually recounted by the young people as something they not only did but were proud of doing in resistance. At this point both young people agree with what seemed firm conviction in their voices, that they had acted this way and that they identified with this example. What is particularly significant is that Craig then goes on to agree that this makes him a bad person. Though they had often described their subject positions as other, sometimes proud, but often describing it in negative, conventional ways, this is the first instance of one of the young people actually concluding that their rebellious position, and indeed their own resisting actions, even those of answering back to a teacher, make them bad people and makes their subject position a genuinely negative thing. And it is Craig, who had so often stood up for his ways of being and questioned why they should be portrayed as negative things, who speaks.

At this point in the discussion, Craig withdraws this sense of blaming, and repositions their 'role' in education, stating "nah we're not bad we're just bad at school cos we just gave education a kick up their arses". Firstly there are two possible readings here: one that the young peoples' subject positions were viewed as bad by the school, and another, in the way Craig seems to claim intent, that the young people deliberately behaved in a way that they knew the school would believe to be bad. My account here would be that both readings are justifiable together: in this statement Craig seems to critique their role at school and this was a piece of text that I felt was very important when constructing an account of the young peoples' subject positions. For me what Craig seems in part to be expressing here is that the young peoples' positions as marginalised other and their resisting

and rebellious actions, challenged education and its ideals and assumptions.

The most significant part of this session came immediately after the last extract and created an ending to that particular discussion, as we became engaged further in the disparity of accounts, focusing on what young people like Raul and Craig should have a right to in education¹⁰⁶. This excerpt was at the end of a long discussion, a particularly deep discussion which touched on difficult issues for the young people. The tone of their short firm answers suggested they might just be resisting my questions in an attempt to finish the conversation rather than convey more accurate opinions. Nevertheless, the refusal of Craig and Raul to side with their own position that they so strongly associated with, particularly Craig, despite his often fierce defence of their position, and despite my attempts to lead them, suggests that in some way the young people might see their ways of being negatively, in similar

¹⁰⁶ I: if somebody's being bad right do you think its right to just, erm give up on them and, get rid of them, especially in a case where it's a school where you're meant to be, good

C: yep

I: ... if that's the case why are me and X and X [YP Staff] bothering with any of you lot?

C: nah

I: If somebody doesn't stick to the rules if somebody's rude sometimes right we should just, push them out, not have any time for them...

C: aye

I: You're saying if you were somebody else you would just give up on you

C: yep

I: do you not think that's a bit, bizarre? Do you not think that's a bit weird,

C: nope

I: Raul? I know you are but, you're both saying that, if

R: aye but, we cannae, dae it

I: you were somebody else you just wouldn't have time for any.. for either of you.....

[Silence for a minute or 2]

(YP4)

ways to how education views them, and that problematic notions of young people deserving to be excluded had influenced their ways of speaking and reflecting about their selves and ways of being.

This section relates to the subject positions of young people experiencing exclusion, using an exploration and triangulation of several discussions, drawings and field notes. What emerges from work with the group at the Youth Project is a conveying of subject positions, in relation to education, that affiliate strongly with selves that involve being 'other' from groups included by education. 'Other' groups, essentially those who conform and are included are positioned negatively and labelled 'swats' by the young people. The young people's ways of being are communicated confidently at times, and are essentially grounded in rebellion and resistance, in opposition to what is expected by education and society generally. Subject positions allied with and constructed by the young people involve a rejection of school rules such as school uniform as well as a tendency towards actions viewed as particularly negative by education and society for young people, such as violence, drinking and drug taking.

Within this small group of young people there are differing accounts of their subject position and conflicting accounts emerge between proud, strong affiliations with these ways of being, and conventionally labelling themselves as negative and deserving of exclusion. The multivoicedness can be found between the young people, but importantly a dichotomy can be found within individual accounts, at times conveying conventional opinions on exclusion. The disparity in accounts of their subject positions seems often to cause confusion, and can be framed as being heavily influenced by education. On the one hand they have fought to maintain

strong selves or ways of being, in the clothes they wear, and the way they speak and act, which challenges education and refuses to conform. On the other hand this very position is continually marginalised, by education but also by society, and is labelled powerfully as negative and 'other'. This labelling of the young people by education as 'other', marginalisation and exclusion from school seems to have powerful effects on the young people. The young people at times find it difficult to criticise education or reflect on social causes, but as elsewhere in education, find themselves being negative and blaming of their own subject position, at times speaking in very negative and harmful ways about their selves.

It was possible to carefully construct an account of selves in the case of the young people at the youth project, due to the time we spent together and the amount and depth of material I had to analyse. Triangulation made possible an examination of alternative readings, different possible meanings and the multivoicedness of the text and of the young people's accounts. In other work with young people during my research it was not possible to use the material and time spent working with them in the same way. Subject positions were not something I was aiming to explore; I tended to discuss with young people issues of exclusion and school rather than their ways of being and so accounts of selves would only emerge rarely and in indirect ways. I did get a sense however that much of what the young people at the Youth Project described would ring true for the other young people I was working with. The clothes they wore and music they listened to for example were all very similar despite their living in different areas. The resistance to rules and the affiliation with an identity that was in opposition to and was rebelling against education continually emerged.

7.6 Summary

This chapter has explored the ways of speaking that emerged from discussion with the young people I worked with. It is possible to construct an account of the ways in which dominant educational discourse limits and is reproduced in the way young people convey opinions and experiences. However, in the same way education affects the young people, they affect education, and their ways of speaking can be framed as being co-constructed in a relationship between themselves and education. In this way the ways of being that the young people describe, in particular their own ways of being were constructed by them and were very powerful, but evidence of the effects of educational discourse and social practice could also be found, creating contradiction and conflict within their ideas of self.

This chapter has explored the concept of subject positions, an account of my interpretation of the young people's opinions about their selves and their marginalised position which is in opposition to and challenges education. In describing carefully an account of the young people's subject positions, it becomes important to also describe what these positions and ways of speaking *do*. The next chapter explores performance, control and resistance in an educational environment between adults and young people. It examines the conflict and compliance which occurs when the strong, oppositional identity the young people value meets the formal and structured expectations of education and adults, and the performance which ensues.

Chapter 8: Ways of Being: Performance of Power and Control between Adults and Young People in Education

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters explored ways of speaking and reflecting, first for adults in education and then for young people. Together with Chapter 5, they aim to give an account of some of the more problematic discourses and practices in education that mask inequalities and problems, particularly for the young people I worked with: from wider texts in Scottish legislation, to social practices in mainstream schools, down to the ways in which these discourses emerge in speech for adults and young people, and limit possibilities for critical reflection and action. I am not suggesting that people deliberately employ or choose to use these discourses and problematic ways of speaking, but that powerful educational discourses enable and limit what it is possible to say.

Sometimes discourse analysis tends to imply that people who have participated in the research have no power over these discourses and no ability to construct their own ways of speaking or being (Roseneil & Seymour, 1999, p. 5; Willig, 2001, p. 122). In many places analysis in previous sections looks at ways in which adults and young people challenged the problematic educational discourse, for example the critical ways of speaking that emerged at times in discussion with staff at the Special School, or critical constructions of control spoken by the young people. This chapter takes agency, in particular of the young people I worked with even further, by considering ways in which young people experiencing exclusion resist problematic discourses, practices, ways of speaking and ways of being. The young people I worked with are positioned as acting at times in ways that challenge and resist the controlling and disempowering practices of education. In the case of the young people at the Youth Project, their resistance to conformity not only resulted in their permanent exclusion from school, but their resistance to dominant

institutional assumptions and norms that affected our research together also offered huge insight into ways of resisting and renegotiating.

This chapter explores ways of being and interacting between adults and young people in education. It focuses in particular on interaction between the young people at the Youth Project and me. I explore ways of being, and construct an account of what the educational discourses and social practices described previously might do to interaction. I examine not just compliance or powerlessness, but also resistance and control, and the struggle for power in interaction between an adult and young people, in an educational setting. The young people I worked with are positioned here as often resisting the dominant discourses and practices by their actions, and subverting notions of control and power.

Interactions between the young people and me at the Youth Project during our sessions together are treated as performances. The impetus for analysis in this way came first from reflecting on the recorded sessions at the Youth Project. I had set out to try Participatory Action Research with the young people. By the end of working with the young people for a year, having recorded sessions and a lot of other material was a positive outcome, but as a piece of Participatory Action Research it was not as rich in critical reflection or action as I felt it might have been. What seemed to limit our ability for action or more critical reflection was times when we were engaged in conflict, when we disagreed, when the young people did not want to do what I wanted, or when I did not want to do what the young people wanted. Some ways of speaking that emerged from myself or the young people seemed to be more about controlling each other in 'teacher' or 'pupil' ways than speaking things we felt we believed.

Parker (2005) describes interaction between researcher and participants as a rich myriad of control and resistance which plays out and fluctuates like a performance. In relation to young people, Raby (2005) reviews theories of power and resistance and notes that similar actions can be positioned in research as rebellion or delinquency (p. 157). This issue is particularly important to this research as many of the actions I describe in this chapter would be viewed negatively by others but are not positioned as such by me. Instances of conformity and resistance, on both my part and the young people's, were analysed in relation to the issues already raised in previous chapters. Resistance was positioned as such and was analysed and reflected upon where actions were in opposition to the problematic and dominant discourses and practices of education. Raby also notes that critical reflection of resistance should consider whether dominant problematic discourses or practices are reproduced through resisting acts, and that subtle acts such as "humour or passivity" should be considered as well as more overt acts, and analysis and reflection considered these complex issues (Raby, 2005, p. 159).

Thus, as well as analysis of possible social practices and ways of speaking within education presented in previous chapters, this chapter presents analysis of what was being done or performed during the sessions, exploring the text for possible instances of the young people or I being controlling, passive, resisting or compliant. The materials focused on were the recorded sessions at the end of the year, in order to reflect closely on interaction during those sessions. Other material such as drawings from the sessions, diary entries or material related to previous sessions were not analysed as such, but did contribute to a context in which the material is framed. Categories and themes were grouped similarly to analysis described elsewhere, using textual analysis, combined with careful and prolonged reflection

on the material, literature, lines of enquiry, and my epistemology, re-analysing and re-reflecting several times leading to the account constructed in this chapter.

The main body of this chapter then describes an account of performances between the young people at the Youth Project and me. I examined other areas of my research for material where performances emerged as being important and work with the young people at the Special School was particularly significant. At the end of the chapter I explore interaction in the sessions I did at the Special School, in particular between the young people and their classroom teacher who was involved in the sessions.

8.2 Youth Project: Context of the Recorded Sessions

At the end of our school year together, the sessions (essentially similar to previous ones) were tape recorded and focused on the young people's experiences and opinions of school. Experiences during lunchtime, prior to the recorded afternoons set an important context in that they describe how relationships between the young people and me developed and the patterns that had begun to develop.

8.2.1.1 Prior to the Taped Sessions – Before the Tape Began Rolling

The sessions would start after a long lunch break, but I would arrive before lunch so I had time to see the staff and prepare for the session. This time before the sessions was important as it could set up expectations in both myself and the young people, and was an initial forum for performance, for us to test each others' hold on power and each others intentions. The staff would often talk to me soon after I arrived about how the young people had behaved in the morning, and this would sometimes be negative. If events had been conveyed to me in a negative way I would feel

worried about the coming afternoon session. Alternatively if the staff felt positive about the mornings then I would feel hopeful and elated – both these reactions no doubt had an impact on the sessions and the ways I communicated to the young people.

The performances by the young people and myself would often start as soon as we met – I would be probing as to how they were feeling, how the week was going, and they in turn would be probing for information about the sessions. Often this initial discussion would be a way for the young people to test out my expectations, which they would perhaps use later on. They would want to know what we were doing that afternoon (we often had either not decided previously, or the young people had forgotten), what the topic was, how much work would have to be done, and most importantly what activity we would be doing afterwards and for how long. At this stage a negotiation would begin. Perhaps they would indicate an hour and a half before the session that they were not going to do any ‘work’. Or perhaps they would indicate that they might work harder, if I booked the football pitch at the leisure centre for them for the activity session. In many respects these initial tests of expectation and statements of intention would gear us up and set the tone for the afternoon – sometimes in positive ways, but if any conflict had occurred it would usually lead me to feeling anxious and guarded.

Prior even to arriving I often had preconceptions that would affect my experience of the situation. I would have spent a lot of time in reflection on how I could facilitate the sessions. How I might change myself from the last time, or what topic or material might grab the young people’s attention more. At the same time I would try and prepare for every eventuality, both with material (such as creative ideas),

and with thought about things which might happen. In some ways all this reflection allowed me to be more prepared, and a lot of the preparation was about making me as flexible and as open as possible to anything the young people wanted to do. On the other hand however, it meant that with so much preparation gone into each session, I felt I had invested a lot of time into the sessions and had much more to lose. No matter how much a researcher may be aware of these matters, it is still very hard to overcome. How I thought the session should go, things I thought would be good to do or negative things I feared might happen, inevitably impacted upon my position regarding control of the situation. Often I had made decisions about the content or structure of the sessions which the young people did not know about. While I already had a lot invested in the sessions before they had even begun, the young people would not have this investment. Finally, actions, agendas or modes of behaviour set in the morning, sometimes set a context for the afternoon.

8.2.1.2 Possible Expectations of the Young People

I do not know what kinds of expectations or thoughts the young people might have had prior to sessions. While these sessions were the most important thing happening in my working week, this was unlikely to be the case for the young people. They had many other things going on in their lives and I doubt they had invested themselves in the sessions as I had. It is possible that the young people didn't spend much time, if any, thinking about the sessions beforehand, although they did seem to quickly assess the situation when I arrived before lunch.

8.3 Youth Project: Performance of Young People

In this piece of analysis, a construction of the performance of the young people, the first features described are actions that seemed to emerge as strategies for resistance

and ways of controlling the sessions, with explanation as to why I position these themes in this way. The final part of this section examines points of compliance, instances where compliant acts in response to my agenda, my attempts to control and institutional norms and assumptions seemed to emerge.

8.3.1.1 Having Fun

‘Having fun’ often seems to be one of the primary agendas of the young people during sessions, but it also appears at times to be a way of gaining control. They use humour in a lot of quick, clever ways, and are very adept at turning a situation on its head. Many times I almost ask for them to make fun, but either way, the young people are ready and waiting for anything I might say that could be made to look funny, for example in the extract below when I am reading a story about a boy called Steven having an argument with his teacher (Appendix B)¹⁰⁷. When I read out this part of the story the young people immediately picked up on the potential humour (in this instance of a sexual nature). When I read it out again, not realising why the young people are laughing, they are only too happy to laugh a second time (YP3). Humour is also found in what I say later when I describe the way the teacher in the story reacts in the argument as “the teacher jumps on him” (YP3) (not learning from my mistakes I go ahead and repeat this line as well –the young people do not make fun this time – maybe I am just not enough of a challenge!). During instances like these, in particular where the young people can derive rude or sexual meaning from a person speaking (not always myself); marked, loud, disruptive

¹⁰⁷ I: *He was shouting really loudly and sounded like he was ready to explode (young people erupt in laughter).*

(YP3)

laughter comes from the whole group, and resuming a conversation or discussion takes a long time.

Another humour technique used often is to give witty answers to my questions. When I ask who else is in the story they are quick to come up with many made up names: “S: Edward, G: Victoria, S: Rosy”, including the 2 main characters from Still Game (a Scottish Comedy), two ‘grumpy old men’, “P: Jack and Victor” (YP3). One thing often attempted where possible is to make fun of each other and of me. In the extract below Raul is playing sounds from his mobile phone, which I can hear but am confused as to their origin¹⁰⁸.

When I manage to use humour myself, by calling Craig by his full name not his nickname, which I do deliberately knowing it will get his attention, it stands out and certainly gets Craig’s attention. Raul’s comment “that’s his Sunday name!” is very funny and is said in an instant (YP3). And the quick wit is clear (unless they truly believe they are perfect) when they answer me back with some unlikely claims¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁸ I: *What’s that noise? ...is that a telly you’ve got, or*

M: *nothing*

I: *what you doing, stop winding me up, I don’t like it!*

Its weird, no what

R: *(laughing)*

C: *chewing the fat*

I: *is it where is it? How do you do that?*

But, did you just say did you just

R: *[shows the mobile] just record it*

I: *read that out yourself? Where do people laugh? No, did you just record it off telly?!*

R: *(laughs) yeah!*

(YP2)

¹⁰⁹ I: *I’m not saying that you were perfect[at school] cos you absolutely weren’t*

R: *aye I was*

C: *perfect*

M: *I was*

(YP3)

The young people use humour many times to gain control of the situation, which often has the (possibly deliberate) outcome of making me look slow and them look quick. My account is that for the group it is the ultimate linguistic tool for gaining the upper hand, for passing time in the way they want it to pass and to fulfil their agenda of simply having fun.

8.3.1.2 Derogation – Taking the Piss

In the excerpt below I am reading from the story about Steven: Raul is making fun of my English accent and Craig is pretending to be angry at my failure (he was laughing at the time)¹¹⁰. Something they like to do in a similar way to humour is to be derogatory. Often they find it funny, but it seems more about putting someone down, ‘taking the piss’, than the likelihood that everyone will find it funny. Although with these young people none of the derogation is malicious, it could be seen as an intention to disrupt the discussion, to turn the conversation, to gain control, and to ‘wind up’ the person it is directed at. Obviously this is usually me, and where successful has the desired effect of me diverting my agenda to attend to theirs.

¹¹⁰ I: *erm, I can't do the Scottish accent, I tried to write Scottish accents but,*
R: *Steven slowly walked into the classroom [English accent]*
C: *you can't*
do a Scottish accent, ah for fucks sake

(YP3)

Although there is often some loyalty between the young people, especially against me, they are quick to turn on each other if the opportunity arises. A good example is when Craig gives a very conventional answer when I ask a question below¹¹¹. Raul, even though he often gives me answers he thinks I want to hear, is appalled by this answer, and voices his opinion. Even though they use this process often to get attention and control, they nevertheless understand perfectly well the effect it can have. Craig demonstrates this in the third session, when we discuss ‘Steven’s Story’; he notes that part of the reason Steven is so angry in the story is because his friends are “taking the piss” (YP3).

8.3.1.3 Negative or Aggressive Responses

Two other prevalent, similar techniques that often emerge are negative responses or overly aggressive responses. Sometimes, it appears that the answer they are giving is a very negative one and that it is given so quickly and in such a context that it seems very deliberate: a very effective mode of sabotage. If I am asking a question they are bored of answering or they no longer want the discussion to carry on, offering the most opposite answer to the one they believe I am looking for, or giving a fairly aggressive answer is a good way of stopping the conversation or diverting it when I act on their response. Quick answers such as “dunno” or “nope” (YP3, YP4, YP5) mean I cannot go further, and have to reroute discussions. When I ask whether one of them would like to read aloud the story in Session 3, the unanimous

¹¹¹ I: *What would you have done differently?*

C: *just told him I’m really sorry sir I didn’t mean to do it*

R: *shut up!*

I: *ah, apologise for being late* *why do you think that’s such a stupid idea?!*

R: *sook up their arse*

(YP3)

answer (which is not true), is that they are not good at reading and strongly communicate that they are not going to read aloud. In the two extracts below for example Craig effectively stops the discussion from going in the direction I am hoping for¹¹².

When conflict gets really tense and our interactions are strained, this is one of the most effective strategies for resistance. During Session 5, one of the last sessions, when I am trying to get Mark to do something within my agenda, his resistance is extremely successful¹¹³. In this extract are examples of a strategy rather than the conveying of an opinion: Mark often spent a lot of time on the computers, and drew many pictures. It could be that Mark usually feels forced to do these things, but my interpretation, due partly to the quick and determined way Mark answers is that he seems to be resisting suggestions because I am suggesting them rather than because of what they are.

¹¹² I: teacher could have said something different you think...do you think there's some stuff that we don't know about in this story that perhaps we need to know about
C: nah
(YP3)

I: Craig will you read the second sentence out for me?
C: nah, cannae read
(YP3)

¹¹³ I: Erm, so what would you 2 like to do, do you want to do website stuff do you want to do websites? You don't like computers do you like
M: don't like computers

I: drawing stuff? You don't like drawing stuff do you like discussing stuff?
M: nah

I: ... (sighs) you don't want to do the opposite of what Raul's doing, the same thing as Raul it doesn't have to be
M: I don't like drawing
(YP5)

Aggressive responses are not responses which are aggressive towards me, rather they tend to be aggressive solutions to situations like Steven's Story, or aggressive opinions about characters in the story or characters in real life. Like the negative comments, I have not included all the times they did this. There are lots of times during sessions where it seems the young people express negative or aggressive things as part of the ways they are speaking or reflecting, and seem to feel passionately about them. Obviously it is hard to make this distinction and impossible to know for sure, but the difference seems clear at times. When Raul describes quite aggressively what he thinks of a teacher at their school ("he's a fucking bum boy" YP3), my experience of the actual teacher and knowing Raul's relationship with him would lead me to speculate that he really does want to convey a very negative subject position of that teacher, as part of a dialogue. On the other hand, when Mark points out that the teacher in Steven's Story "could be a psycho" (YP3), it seems less convincing that Mark might 'believe' this. My interpretation is that this comment successfully stops me asking over and over again the question of what we don't know about the teacher – something I repeat and seem to want them to discuss, and so successfully resists my attempt at control.

8.3.1.4 Self Put Downs

Similar to the oppositional comments are opportunities the young people use to put themselves down in order to resist a request. Bound up by problematic subject positions of their selves, reflected upon in the previous chapter, it is hard to construct a difference between ways of speaking about their selves and ways of trying to elicit sympathy and evade requests. Putting one's self down emerged most often from Craig. It would be hard not to argue for a significant link between this and the fact that Craig tends to communicate many accounts of teachers telling him

he was stupid and incapable. Ironically, although Craig was very far behind academically when he arrived at the project, he nevertheless became very good at Maths and English and had a real talent with computers. Despite this, old habits seem to die hard and at times Craig's positioning of himself as incapable seems to become a strategy to resist. Any time I ask Craig if he would like to read something, the answer is invariably "nah cannae read" (YP3). During Session 3 (YP3) when we are discussing how Steven's Story (Appendix B) could be different, I suggest we re-write it. A negotiation begins between me and Craig, as to how much he can write – he claims less than 200 words, that it needs "a good writer or somebody who's got the brain for it" to write a story, even though he often wrote longer stories for English (YP3). From my point of view during the session I am not really looking for him to write anyway, and settle on me writing a short paragraph. It is possible here that Craig, seeing me more as a teacher thinks there is work to be evaded, and that by claiming to be incapable I will expect less of him – even though I have no agenda to make him do written work.

8.3.1.5 Silences

The silences in these sessions are as important if not more important than the verbal communication. In many ways they can be seen as another form of resistance and control, while on the other hand show in places how little the young people are given or take control and direct the discussions and outcome of the sessions. General silences and pauses in discussion come almost entirely from the young people. As a researcher, adult, teacher or facilitator I inversely often appear to be filling in the silences, and this too can be constructed as having implications for power and control. In a more specific case, the young person who eventually chooses not to be part of the research is an important 'absence' from the transcripts.

On the one hand he often spends long periods not engaging in the discussions and this has a powerful influence on the other young people. On the other hand my having to remove all times that he speaks, some of which are engaging, useful and interesting, raises serious ethical questions about doing research on injustice and exclusion, where a young person who is part of a group still becomes excluded or chooses to self exclude. It is very hard to infer meaning from silences, and the following pieces of analysis are tentative and should be read as constructed possibilities.

Silence in response to a question of mine is a large factor during discussions. For various different reasons, the young people often do not answer to questions I ask (there are also times when I miss or ignore questions they ask me, discussed later). Sometimes, listening back to the tapes and reading the transcript it is clear that there are times when the reason for not answering is that I have asked an obtuse or foolish question, or have not made myself very clear¹¹⁴. This is an obvious question as we have just read the story and all know who is in it, so the question sounds patronising.

¹¹⁴ *I: who else is in the story?...*

The ensuing silence seems to be much more about choosing not to answer a question in order to resist my control rather than wanting to say something but not knowing the answer, as in the extract below where there is silence in response to my question¹¹⁵. This demonstrates something I often do and can recognise as an obtuse question. I have an answer in mind, and wish them to come up with that answer. “Information missing” is so ambiguous, when the only answer I am looking for is that we do not know why Steven is late or why he is having a bad day. In this case I would not have answered either!

There are many times like this, when the young people are more than justified in not gracing my obtuse questions with a response, as well as times when I ask a stupid question and get a stupid answer. But this is not the only feature of these silences. Though silences are absences rather than presences in research material, not answering a person in control can leave that person with nothing. It is not something that can be punished, and it forces the person talking to change direction, to rethink the discussion. It was something I observed very often in mainstream classrooms. It was common for an entire class to remain silent when a teacher asked a question, to the extent that it was seen as a pretty uncool thing to answer, as this would break the silence and offer relief for the teacher. While there were limitations to the sessions at the Youth Project, our relationship did advance to a stage where the young people usually responded – not how I might have wished, but they did not feel very often the need to resist discussion with flat silence, rather they

¹¹⁵ *I: do you not there's erm, some stuff that's missing some information that's missing about this day?...*

(YP3)

felt confident to use a more direct, louder approach and so compared to a classroom there seemed to be much less silence.

8.3.1.6 Other Ways Young People Resisted and Gained Control

Using a mobile phone or making sound with it is a non verbal way of taking control, of resisting my agenda. Making sounds with it, or writing text messages is often successful because I stop what I am saying and spend time engaged in conflict, trying to regain control¹¹⁶. Starting a random conversation, often between themselves, ignoring totally what I am saying, or digressing from what I am trying to ask them to divert attention, is often a successful way of disrupting my agenda, for example in the extract below where Raul is having an unrelated conversation with Craig and I am talking at the same time¹¹⁷. Interestingly however they are sometimes intolerant of each other's interruptions ("S: shut up man", YP2).

Physical interruptions, for example leaving the table, again divert me from my agenda and challenge me to enter into conflict. Below I am challenging Raul and his opinions, and when he decides he doesn't want to engage in this discussion he

¹¹⁶ I: *ok, Steven's bad day, do I have to do voices and stuff I can't do the Scottish accent.[mobile phone song begins]..its a good song, but we can't listen to it all the way through we can maybe put it on afterwards we'll try and get it off the internet afterwards*
(YP3)

¹¹⁷ I: *erm don't forget It's got to be a classroom, you've got to put the good things and the bad things about it, you can do like say, about the environment*
R: *[Speaking to Craig] aye what was that song you were singing earlier?*

I: *there's some scissors if you want them... so your task till half 2 [writing on board]*
R: *aye that*
C: *xxx xxx [unable to hear Craig's speech]*
(YP2)

simply gets up and leaves¹¹⁸. In this extract Raul very successfully resists my attempts to ‘challenge’ him, by refusing even to sit at the same table with me.

8.3.1.7 Compliance

Often the young people would give in and comply with what I wanted. Sometimes my strategies for control worked, my moral reasoning won, or the young people were simply tired of resisting. At the time this was viewed as success by me, even sometimes after the session¹¹⁹. In reality, times where the young people did comply often meant they were led into comments, and the compliant sessions were not as rich and filled with interesting discussion.

An obvious example of the young people complying, and me losing out in the process, was giving me the answer they think I am looking for¹²⁰. In this extract Craig claims he would apologise to the teacher, despite the teacher being fairly rude in the story. This contradicts Craig’s often firm position that he will stand up to teachers and resist notions of obeying: the response seems instead one that a teacher

¹¹⁸ I: *I don’t want what everybody else thinks I want what you think*
R: *ok I think this too fuck, I just want to do it*

I: *if you were at a disco right, but Raul, just cos I’m, challenging what you think!*
R: *right I ain’t doing it [gets up and walks away]*

(YP4)

¹¹⁹ *Ok, so everyone was in quite a good mood today, and everyone was present... Positive points were: they didn’t object to doing it...*

(YP Diary, YP3)

¹²⁰ I: *if you were Steven in this story what could you have done to stop the argument from happening and stop yourself from getting sent out of class? What would you have done differently*

C: *just told him I’m really sorry sir I didn’t mean to do it*
R: *shut up!*

(YP3)

or an adult might expect. In this way Craig avoids telling what he ‘really’ thinks, and complies with an answer centred on compliance.

This section constructs an account of resisting and complying performance that becomes possible in an educational context. For the young people at the Youth Project, having fun seemed to be a primary agenda, but it also emerged at times as a way of taking control and resisting attempts I might make at being ‘serious’. Making fun of me or others in the groups was a similar tactic, not only diverting attention from discussion about education, but when directed towards me served to negate my authority. Negative or aggressive responses, rather than malicious are positioned in this account as effective sabotage: the young people were aware of my agenda and knew I would not try and force them in certain circumstances, and so their refusal to work for example meant I could go no further. Self put-downs reproduce dominant, problematic ideas such as the young people being ‘stupid’. At times these seemed problematic as internalised negative subject positions, but the young people also seemed to use these problematic ideas to resist and avoid my agenda. Silence emerged as a very subtle but also very powerful strategy, and was something that I observed often in school classrooms. Ultimately an adult cannot, without physical power, force a young person to speak, and refusal to do so emerged as a formidable act.

The young people did not relentlessly resist. As well as times when we engaged in mutual, collaborative dialogue, there were times when compliant performances emerged from the young people. In some ways compliance with dominant language and practice in education would emerge in the young people’s ways of speaking, especially as described in the last chapter, through ways of speaking about their

selves. Doing everything I suggested and giving me answers I might be expected to want to hear were performative instances of compliance. However, these compliant acts are not entirely straightforward: compliance with my attempts to control created research material that was far less rich and insightful for me, perhaps not oppositional in relation to education, but effectively obstructing my attempts at research.

8.3.2 Performance of Resistance and Control – Researcher

In some respects it is easier to analyse my performance during sessions. I have diaries which were written from my point of view and in which I wrote controlling rhetoric, or heartfelt despondency, and I have memories of how I was feeling at the time: what my agenda might have been; and what my thought processes were (taking into account time passed and subjectivity as limitations). On the other hand, it is hard to be more balanced critically for oneself. In analysing I found it hard to be critical enough at times, and at other times found myself being too critical. In this way the analysis of my performance is not the same as that of the young people. It is closer, and yet unavoidably biased. It works with the premise that I was in a position of power in many ways over the young people, and at the same time was working within barriers I could not control.

To many teachers or people working within education, I may have seemed very fair, collaborative and even radical towards the young people. It is not the intention here however to focus on a conventional view, but rather a more unorthodox standpoint with the young people. As such, much of the focus here is on times when there were discrepancies between my values and my behaviour. Behaving just like a teacher when writing fieldwork notes about how oppressing such behaviour was.

Failing to listen somehow to the young people when something valid and interesting was suggested. My aim for working with these young people was to attempt collaborative, transformative, conscientizing, critical, young person led research. The actions which occurred instead tell us as much about the role of researcher, research in general and about institutions as they do about young people. While it is inappropriate to victim blame the young people, it is equally inappropriate to victim blame the researcher – what is more interesting is to examine the attempts at control and power, the failure of such attempts, and the spaces where more collaborative and less agenda led dialogue occurred, to see what these patterns tell us about a wider context.

8.3.2.1 Reproducing the Performance of a Teacher – Trying to ‘Win’

Comments like those included below are so obviously reproducing old fashioned teacher strategies of achieving some kind of control, as to make for pretty embarrassing reading to me¹²¹. These are things I remember saying quite clearly but do not know where they come from or how they manage to emerge. The

¹²¹ *I: Just calm down, act your age*

(YP1)

I: Well if you're not gonna listen to the story, are you ready? Then I shall begin.

(YP3)

I: I'm gonna be asking questions at the end, I'm gonna be asking questions at the end, if you don't know what was in.. am I gonna have to take you're phone off you.. do you want to put your phone over there Raul, by the window

(YP3)

demands and the ‘teacher behaviour’ seem to surface with greater conflict – the stronger the conflict or the more the young people resist, the more pronounced and ridiculous my behaviour becomes.

I sometimes try to implement choice for the young people, for example below at the beginning of Session 5 when I am showing the young people ideas I have come up with of things they could do, which I have written down on separate cards¹²². I describe these as “task cards”, and go on to suggest the young people can do “whatever they want”. Of course in such tight controlling boundaries this choice is entirely tokenistic. But when the young people then refuse to follow my ‘suggestions’ I use justification that I had given them lots of choice¹²³.

I would sometimes resort to ultimatums, again against my values and ethics¹²⁴. Here I am drawn into very controlling discourse, giving an ‘either or’ ultimatum, with no attempt at negotiative dialogue or participatory methods: the response is silence.

¹²² I: *These are the, task cards so you can do one of these some of them involve art work so you can do some art work this afternoon, or, anything you want, it doesn't have to be drawing it can be writing or, whatever you want. Ok? You can label bits on it if you want, and I'll come and ask you stuff about it and stuff*

(YP5)

¹²³ I: *right guys I'm not spending, all this time arguing you've got 5 more minutes to make up your mind that's the options, several options there, plus the website stuff*

(YP5)

¹²⁴ I: *Mark and X you are going to do something this afternoon, ok? So, just make it, as least painful as possible ok? Otherwise, if you absolutely can't do my stuff then it's just a case of doing maths work or English work...*

(YP5)

Even when the young people do choose to comply, the pressure I feel to produce some research, together with the teacher role I become drawn into, sometimes leads me to keep pushing. For instance the young people give in and draw a picture I want them to do, but I then want them to do another picture, or that picture differently¹²⁵. Here I end by suggesting problematically that what the young people are already doing does not involve “thought”. In this way I seem inexorably drawn towards performing in problematic ways influenced powerfully by discourses in education, but similarly and importantly also by discourses and social practices in research and academia that legitimise particular kinds of research and researcher.

8.3.2.2 Moral and Logical Reasoning

The context of the Youth Project was interesting, as was my actual role – I had no real power, less even than teachers and no experience, no “sleight of hand” (Willis, 1978, p. 64). While sometimes this gave me the opportunity to think differently to a teacher, other times it ill equipped me for thinking critically, and drew me into using as sophisticated teacher strategies as I could muster. In the context of the Youth Project, I had less concrete sanction and possibility of control than a teacher. As such during sessions and in diary entries, I tend to rationalise to myself and to the young people in moral and logical ways.

¹²⁵ I: a picture you're happy with you'll draw a picture of the
R: (sighs) I'll draw a picture of Hogwarts

I: school? like a, erm, full on view or a birds eye view
R: full on view

I: ...will you draw a room plan as well? It's got to have some thought

(YP4)

When heightened resistance occurred, such as in Session 5 when X actually left, I communicated this reasoning to the young people¹²⁶. In this extract I make a very controlling statement from the outset, but I then go on to use words such as “fair”, “not that painful” and “honest”, powerful rhetorical discourse to persuade the young people that there are logical reasons why they must do as I say, and moral reasons why they should do as I say.

Interestingly, prior to this session I even decide upon this strategy and rationalise it to myself in my fieldwork diary¹²⁷. What is surprising is not that I go through decisions based on values and ethics, but that once submerged in education these decisions come to be based on uncritical and problematic educational beliefs and discourses, rather than on my own epistemology and the assumptions of the research.

8.3.2.3 Failing to Hear/Act upon Important Comments Communicated by the Young People

Listening to the young people was something I understood as vital from the very beginning. I knew that it had to be more than tokenistic and that considering their wishes for the sessions as valid and useful would be paramount to the research. There were many times I did this, but equally there were times when I did not hear,

¹²⁶ *I: You can do something together or you can do different stuff, but you are going to do something. For a start it's not fair on Raul and Craig if they're doing work and you're not. But it's also part of your curriculum and something you need to do and its not that painful to be honest I'm not asking you to, do difficult sums, or, write an essay, I'm just asking you to think a little bit about, issues about school.*

(YP4)

¹²⁷ *I think next week I will have to see if I can be firm and have them all take part in some way – walking all over me is as unfair as me telling them what to do, I just feel like they're taking the piss a bit – not sure if that's my conventional adult coming through!*

(YP Diary, YP4)

or even worse seemed to actively ignore, ideas or wishes which may have shaped more radical sessions. Below Craig makes quite an aggressive or emotive statement, but I quickly change the subject¹²⁸. Different interpretations might include that Craig's comment does not fit in with what I am trying to ask or the direction I am thinking in at the time, but it is an important comment and an interesting conversation might have happened had I pursued it. Another example, during Session 4, is when Raul and Craig come up with an idea for a cartoon about a bad school and a good school. I am asking them questions about it and they are coming up with an interesting idea. Perhaps because I am trying to focus on several things at once, or have fixed an idea in my mind at the outset, I seem to spend the whole session believing that their idea is about making a film, a documentary rather than a cartoon – even though they re-iterate to me several times that the idea is in fact a cartoon (YP5). During analysis I found it very surprising that I make the same mistake again and again during the session, referring to their idea as a film and being corrected. Though this is not significant to the content of the research, it raises questions about what else can be missed by a researcher even during exploratory sessions. The pressure of producing research and the implicit agenda of control seems to get firmly in the way of the young people being able to direct the sessions.

¹²⁸ C: *I don't care what happens*

I: *you don't care what if the teacher chucks you out?*

C: *you don't care if they chuck you out cos if they do you just slap their face*

I: *exactly... I see that happen quite a lot, and..*

so, some of the things I thought we could, cos, we'll just discuss this quickly

(YP3)

Furthermore, there are a couple of instances where I explicitly refuse to listen, even when my own values and assumptions are being used. Below Raul is trying to negotiate with me, but I resist in any way I can¹²⁹. Here Raul is using my strategies, my logical and moral reasoning, and yet I still refuse to give in. He uses words like compromise, argues that he has completed work, and tries to attend to possible fears I might have of feeling old fashioned, but despite this adept way at using my own strategies I refuse to relinquish control at that moment (we did play pool in the end).

¹²⁹ R: *well can we tidy this first and get pool set up first and then we'll come back*

I: *no 10 minute break outside, if that's ok 10 minute break outside, we'll come back, we'll do the craft activity that I thought we could do and then, if you get really really fed up we can play pool but at least give it a little stab cos we do the same thing every week and it's so*

R: *nah!*

I: *boring! Just see, see what*

M: *it's not!*

R: *no, what about a compromise*

I: *yeah exactly I'm trying to keep a compromise*

R: *no a compromise is here we did our work look*

I: *I'm trying to compromise between (starts laughing)*

R: *we have to talk in this [session], all we want is a little afternoon of pool, come on Rachael don't be an old fogey*

I: *come back in 10 minutes and I'll tell you what I was thinking of afterwards*

R: *yes*

ah no!

(YP1)

8.3.2.4 Leading

The following extract is an example of how leading my communication sometimes becomes, where I am assuming Raul must have been excluded from class for something, and so lead with the idea that it is fair to be excluded sometimes, which he complies with¹³⁰. In these cases my leading meant I had to discard comments from the young people regarding their account. What is interesting is that my leading often relates to more conventional, educational discourses rather than my own beliefs and values as a community psychologist.

8.3.2.5 Responding to or Rising to the Young Peoples' more Disruptive Agendas – 'Losing the Battle'

Points where I respond badly to the strategies the young people have for sabotaging are often points where the young people's agenda is realised. While by no means necessary, as the person in a position of power my performance has potential to dissipate conflict, and it is also in my interests as a researcher to do so.

¹³⁰ I: *Eh? You got punished for you got sent out for English? Oh of, yeah but what was*
R: *English*

I: *it for why were you getting sent out... do you think it was fair that you got sent out?*

R: *aye, sometimes*

I: *Sometimes*

(YP1)

However, due to the skill of the young people, I often find myself getting drawn into battle, and occasionally losing my temper¹³¹. In this extract the young people appear to be making fun of the story (Steven's Bad Day, Appendix B), and instead of doing the same, or simply redirecting conversation to something else, I get drawn into being wound up and am responding in a way which is fun and beneficial for the young people, when for example Craig responds by suggesting the notion the teacher is a transsexual "is serious"¹³². Below the young people have been making fun of me for some time but I ignore it and carry on. Eventually however, I stumble over my words, and then respond to their teasing emotionally, conveying that I am annoyed. There is a powerful notion in education that adults must never respond to young people's attempts at eliciting emotional responses such as these. When this kind of outburst happens it feels like failure. That adults should not engage in emotional dialogue, angry dialogue, or even conflict is assumed but can be positioned as problematic. Whether or not this is the case, the tension that arises from adults attempting calm dialogue, and young people knowing this is something

¹³¹ I: *why might [Steven] be having a bad day?*

C: *maybe a transsexual!... (xxxxx)*

I: *well, I don't think that's usually a good reason for why*

I: *somebody's having a bad day, no, serious reasons why he could be having a bad*

C: *aye*

I: *day no, well ok that might but what else do you think Steven might*

C: *it is serious*

(YP3)

¹³² I: *the the the, sorry! The outcome, the solution for this*

C: *the the the! The the the!*

I: *is that Steven and the rest of the class, well if you didn't keep interrupting me I wouldn't stutter!... right, erm, the solution to this is supposed to be, that the class and Steven gets to..*

(YP3)

they can sabotage creates more conflict rather than less. The ‘unemotional’ approach adopted by teachers in education can therefore be positioned as a very controlling and disempowering strategy.

8.3.2.6 Respecting and Complying

There are many times when I respect the wishes of the young people, or comply positively with their wishes and agenda. Backtracking occurs when I assert myself and my agenda, but withdraw realising that I am being too controlling¹³³. In this extract I withdraw step by step from my initial assumed position that we will complete the worksheet. There are many times when I respect what they want to do during sessions. I felt for instance that a particular agenda the young people had was to have fun, and so I tried to incorporate ways they enjoyed having fun into sessions, such as playing football for half of a session. Below after no response from the young people as to who might like to read the story, I reason that they should not have to do this and read it myself instead¹³⁴. I often openly state I am on the young people’s ‘side’: partly because I feel I am but also perhaps in an attempt to convey mutual understanding and affiliation. In fact, at times I seem to side with the young people more than they do – in part possibly because I communicate more in the sessions, but it seems sometimes to suggest I have a more positive way of positioning the young people than they do, as was discussed in the last section of the

¹³³ *I: so for instance, if you look at the, work sheet, you can write on it but, you don't have to write on it.. the sheet that one.. that one Craig or you can just scribble and, or anything you like*

(YP3)

¹³⁴ *I: ok so let's read the story.....does someone want to read it or do you want me to read it.. nobody else wants to do it ... ok, Steven's bad day[go to read the story]*

(YP3)

last chapter¹³⁵. Here Raul states that a good school is one where everyone is “well behaved”, but I disagree and go on to problematise whether “sticking to rules” is a positive thing in relation to learning.

Another way I tried to affiliate myself with the young people was to put myself down. This had the added affect of trying to strip away some of the power I might have had or that the young people thought I might have. For example, I tended to say I couldn’t read well or that my spelling was terrible in an attempt to appear less academic.

8.3.2.7 Attempting to be a Collaborative, Dialogical, Critical Researcher

There were various ways in which my behaviour towards the young people was different to that of a conventional teacher or researcher, and ways in which I found it possible to be critical, conscientizing or dialogical.

¹³⁵ R: *there’s no fights and fuck all*

I: *So just cos there’s no fights that makes it a good school?*

R: *aye, and, they’re, well behaved*

I: *right, cos everyone’s behaving themselves basically at school?.. I disagree with that*

I think that just cos everyone’s sticking to the rules

R: *how*

I: doesn’t mean they’re learning and like but.. I don’t know, what I think of as a good school, is different to... just because people are sticking to the rules doesn’t mean that they, are, becoming, like learning about life or, if anything they’re learning less about life..

(YP3)

Below I am speaking to Craig, and rather than attempting to appear superior, or negating Craig's idea that he should be paid for creating a website, I am simply as honest as I can be and attempt to explain to Craig why I have no power to pay him¹³⁶. I always attempted to be open and honest towards the young people. I tried to carefully explain why I was there; always explaining things I thought they would want to be made aware of and was very open to having discussion about my own life, beliefs and experiences. For example, the young people conveyed they were not aware of the selection process that had occurred at the school which meant they had been selected to come to the Youth Project (YP1). Though schools rarely feel the need for this kind of reasoning to be made explicit, I thought it was very important for the young people to at least know that they had not been chosen because they were the "worst" (Raul, YP1)¹³⁷.

¹³⁶ I: *And then, if you ever have like, an interview or something, you can give people the address of the website and say that you designed it.*

C: *what I can get money for it*

I: *I can't give you money for it, I wish I could* *yeah, other*

C: *you don't get money for making a website and that*

I: *people's websites but I can't give you money for this one* *I haven't got any!*

C: *how?*

(YP4)

¹³⁷ R: *...I dunno...we were never the worst eh ... I don't know how Mark managed to come here he wasnae bad*

C: *he was a swat!*

I: *I think erm the people that made the decisions at school, er I can't be certain but I think, the people that made the decisions at school this year as to who was gonna come here wanted people that would, get the most out of it, so they didn't pick the people that were just the worst, in their eyes, they picked people that they thought would get, but, yeah, there's that as well*

(YP1)

I also tried to make the research transformative in any way I could. In order for the young people to get something ‘in return’ for helping me, the activity part of the sessions were to be a relaxing, fun space where they could perhaps get to do things they did not do normally. Though not always successful in this respect (i.e. not letting them play pool a couple of weeks), it meant that when I knew how much the young people missed PE at school and at their suggestion, I could book space at the leisure centre for them to play sport.

Attempts at critical discussion were difficult and something the young people didn’t like to do. I tried to use a lot of problem posing dialogue, and often attempted to challenge their beliefs (although this often produced conflict). It is hard to reflect whether any conscientization ‘occurred’, although I would argue not, as by the end of the year critical dialogue was still rare between us. I successfully conveyed by the end the idea that the young people had to elaborate beliefs such as ‘this is shit’¹³⁸. Although not hugely critical, this was something I often reiterated in trying to communicate that I wanted to learn from them rather than the other way around.

This section has considered my performance for its adherence to problematic educational assumptions and for its resistance and compliance with the young people. Performance that can be likened to that of a teacher often emerged, and I frequently engaged in strategies to maintain control over the group, despite this being contrary to the methodology of the research. The problematic way that I communicated to the young people that they had ‘choice’ during the sessions was

¹³⁸ C: *because er, er, just saying they’re [teachers are] wankers isn’t giving you a reason for it*

(YP1)

positioned as participatory, but in fact was within very narrow boundaries. This emerges as very similar to the language described in Chapter 5 in the High School, where young people are problematically positioned as having 'choice'. Both educational assumptions and assumptions related to carrying out academic research emerged in my controlling attempts at getting the young people to 'do work'. Though sessions were designed to be exploratory and unconventional, and involve discussion, perhaps artwork and action, these actions became formalised by me as I sometimes coerced the young people to produce drawings, and to produce them in particular ways, such as labelling them. In this way actions within the research sessions became framed as 'work', became more conventional actions and required resistance from the young people.

Moral and logical reasoning was a prominent theme related to the performance of a teacher. Arguing to both myself and the young people that there were valid reasons for controlling actions, positive language emerged and were used in 'logical' and 'moral' ways, that sat within finite boundaries and assumptions of education that served to legitimise my attempts at control. In addition to these engaged attempts at control, what emerged as unexpected and surprising were instances where I failed to listen to the young people or act upon their wishes or suggestions, and tended to lead the group, which seemed influenced more by education and assumptions about research than led by methodologies of participation and collaboration.

Controlling performances did not always emerge from my actions: there were also times when I tried but failed to maintain control; deliberately complied with the young people; and times when we were engaged in collaborative, mutual dialogue and actions. When attempts at controlling failed, when I 'lost' the battle, I would

become drawn into conflict and we would be diverted from collaborative discussion about education. There is a further assumed position that can be positioned as problematic however, in the assumption that to lose one's temper or to engage in conflict is a negative thing. In relationships with young people, a common aim is to remain dispassionate, not to allow oneself to become drawn in emotionally and to be calm while young people might try to 'wind you up'. There remains a position of power and control in this assumption however, as young people are assumed to be 'out of control', as described by the staff at the Special School in Chapter 6, and adults have power and are in a position to be unaffected emotionally.

Instances of my compliance that were more positive involved me recognising the need to remove or negate my power somewhat, for example withdrawing from problematic educational agendas, explicitly siding with the young people, or listening and taking them seriously.

8.3.3 Mutual Success: Dialogical Collaborative Moments

Control and resistance, conflict and compliance were not the only performances that emerged from our interactions: there were times when we engaged in collaborative, two-way, equal dialogue and action. In the next extract we are discussing conflicts that the young people had experienced between them and particular teachers at school¹³⁹. This is a good example of instances where we communicated dialogically. The young people were very keen to convey this information to me, and were very animated, using my name to get my attention. In response I was listening intently and we were engaged in rich and interesting dialogue. I am fairly unrecognisable in the text and was using language similar to theirs. At the end of

¹³⁹ I: I mean you should never call erm school er pupils stupid, that's something everybody knows, you should never, yeah, I mean how do you feel when
R: that's bad

I: you get called stupid? I mean Steven called him a stupid puff so that's not good
R: see when we were at

I: uh huh
R: Rachael, see when we were up at Hogwarts [Their school] up at you'd see Gandalf shouting at him [Craig]
C: who's Gandalf?!

R: you not remember?... nah he used tell you were barmy, no TJ, TJ truck and you'd go "I'm not doin this" and [the teacher would say] "you're such stupid, you couldn't do that work anyway"

I: woah
R: saying that
C: Mr Y you remember that fight that, Mr Y put in said you're a daft (xxx)

R: aye, he looked like he was ready for a fight and that ken kept me behind in classes and like that "son don't you be lookin at ma face" and like that "right, what do you want to do about this" I goes "right you look like you're ready for a fight" and he went "what? [surprised]" an then he wouldn't speak to me

I: aye he would of cos, he'd have been
R: he's a fuckin bum boy
C: Aye cos I suppose, teachers get the adrenaline thing too

(YP3)

the extract I allied myself with the young people and empathised, partly because I knew the teacher they were referring to. In turn Craig empathised in a way I might that teachers might get just as frustrated as the young people at times.

These points of mutual success and dialogue were interesting and important. These rare moments of equal dialogue are what any PAR researcher or critical researcher would strive for. During these moments I certainly relaxed, and forgot that I was meant to be thinking about the next thing, or meant to be leading the young people to a logical conclusion I had already thought of. Importantly, conventional and even relatively unorthodox methodologies and methods involved in carrying out research seemed to hinder my performance, as the need to produce material that could be thought of as research and the position of researcher, carrying out 'expert' performances such as open ended questions, all diverted attention from engaging discussion and limited possibilities. During points of collaboration the young people too appeared to break down their barriers and desist for a moment from their strategies of resisting or controlling. I became genuinely interested in what the young people had to say and fed back in agreement, and the young people similarly were interested in what I had to say, and asked me about my experiences.

8.4 Analysis of Performance from the Special School

Once analysis had been carried out on mine and the young people's performances at the Youth Project, it became interesting to look at adult or teacher and young person relationships elsewhere. There were areas of my research in other settings that had implications for my account of performance at the Youth Project: in some ways these other areas had influenced and had an impact on my account above, and in some ways the account above led me to look differently at research material from

other settings. Experiences in mainstream classrooms for instance, as a classroom assistant watching interaction between teachers and young people (while at the same time having relatively little effect), were aiding me in constructing my account above of performance, as what I was constructing in relation to the Youth Project seemed very similar to performances I had witnessed or been a part of in mainstream education. Thus it became important to approach material elsewhere and to reflect upon and analyse it for performativity, for an account of control and power between other young people and adults. The account constructed below highlights some of the most insightful and useful analysis, which emerged from the Special School, that in triangulation with the account from the Youth Project, develops the construction of power and ways of being in education.

8.4.1 Special School

From the recorded sessions at the Special School I had reflected on the effective way in which the teacher, Chris, present during those sessions had communicated with the young people, and had felt at the time that they had used very collaborative methods. Much of the time the focus was between myself and the young people as this was a research session, but I was keen to involve the teacher as I felt they were more experienced at working with young people and they knew this group better. Though the basis for my analysing interaction and performance between the young people and their classroom teacher had been this positive notion of their ways of being from the outset, I began to problematise this idea as I reflected and analysed. Part of the analysis involved reflecting on why I had felt more positive initially about the interaction between the young people and their teacher than between me and the young people at the Youth Project. Despite the sessions at the Special School being organised by me, the teacher present had in some ways a more

powerful role, and in part the discourses described so far that affect the young people in ways that produce feelings of compliance also affected me. This and the account I have given of my immersion in education making critical reflection difficult, made it hard to meaningfully critique a teacher's performance: initially I was more likely to say uncritical positive things and found it difficult to say anything that might be construed as negative. What appears below however is an account of ways in which the performance was different, rather than 'better' or 'worse', and that these differences derive from context. It is not possible to describe deeply the context of interactions during these sessions, but the following description highlights some important features of the relationship between the teacher and young people at the Special School. Evidence for this account comes from policy documents from the school, my Special School fieldwork diary, and informal conversations with many teachers and staff at the school.

As an experienced teacher, Chris often spoke in ways that seemed grounded in a standpoint with young people and in dialogical respectful methods of interaction, and spent much time reflecting on and attempting collaborative dialogical approaches. Furthermore the demands of Chris as a classroom teacher importantly did not include a curriculum with subjects such as Maths or English, but a very flexible curriculum often involving reflection and discussion of issues the young people might be having in school. Tests did not have to be taken and the literacy or numeracy ability of the young people was irrelevant in this classroom. At the same time however, Chris was nevertheless a teacher in conventional ways: though collaboration might have occurred, he was still fundamentally in charge, and would be expected by the young people to make decisions. Were the young people not 'behaving' in ways Chris expected, it would still be possible to use discipline and

authoritarian methods: suspension and exclusion, though rare, was not unheard of at the Special School.

The following account is constructed from analysis performed on the fourth session at the Special School where there was much interaction between the teacher and the young people. Analysis was carried out in a similar way to before, reflecting on the relationship of power, control, resistance and compliance, while also reflecting on the differences and similarities from the account of performances from the Youth Project. The following section will describe analysis of various themes that emerged and were particularly important, that raised similar issues to the last section, or challenged and added to my account of performance.

8.4.1.1 Performance of a Teacher

There are often times, despite this being a research session and not a lesson, when a very conventional teacher performance emerges from the teacher, Chris. In the extract below for example Chris is reprimanding Steven for using his mobile phone, and is demanding he stop using it and put it away¹⁴⁰. There is great similarity between extracts like this and the ‘teacher behaviour’ I described in my own performance: in fact it was observation of interaction like this that led me to liken some of my performances to those of teachers. A very controlling discourse emerges, with the “put it away” phrase, a very definite statement, being repeated

¹⁴⁰ *C: what is it. Right aye put it away*

C: just put it away son. You’re not allowed them in schools other schools. Aye I

S:

xxx

C: know but just put it away. Right Steven put it away, or I’ll need to take it off you (tone changes to more stern). Steven, Steven you’ve got a choice put it away or I will seriously.

(SS4)

many times, with increasing force while other techniques are introduced to persuade Steven to comply. The ‘logical’ reason is given, that it is a rule, at least in other schools, that mobiles are not allowed, and a threat is issued that the mobile will be confiscated. Finally having changed his tone of voice, Chris speaks of a ‘choice’, though there clearly isn’t one.

Analysis highlights instances of the use of moral and logical reasoning, times when a particular line of argument is used to make a strategy more powerful. Below Chris is talking to Steven as Steven is getting excited and distracted from talking about school¹⁴¹. Again here what emerges in Chris’s performance is persuasion, trying to get Steven to comply with the aims of the session, namely to discuss issues of school and education. A moral discourse emerges in the “need” to participate in the session, as this and other statements from Chris at this point in the session were conveying to the young people that I ‘needed’ them to participate. The discourse develops arguing that Steven was experiencing “good things” (possibly the craft activity of making a school brochure), and so should follow what Chris and I want, perhaps gratefully. The word co-operation is used several times and is significant: the word can be framed and seems to be phrased here in a notion of ‘collaboration’, the negotiative kind of interaction I have described. However in fact what this word is requiring of Steven here is ‘compliance’, to perform in a way that Chris and I want him to: to participate in discussion related to school and to be calmer.

¹⁴¹ C: Steven come on, right we need to get this done, right, now come on your taking all the good things here but we need to, a wee bit of, cooperation here, Steven? Right we need a wee bit of cooperation. Right. Would your school be a strict school or a

(SS4)

During this session I feel the young people do seem to discuss issues related to school and to participate in the making of imaginary school brochures more than the young people at the Youth Project. However, there are many times when these young people speak in more problematic ways, and seem to be complying with controlling agendas of me and the teacher. The problematic ways of speaking have been described in Chapter 7, many of which came from this session, where the young people were creating rules and structures that they would like to see in schools as they made school brochures for their imagined ideas of school. Instances of compliant performance include obeying the teacher, for example when Steven does put his phone away after Chris had told him to. In the extract below the young people are becoming excited and are laughing and joking about ideas of school, when Chris intervenes¹⁴². The young people do challenge the claim that emerges, that they are not taking the session ‘seriously’, and Chris accepts Steven’s response that he is in a good mood, when other teachers might have argued this was not a valid response. However, though there are aspects of dialogical communication here, what is significant is that Chris’s statement changes the tone of the session for the rest of the afternoon. As Chris speaks, very quietly, the young people stop speaking immediately. After this point the session becomes much quieter and the young people engage in less humour and joking, and comply with conventional

¹⁴² C: *something tells me you’re not taking this quite seriously (goes quietly)*

D: *what*

S: *I’ve been taking it seriously from the start*

I’m just in a good mood

C:

you have?

Oh well, ok

(SS4)

educational performances of sitting quietly, completing their brochures and speaking mainly of education and schooling.

8.4.1.2 Listening

Listening is something that the teacher seems to perform regularly and in a positive way in interaction with the young people during the session. If Chris is talking he stops the conversation to answer a question, and seems to find it easier than I did to change the direction of a discussion based on what the young people are saying.

In the extract below Steven is describing a youth organisation called Fairbridge that works with young people providing support and in particular a lot of activities¹⁴³. The teacher, Chris, is attempting to explain to me that it is aimed at particular young people that “struggle”. Steven interrupts explaining the work they do is away from school and does not really involve academic work. Here Chris changes the direction he is going in, and agrees with Steven, repeating his statement. Again when Steven changes the direction of the discussion towards academic subjects asking the group which they dislike, Chris again picks up this direction, suggesting ways the young people could have more choice with subjects they dislike. This feature of following the statements the young people are making, and repeating their

¹⁴³ S: *aye Fairbridge that's well good that place man*

I: *yeah? Can you explain it I can't remember*

S: *a unit its you, you go in what you do like canoeing, paragliding, quad biking*

C: *one of the things about it is its people that struggle to*

S: *more out of school work*

C: *more out of school work right that's what ... cos for example, I know they do kind of, things like mountain climbing*

S: *what lessons do you hate? Maths English geography science, French*

I: *what about history, computing?*

J: *French, science*

C: *see at the start of school do you just go in and say, right I don't like these subjects I'm not doing them*

(SS4)

comments suggests Chris is listening to the young people, but more importantly is focused on following what they have to say. This is something that was often lacking from my interaction with the young people at the Youth Project, and I found when reflecting on the recorded sessions, that I at times I had ignored important statements the young people made as I pushed for communicating the points I was trying to make.

There are nevertheless times when Chris seems to actively ignore things the young people are saying. In some ways this can be interpreted as a conflicting theme in relation to listening, but there are subtle differences in what is listened to and what is ignored. Statements often ignored by Chris tend to be points where the young people begin conversations about totally unrelated issues, for example what they have done at the weekend, or times when some of the resisting strategies described at the beginning of this chapter, that emerge from the young people at the Youth Project appear. Times for example when the young people are making fun of something, or are making fun of someone. At points like this Chris often carries on speaking, repeats his question, or asks another question in an attempt to get the young people's attention. This could be positioned as dialogical interaction: it was times like these at the Youth Project that I often got drawn into engaging negatively with these strategies and that conflict occurred. Instances like this could be interpreted as points where the teacher uses their power in positive ways: often it means Chris is not becoming drawn into a conventional teacher role of disciplining or becoming angry, but is using his skills and controlling strategies to draw the young people back into discussion. However, points where the teacher chooses to ignore young people still involves control and power, and this rests on the assumption that the adult will ignore the 'right' things, and will not ignore important

negative experiences of school, education and of adults in general. The staff at the Special School conveyed (in particular during the staff group sessions), that they were aware of this and wanted to interact with the young people in a different way, to interactions the young people may have previously experienced, to give the young people positive experiences of adults and school.

Below Chris is responding to a suggestion from the young people that there should be more learning support in schools¹⁴⁵. The notion of learning support is discussed very often in education, to an extent that there are assumptions and taken for granted issues, and a discourse that were there scope in the thesis could have been described alongside discourses of inclusion or control. My initial reaction when reading this part of the transcript was that learning support does exist in school, and that this is a fairly obvious need in schools. My reaction to the young people simply stating that there should be support for them in subjects they are struggling with might have been to argue that there already is or to problematise the notion of learning support. Here however, Chris takes up the issue of learning support and the dialogue has a seriousness to it, where Chris reflects on the feelings of young people, sides with the young people in this group as well as those he has worked with in the past. In this instance Chris allies himself with the young people, validating their wishes, and

¹⁴⁵ C: *cos I know, a lot of pupils we've had before, and one of the things that they loved, was coming here, and it was because they got a wee chance, and it was some, there was pupils that could'nae were, really bad at reading and writing right? And it made it really hard for them at school, cos they couldn't follow the lessons, and they always fell behind, and they never felt they were getting anywhere and (I: mm), and, getting a one to one or, somebody sitting down and helping them with their reading or writing, made a big difference. So, that's, I think that's a good idea, that there should be people to help you, if you're struggling with reading or writing or French, there should be a way of, saying that and getting some help. It means a lot more teachers but, cos usually there'll be groups smaller groups then*

(SS4)

does not get drawn into dominant educational discourses that would suppress the idea that there is not learning support available in schools, and would suppress the ideas such as more teachers and smaller class sizes.

8.4.1.5 Dialogical, Mutual Success and Negotiation

Again these features of interaction happened often and seemed to be an important part of teaching practice at the school. Experience of being in classes at the Special School led me to believe that the teachers were in control and had more power, but tended to be more honest and open about this to the young people. While staying within teaching boundaries, they nevertheless pushed their strategies towards equal, respectful, dialogical relationships with the young people. I observed a lot of teaching by negotiation: staff would sometimes spend up to an hour negotiating what would happen for the rest of the morning or the week, or what work the young people would do. Negotiation could lead to any number of unplanned outcomes, which gave flexibility and room for meaningful discussion.

Mutual respect was often communicated about and performed, and it was something that came across as being very important to the teachers at the Special School, in that they were often demonstrating to the young people that they had respect for them.

In the following extract from Session 4, the young people have stated that they wish there were rules for teachers in a school, and the teacher is explaining that when he and the young people first met as a class, they worked out what the young people expected of the teacher during lessons, as well as what the teacher expected from the young people¹⁴⁶. The notion of rules can be positioned as problematic and in part a function of control, as has been reflected on elsewhere, and there are problematic aspects of this excerpt, such as the expectation that the young people should be “calm” and that the young people refer to the teacher as “sir”. However, there is a very different positioning here in the interaction between the young people and Chris than would be expected in a mainstream school, and it was something the teacher had enabled long before this session, when the young people first attended the Special School.

This teacher appeared to use less authoritarian dominating strategies than I had found myself using. He also seemed to use a more controlling approach at the beginning of the session, withdrawing control as the afternoon progressed. There were few instances where the young people spoke to Chris and he didn't respond and I could not find instances where Chris expressed opinions against the young people. At no time did he become frustrated or impatient with the group, and so seemed to get drawn less often into the role of a conventional teacher. There is a convincing argument that this was because it was a research session rather than a

¹⁴⁶ C: in actual fact, er I didn't, but we did that we actually worked out, some of the things that I would be doing, and some of the things that the boys would be doing... so as it was kind of that, right so rules for teachers I think that's quite a good idea. Cos if you can't like, be calm, do your work, respect other people, but you've also got beside that you've got the teacher will, not shout at pupils, will, be fair, right you've got an opportunity you can say well sir, you're not following your rules

(SS4)

lesson, and Chris's role was to take part rather than to lead. However, the performance here also seemed to correlate with interactions I had seen and been part of in lessons throughout the year at the Special School. As well as the somewhat informal nature of this session, I want to suggest that less conflict comes in part from more power. In similar ways to my account in the previous section, less conflict can simply mean more compliance from the young people, and that can still be positioned as problematic. Chris has taught for many years and so is much more comfortable in his role than I was in sessions at the Youth Project. This skill in performance and using more persuasive or even more collaborative strategies can still be positioned as a form of control, that can be positioned as problematic if an aim of pedagogy is to enable young people to be independent critical thinkers, or if the aim of a research session is meaningful collaborative dialogue and an enabling of critical reflection, for the young people in particular.

This section has described performance and strategies of interaction, observed and tape recorded at the Special School. It adds to and builds upon analysis from the sessions at the Youth Project, showing at times possibilities of more dialogical and conscientizing interaction with young people. It does however further questions of what kinds of performance can be constructed as collaborative and dialogical between adults and young people in education, and which performances seem collaborative, but in some ways can be argued to be creating compliance in young people rather than empowerment and enablement of critical reflection.

8.5 Summary

The interactions between me and the young people at the Youth Project are treated as being within an educational context. Our sessions were held in a building away

from the mainstream school, were not 'lessons' in which subjects were learned, and my aim was not to be a 'teacher'. However, education affected our work greatly, as this chapter has demonstrated.

This chapter has described analysis which looked at power in interactions between adults and young people in educational settings. It examined ways in which adults and young people become drawn into conventional roles of being teacher and pupil. In the case of teachers it is possible to become drawn into exerting power and control in an attempt to satisfy agendas, some of which are not necessarily educational, such as keeping the young people sat down and quiet. Analysis suggests that young people can resist this control, using strategies which offer them some power in a classroom situation, such as making fun of the adult or refusing to answer questions. These attempts at control and resistance on both sides, instead of creating dialogical, collaborative, two-way learning, often lead to conflict, disempowering actions from adults, frustration and anger from young people and exclusion of young people from education

As educational practices and assumptions position young people as incapable and vulnerable, as a researcher I was positioned as having to make decisions about the research before involving the young people, something that was also required by institutional assumptions of the University. The structural practices thus limited possibilities for more critical participatory and transformative work right from the start. The aims of the research at the Youth Project were to explore, collaboratively with young people, their experiences of education and to work together engaged in critical reflection and action. These aims became limited by educational discourse, language and practice, which in turn opened up an opportunity to explore and

construct and account of the extent to which education limits possibility for critical ways of speaking, reflecting and being. As we worked together throughout the year and during the last six sessions relating to education, I became drawn into conventional adult ways of speaking, reflecting and acting. I became influenced by the subject position of teacher and spoke and reflected in problematic ways. In terms of performance, what emerged was in direct conflict with the aims of the research. I often became drawn into attempts at controlling the young people and coercing them to conform, and often failed to listen properly to their accounts. The sessions were designed to be exploratory and led by the young people, but attempts by me to lead sometimes emerged. On occasions when the young people did not want to do what was planned such as drawings or writing, an informal discussion while we played pool would have been rich and informative for the research. However, at times I would pursue original plans, attempting to coerce the young people into doing the drawings or writing and the session would be less rich. Educational discourse and practices emerged in that I seemed to be trying to make the young people 'do work', and academic constraints emerged limiting me with conventional assumptions about what might count as research. The young people might be creating a drawing of something they felt was important, but I would interfere and ask them to 'label' the drawing. Dominant problematic discourse emerged in my interactions, occasionally explicitly siding with school and education, or arguing the value of something within constrained, problematic educational boundaries, and I would frequently engage in 'teacher' like behaviour and try to keep a 'seriousness' about our discussions.

In opposition to these emerging actions and educational discourses and practices, were the group of young people, on the one hand resisting in skilled ways, on the

other drawn into a role partially constructed by education and in some ways problematic. The primary agenda of the young people seemed to be ‘having fun’, an agenda that did not conflict with the aims of the research, but which did conflict with educational norms and practices that we seemed to become drawn into. The young people used resisting performances to avoid ‘doing work’. As much as the drawings and discussion became positioned as work by my attempts at formalising them, the young people saw these actions as things I wanted them to do, labelled them as work, and as such as actions to be resisted: with limits placed on us by education, we co-constructed informal actions such as conversation, drawing, story writing, into formal, conventional ‘work’, to be promoted by me and resisted by the young people. The young people were able to employ skills that education had compelled them to acquire, to resist my actions and gain control of the sessions.

In part these actions can be positioned as being co-constructed by the young people and education: without education’s disempowerment of these young people and its requirements that young people conform, the young people would not have needed to resist, rebel and to construct for themselves oppositional ways of being. Their resistance can be positioned positively, as challenging problematic assumptions and revealing to us fundamental problems in education, in short: “[giving] education a kick up their arses” (Craig, YP4).

As such a powerful institution, education also confines and limits possibilities for resistance, and for critical reflection and action for the young people. Education is so central to our society, and so powerful, and young people have so little power generally, that resistance is suppressed so completely. What results is exclusion from learning, peers, and no space for young people to reflect critically on these

problems or to act on them further than the opportunities they find for resisting. Conforming within education does not lead to spaces for critical reflection: rather it can be positioned as another, more subtle form of oppression where young people learn not to engage critically. However, resistance results in exclusion not just from school: without conventional 'academic' capital, literacy, numeracy, several qualifications, and an inclination to conform to hierarchical systems, young people can become marginalised and excluded from community, workplace, material wealth and all the structures that education prepares us to conform within. In relation to the research I carried out with the young people at the Youth Project, they resisted in very skilled ways, and at the end of each session I was often left feeling drained and deflated. However, ultimately, as an adult and academic researcher, I remained in a 'safe' position and did not lose opportunity in the long run: even though the recorded research seemed unremarkable at first, it has become some of the most insightful and richest material I have, and has allowed me to construct a significant account for a PhD thesis. The small windows of opportunity for resistance that are limited by education and were exploited as far as possible by the young people, while in school and when we worked together did not offer the young people a chance to make more critical and lasting change.

Chapter 9: Reflexivity, Ethics and Limitations: a Critical Community Psychological Approach

9.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity must involve an exploration of subjectivity in relation to the researcher and her research, from personal, to relational, to institutional issues and constraints which shape both the research and the researcher. This section on reflexivity attempts to be a creative rather than a prescriptive exercise, to perform reflexivity rather than to apply it. In the same way as many other aspects of my subjectivity and of the research, this section itself is a performance; a socially constructed description based itself on personal, relational and societal reflexivity. This is described by Stronach, Garratt, Pearce and Piper (2007) as a “performative reflexivity... avoiding static labelling”, constructing accounts of the various possible roles and selves which are themselves constructed socially (p. 180). As I perform this reflexivity, I am describing how I performed during the research, affected the research, but also how it affected me, and how change occurred in both the research and myself in a continuous circle. The praxis element of the research means I was confronted with my subjectivity by the research, which altered me, at the same time as I was altering the research.

Furthermore, the singular ‘self’, is itself socially constructed, emitting an illusion of coherence and simplicity. It is more effective to think in terms of several ‘selves’, as described by Stronach et al., several ‘me’s’ (p.181). Some of these selves were more dominant, positive or negative in relation to the research and groups of people, some critical or less so, and some enabling or a hindrance. These various selves fluctuated in continual movement, even conflicting, resisting or complementing each other, emerging and changing in different environments and through time.

So in relation to personal, relational and institutional subjectivity, there were

various factors which shaped and affected my 'selves', and in turn the research. Historically and culturally, the experiences I have encountered, and the place I have found myself in society have shaped me. The settings and localities I spent time in during research affected my 'selves' and the decisions I made in research. The expectations I had because of my subjectivity are a further factor: "what we find and the sense we make of it are always a function of what we thought we would find and the position we try to make sense of it from" (Parker, 2005, p. 27). It would be possible to be reflexive about every single aspect of one's life, examining every action taken in research. However, this would be too lengthy, too self-indulgent and not relevant to this thesis. One of the biggest contextual, cultural and historical factors I find has affected me particularly in relation to this research is my education. Reflecting reflexively, coming to an understanding of where I am in society, I find that to arrive where I currently am, as an academic researcher qualified more than most, has been in many ways a hindrance to this research. My undergraduate psychology degree with its emphasis on positivist, quantitative, experimental psychology has been largely a hindrance to critical understanding and has been something I had to unlearn in many ways. Going back through the rest of my education I find it has affected me adversely too. To even arrive at university means one has been successfully taught how to perform and conform to a middle-class, academic, passive way of life. I did not experience exclusion in school; rather I was for the most part obedient and submissive.

However, this path through education and place in society progressed me to this point, to a possibility of doing research and to an opportunity to be exposed to and to learn of Community Psychology. There are aspects of my subjectivity historically that have also made me resistant, questioning, subversive even and more

likely to identify with community psychological values. Too wide to go into great detail, these societal influences have included: growing up in a single parent family; growing up in an industrial city at the end of the demise of industry; growing up in an 'old' Labour community during a Conservative government and working from a young age as a youth worker.

Thus, together these elements of society coercing me to conform and challenging me to resist, have brought me to this point. Community psychology has enabled me to develop values and assumptions, to challenge the passive actions and ideas I have been taught and to build upon the questioning, resistant skills and critical understanding I already had.

In this way, and others described below I affected the research. Importantly however, the research also affected me. It only became meaningfully possible to confront my subjectivity, to understand the effect being middle-class, academic and conforming was having, by experiencing a relationship with the young people I worked with. Only by the conflict we experienced together, as different and 'other' from each other did I come to truly understand my position in a critical and socially constructed way. Furthermore, only by being affected by the research could my methodology be tested and reflected upon. The values and assumptions I had developed through learning community psychology could only be superficial until they were challenged by the research, groups of people I worked with and by institutional constraints.

In both these ways the research affected my subjectivity, challenged it, at times changed it and allowed me to develop the research accordingly. Temporally, the research and I changed together, in synthesis, creating and recreating new selves,

new ideas and new ways of working.

Over this period of research, different 'selves' emerged, described by Stronach, Garratt, Pearce and Piper (2007) as: "the generation of a series of research selves within the acts of research itself" (p. 181). These selves, as described above were more or less dominant or critical at different times and in different settings. The academic conforming self, developed from nearly a life time of education felt deep and hard to resist, and was something I had to reflect on often, not always successfully. The community psychological self seemed new but critical with a set of values and assumptions positive and enabling for the research. This identity developed hugely through the PhD, and seemed to ally itself with some sort of core resistant self that identified passionately with critical assumptions, ideas and actions. There also developed a 'stand point' self, in relation to young people, again which developed a lot during the PhD, largely out of experiencing relationships with young people who were resisting authority and learning from their experiences. Out of this came a personal choice but also a research decision to develop a stand point with young people, to centre the research on young people's voices that were not being listened to or acted upon.

As well as selves in relation to and response to young people, I developed a complex set of identities in response to interaction with adults in education, some of which I touched upon in Chapter 3 (3.3.3). There were times when I was positioned as a listener or someone giving support and advice, in particular with staff at the Youth Project and with classroom assistants at the Special School. To most adults in the field I was an outsider, someone with less power or in some ways more of an equal than others. These situations gave me an opportunity to provide some sort of

transformative support, to gain trust but also to learn and I found these relationships very illuminating. There were other times, in particular while volunteering as a classroom assistant in mainstream classes where I was clearly there with less power and was seen as and treated as a passive assistant, there to carry out wishes of the teacher but not to challenge or question them. In this role I usually found myself trying carefully not to assert any dominance or display disagreement, sensing the powerful institutional norms existing in a classroom and feeling powerless in that environment to challenge them. Though these experiences and subsequent reflection taught me a lot about education, from observing but also from examining my performance and feelings, this role conflicted sharply and directly with my stand point with young people. While it also conflicted with my community psychological self, the alliance I felt with young people was directly opposed as I found myself observing young people experiencing disempowering situations and anger but being unable to take action or to even publicly ally myself with them. This dissonance can be found in any research; the key to critical research is to explore, deconstruct and describe the implications it has for the research as well as for power and ideology.

With regards to power, one of the things that was challenging about my position socially was power. Understanding I had it in certain settings and in what way I had it, not wanting it, trying to reduce it, but at the same time studying it at personal, relational and institutional levels. These challenges, difficulties, subjectivities and conflicts are ultimately of vital importance to describe and attempt to understand for radical research.

Temporally, as I proceeded through the PhD, my subjectivity changed and

fluctuated, in part due to changes in settings and institutional barriers and constraints. During most of the first year in the research my time was spent reflecting and developing ideas for research. This strengthened my values and assumptions critically and gave me time to challenge my more conforming and positivist or academic identity. However as gaining access to educational settings and permission to work with young people took much of that year, it was not possible to be engaged in praxis, in trying to put ideas into practice and develop a more critical understanding of theory. During the second year, most of my time was spent immersed in educational settings, reflecting on my experiences and observations and carrying out research. Carrying out the research with the young people at the Youth Project had particular importance. Attempting methods such as participatory action research, conscientization, and problem posing dialogue challenged the ideas I had had relating to the theories, but in particular in relation to my own subjectivity. Arturo Ornelas (1997) describes the process of doing participatory action research below¹⁴⁷. However, the constraints and powerful dominating structures and discourses of education as an institution made it very difficult to reflect critically and at times my critical self was weakened as education exerted power over me and re-energised my conforming passive self. The academic institution of my university also affected my research, with similar barriers and instilling worries about doing research within a time limit, within resource

¹⁴⁷ *In doing participatory action research (PAR), you enter into the process as an ignorant. You start by recognising your ignorance and working with it. Only when you do this, can you truly 'know' your own ignorance. Part of PAR is knowing that you will have doubts and uncertainties, periods of 'fog' when it is not clear what to do next. They are part of the process. This does not mean that you are a mess of doubts. You do not doubt that you will have doubts! But if you begin, already thinking that you have the truth then it is not possible to find reality.*

(Ornelas, 1997, p. 145)

boundaries and within accepted perceptions of 'ethics'. During my final year these academic constraints instilled doubts about writing up radical research in such a conforming institution. In some ways had this not been the case, had I not been challenged institutionally I would not have been challenged to reflect on what knowledge is and whose interests it serves. During the final year, though critically I developed my values and assumptions and was able to analyse the research in a more radical way, I was not able to share this process with the people I had worked with. The nature of what I had been allowed to do and what kind of relationship I had been allowed to develop, in particular with the young people meant that I was only allowed access to them for a limited amount of time and could not be flexible or carry on the research past the end of their school year.

All these issues, difficulties and challenges both to my subjectivity and to the research are important to describe in order to consider the personal, relational and institutional influences on this thesis. In this way processes and underlying issues are made visible rather than overlooked, and reflexivity is performed to reveal patterns of power, privilege and institutionally constructed assumptions.

9.2 Ethics

This section on ethics will on the one hand reflect on what socially constructed ideas of ethics emerged and had an impact on this research. On the other hand it seeks to reflect on how a more radical notion of ethics can be constructed for this research in an attempt to retain a fidelity to the research and its participants.

Conventional ethical notions and discourse are wide ranging, from the policy set by the British Psychological Society and the ethics committees of universities to the conventional qualitative ideas of morals and individual responsibility of the

researcher. Rules set by ethical committees in universities and local education authorities directly affected this research. They are not independent however, but are designed based on national law, and our cultural and societal representation of what is ethical and moral. Conventional ethics is bound up in notions that the participant is weak and vulnerable and that the ‘professional’ psychologist has knowledge and power. When the British Psychological Society’s Code of Ethics and Conduct first mentions an imbalance of power between participant and researcher, it is to reinforce rather than challenge: “ethics is related to the control of power. Clearly, not all clients are powerless but many are disadvantaged by lack of knowledge and certainty compared to the psychologist whose judgement they require” (British Psychological Society, 2006, p. 6).

This notion that co-researchers, clients or participants are weak and vulnerable becomes even more heightened when working with young people, and is powerfully bound up in implicit societal beliefs that adults as well as professionals or academics know what is best for young people.

There are guidelines which are more critical and applicable to this research, such as respecting knowledge and expertise of clients, but most of the guidelines describe how the researcher can be in control of the research process in an ethical way.

Guidelines from national laws on confidentiality and working with young people, together with societal values and conventions then filter down to inform the ethics committees of universities and the ethical decisions made by education authorities in relation to research. While the intentions of these committees are to ensure good practice in relation to ethics, some of the structural or implicit conventions this research had to adhere to were actually a hindrance to the fidelity of the research.

Firstly the assumption that young people are vulnerable and must be protected leads to disempowering policy where adults become gate keepers: “when the specific nature of contemplated [research] precludes obtaining informed consent from clients or their duly authorised representatives, obtain specific approval from appropriate institutional ethics authorities before proceeding” (British Psychological Society, 2006, p. 12). Indeed, before I could begin working with young people I was required to apply for permission from both the education authority and my department, which entailed designing the intended research. Their permission was then only granted once I had permission from schools, staff and parents. Informed consent from young people was the very last ethical consideration and effectively took away all power and control they might have had in the process. As Hilton (2006) reflects in her research on education: “educational researchers often express concern about the procedures for undertaking research in schools, pointing out that pupils are not part of the initial preparation and negotiation” (p. 299).

In fact, much of the critical ethical process I describe going through later in this section was carried out as a response to these unjust process in order to try and minimise the inequalities they had created. Another area for concern in this research was that of anonymity. Again this assumes that the participants are vulnerable and in need of protection, in particular young people: “it confirms one of the prevalent images of those who are researched by psychologists as fragile human beings needing to be protected by others” (Parker, 2005, p. 17).

Policy on anonymity is strict and extensive, and seems implicit ethically. Had participants wanted to use their real names I believe, in particular with young people I would have faced many challenges in both my department and in local education

authorities. But in fact this is exactly what happened. One of the young people in one of the research groups explicitly asked to have their real name used in my research, and did so on two separate occasions¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ *R: I want my own name on that (points to the tape)*

(SS4)

Because I did not have permission to do this I was forced to explain to this young person why that would not be possible and discuss how it was not in my power to use their real name (see extract below¹⁴⁹).

This raises real ethical questions about this young person's right to a voice in the way they see fit, and a failing of the institutional conventions of ethics means that

¹⁴⁹ R: *I want my own name* *I want my own name*
I: *you want what sorry?*

I: *right, yes, I was going to talk to you about that the only problem with that Ryan,*

R: *are you no allowed but?*
I: *well, its not that you're not allowed its just nobody really does it because,*

R: *I but I do want it*
I: *but you do... Ryan wants to use his own name on the,*

C: *xxx [not clear]*

I: *I don't know Ryan I think*
R: *oh you don't want it then!*

I: *well no it's not that I don't want you to have it it's that other people will think I am being unfair to you*
R: *what do you mean*

I: *because, they're* *by using your name*
R: *aye but they don't know it's my name* *they won't know its my name*

I: *my teacher will though because he'll know its your name because..*
R: *how?* *Aye, I want it done*
I: *but. I don't like another name*

I: *well if I do another cool name?*
R: *no, I already put my name on it [his picture]*

I: *no no that's ok that's fine because nobody else sees that but I'm talking about is when I write a big report, and all the young people, in all the other schools have changed their*
R: *Ryan, Ryan*

I: *names*
R: *aye but I don't want my name changed*
C: *it has to be done*

R: *that's shocking that sucks*
C: *it's just that*
R: *well I'll be Ryan Giggs then!*

(SS4)

this research is not able to completely and ethically ally itself with the people who I worked with. Anonymity may be appropriate in many situations and often was in this research, but the underlying assumption that anonymity must always be employed primarily protects the researcher and makes it difficult for the researcher to support wishes of those they work with.

Even qualitative notions of ethics can be problematic from a critical community psychological perspective. The idea that ethics should be moral and value based is prevalent and is often connected to the idea that these morals can in some way be defined universally. Here the notion of 'moral' becomes bound up in societal norms of what is right and wrong, and perhaps what is 'normal' and 'other'. In this way much of the dominant discourse of ethics can become caught up in institutional constraints, in the same way that dominant educational discourse becomes bound up in power and ideology. Ideas that there is a universal or even country wide set of values for research forces ethical considerations to ally themselves with academic, middle class, dominant groups and ideas, rather than to ally themselves in a thoughtful and critical way with the community and the research. Certain ways of framing ethics then become outside what is considered normal and practices which may be ethically rigorous are rejected as other. This issue is particularly relevant for this research, where many of the young people I worked with were being excluded from the majority on moral grounds and were being labelled as 'other'. For this research to be able to describe these unjust situations it must be able to identify what is ethically unjust, even in conventional notions of ethics, and attempt to work in opposition to convention which is disempowering for young people.

Another common discourse in conventional ethical discourse is that the researcher

must take responsibility for processes which occur during the research and must be made accountable against a set of ethical principles. Of course the researcher must aim to make critical, thoughtful and reasoned judgements based on a set of assumptions and methodologies they believe to be relevant and pertinent to the community and the research. But to only assume the individual researcher is responsible, is to mask societal and institutional structures which affect that researcher and their work, and is an individualising and blaming approach. While this section does recount what steps I took to ensure my research was ethical based on my methodology and assumptions, it also considers the institutional constraints that prevented me from being more faithful to the people I worked with. Actions, discourses and beliefs are never unique and separate to the individual, but are collective and controlled by power and ideology in society. The next part of this section will examine the ethics of this particular research.

During the process of carrying out research a number of steps were taken ethically, some due to institutional requirements and some based on critical community psychological methodology. Ethics permission was primarily gained for immersion in each educational setting. This allowed me to develop relationships in the field and reflect on the context of the field. I was then in an informed position and had built up trust that enabled me to design research, together with the schools themselves that was more appropriate and respectful. Based on these designs for research I then applied for ethical permission to the Local Education Authorities and my departmental ethical committee. Once permission had been granted I could go ahead with research with staff, but still had to gain permission from parents of the young people. In the case of the Youth Project I had been able to fully inform the young people of the ethics process and they had taken home and returned the

parental letters themselves. In the other two schools the letters to parents had to be sent out before I actually met the young people, which was problematic. I described carefully what I hoped to do with the young people in the letters, and where possible followed up the letter with an informal telephone conversation. Informed consent of the young people was taken very seriously and was tackled thoughtfully, from a rights perspective. Before research began as much time as possible was spent explaining the process to the young people and why I was carrying out research. I explained that I wanted to learn from them what their experiences and opinions of education were, explained why I would like to use a tape recorder and explained exactly what would happen to the tapes. We signed a written agreement and they kept a copy. It is never possible to state that participants were fully informed, and these processes never run in a completely smooth fashion. When young people demonstrated they were unsure of my intentions for instance during taped discussion I would stop what we were doing and discuss it with them once more. On one occasion at the Youth Project this discussion lead to conflict and the young people were not happy with the tape being switched on. Accordingly we discussed and negotiated and the tape for that week was erased. This demonstrates something that is often not reflected on in writing, that ethically research does not run smoothly. There are tensions which arise and difficult decisions must be made.

I went through a similar process with staff, informing them fully of the process and the aims of my research. There were not as many ethical considerations for staff simply because they were more in control in their position in education in the first place. Nevertheless, any participants must be fully informed of the research process and my intentions were explained carefully.

The end of carrying out research in each setting came around the time of the end of the school year. As stated this meant that I found myself out of the research environment and away from the people I did research with. In many cases this meant it was not possible to involve participants in the process of analysis. In the case of the Youth Project and the High School however I did get the opportunity to take transcripts to the young people from sessions in previous weeks and discuss possible areas of analysis with them.

Once analysis had been completed it was vitally important to ensure that people involved were happy with my findings and could give feedback if they wished. In the case of the Special School it was possible to visit the school and discuss my findings face to face. With other schools or adult participants I wrote individual letters explaining what I wanted to say in my thesis, giving copies of transcripts relevant to them and including several ways to get in touch with me (SAE, email, phone). In the case of young people, there was no possibility of face to face dissemination. Again each young person was written to personally and given every opportunity to get back in touch with me and give input to the findings.

At the time of writing, to make the research more transformative and useful for the schools, dissemination of the research is continuing. A tailored report is being written for each school with input from them, aiming to answer questions they have in relation to my research and offering recommendations relative to the schools as case studies. I am also suggesting to schools that I might return and engage in dialogue with the staff relating to my findings and recommendations.

Other ways I have attempted to make the research ethical involve the way I have approached the work. Identifying problems in dominant discourse and institutional

structures have involved reflecting on making sure I do not collude with these systems in my own practice, thinking and discourse. How to portray people in a way that is not blaming, stereotyping, individualising or patronising has been a central matter in my work. I took care for example not to describe the young people as either perfect or deviant, in order to avoid patronising or labelling descriptions, particularly important when developing a critical stand point with young people. It was important not to assume participants were not homogenous to a particular group and not to be stereotyping, but rather to identify ways in which society constructs groups and divides people. Language was particularly important, especially in the context of such dominant educational and academic discourse. Conventional ways in which groups are described 'other', representations of experience or identity are conceptualised and the way the researcher is placed in conventional research were first reflected upon and then subverted. In these ways the research attempted to move away from colluding or reproducing problematic discourses and representations to produce more radical research.

In conclusion, while there were institutional barriers and constraints themselves labelled as ethical that hindered the research process, efforts to be critically radical involved careful, thoughtful reflection deciding what ethical decisions should be made in particular contexts with particular groups of people.

9.3 Limitations

Personal and relational limitations have for the most part been described in the analysis chapters, reflexivity and ethics sections, and are less critically useful than institutional, structural and societal factors. These not only limited my research, but affect other research and tell us something about education itself. This section will

primarily describe some of the institutional structures that caused limitations in this research.

One of the biggest hindrances to this research was that the young people could not volunteer and were afforded little control over the research. It made collaboration in some aspects of the research impossible and from a rights perspective made the research less radical. Because permission had to be gained from adult 'gate keepers' before I could approach the young people, a lot of control, as it does in all areas of education, remained with adults who were put in a position, by education, of making decisions of what was best for the young people. In particular the participatory action research I attempted to do with the young people at the Youth Project ultimately suffered as we became drawn into conventional teacher and pupil roles, largely due to our immersion in education. Had I avoided education altogether and chosen to approach young people outside educational settings, such as Youth Projects (not during learning programmes), I could still have asked them about school, but might have avoided some of the constraints present in this research.

However, had I done this I would not have spent time immersed in education, and would not have learned how dominating and controlling education can be. I would not have experienced these difficulties and so would have less to say about the unjust systems. In the case of the young people at the Youth Project, had we not experienced conflict and difficulties, I would not be in a position to describe in such an in depth way, features of power and resistance between young people and adults as teachers. Furthermore, many of these young people had learned while in school the value of self excluding. Indeed it could be argued that because of institutional

and societal domination, part of these young people's strong identity was to exclude themselves from mainstream society: reject it as it had rejected them. In the case of some of these young people, had they been required to properly volunteer for this research project, with its academic identity and mainstream adult researcher, it is highly unlikely they would have done so. To them this project would have seemed just as academic and negative as school lessons and teachers, and in this way these young people would have been excluded from the research as they are in so many other areas of their lives. This raises serious questions for participatory collaborative research, whether our model of it is radical enough to reach these young people properly. A lot of dominant discourse would call these young people 'hard to reach', but I prefer to call the research methods 'not far reaching enough', not radical enough to reach young people who do not want to be reached, in some sort of conscientizing enabling, but still respectful way.

One of the limitations that have had to be imposed on the analysis and reflection in this thesis is the scope of the analysis that was possible, due to time limits, the limits of a thesis, and the focus the research took. In particular, issues of gender and class did emerge from the research I did and are significant concerns in education, but it has not been possible to explore these issues. Any analysis or reflection would have been too lengthy or too superficial and so it was not possible to include. With far more boys being excluded nationally than girls, there are clearly issues of gender involved, which are complex and seem to involve not just differences in representations of the two genders, but also differences in the young people's experiences in life, inside and outside school. A further element to the research was my own gender. As a young woman there were issues related to working with the young people, both boys and girls, in their representations of me and in my actions

towards them. As more boys are identified and excluded, I was often working with young males, and our different experiences in life and beliefs relating to gender affected our relationships (not always negatively), and the way we interacted. Effects and divisions related to class also had a significant impact on the research and are considerable issues in education generally. Where possible I have touched on class very briefly, but to properly reflect on the matter would require much more time, and research with a different focus. As one would expect, there does seem to be class inequalities evident and maintained in education which cause greater exclusion of particular groups of young people. There was also an aspect of class in my research. As an academic, and interestingly as an English person, the young people identified me as 'posh', as they described it, and this had an affect on our interactions and relationships. There was not scope to fully pursue these issues in the research, but they seemed nevertheless to be important aspects of education and of doing research with young people.

Chapter 10: Discussion

10.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws the thesis to a close. It first returns to the research literature and considers: some of the issues with current research; where my account differs with others and why; and in what way some research literature describes similar accounts to mine. I then reflect on the research process that was involved in this project and what the implications are for the approach I took: in relation to praxis and Participatory Action Research (PAR) in particular. I then construct an account of meta claims and conclusions, that stem from the accounts described in Chapters 5-8 and relevant literature relating to research and theory.

10.2 Research Carried out Elsewhere

Very little research has been carried out that describes similar accounts to the one constructed here, which is I would argue, as Catts, Allan & Smyth (2007) do, due to the inherent problematic nature of so much research with young people and their experiences of education. Much research is blaming and dehumanising towards young people, particularly those in conflict with education or society (Hallam & Castle, 2001; Visser, Cole, & Daniels, 2002), and even within community psychology is often pathologising (Leenders & Brugman, 2005). Research often fails to re-position, re-frame, and unmask core problematic assumptions in education and in relation to young people (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Prilleltensky, Nelson & Peirson, 2001). The core epistemology in my research, in particular the standpoint with young people that was aimed for throughout, made it possible to construct an account that more critically examined young people's experiences, avoided labelling assumptions and challenged the status quo. It became possible in this way to re-position the young people I worked with, not as the 'delinquents' education (and much research) often labels them, but as resisters of an oppressive and

disempowering institution.

Much of the research reviewed also failed to use methodology and methods that might make possible a less problematic account. Research using positivist methodology, or even superficial qualitative methods such as surveying fail to gain insight into the complex nature of education, and furthermore often rely on fundamental problematic core assumptions in both education and academic research (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Leenders & Brugman, 2005; Prilleltensky, Nelson and Peirson, 2001; Williamson et al., 2005). The prolonged period of immersion in my research was vitally important as it allowed the context and people within to challenge the theory and literature, and allowed me to gain much greater insight into very complex issues. Immersion and research in several settings, and consideration of the research at several levels allowed for an account that takes into consideration the relatedness of structures, practices, language and performance that remains only partial in much research. Burman (2004), in her reflections on discourse analysis, stresses the importance of engaging in an account that situates the research in context, to describe “how it has come about”, thus locating the research and construction of knowledge in all (or as much as possible) of its context, in order to produce rigorous and compelling work (section 4, para. 2). Various elements in this thesis have aimed to develop a very comprehensive context that describes what the account is grounded in, to make visible its origins. This ‘visibility’ and transparency allowed for further consideration of the problematic nature of secondary education, as well as constant critique of the affect of academic institution and research assumptions. Much research elsewhere was not transparent or reflective of the limitations and barriers involved in attempting meaningful research. Much research does not adequately describe the subjectivity of the researcher or many issues involved in carrying out research with young people, particularly within

academic and educational institutions.

Where research was carried out in similar ways and with critical values and assumptions, accounts were similar to mine. The prolonged period of immersion and ethnography that Willis (1977) took part in was very similar to my work. Though he described working class culture at times in some negative ways, he generally conveyed few problematic assumptions about the young people he worked with, and did not appear to make value judgements about the young people's decisions, leading him to describe their 'counter school culture' as a resisting response rather than delinquent behaviour. Goodley and Clough (2004), by not working within education, were not able to describe institutional issues and problematic practices, but were able to work far more collaboratively with young people, even having the opportunity to use the real names of the young people, as they wished, in their research. Again Bostock and Freeman (2003) describe more collaborative and transformative research in their work with young people which they do away from institutional settings, although the work is likely to have been influenced by academia as an institution.

Araujo (2005) draws on similar methodology by engaging in ethnography in mainstream secondary education for 18 months. By drawing on prolonged immersion, and (though not communicated in the paper), appearing to focus on a questioning of assumptions in relation to discourses in education, Araujo constructs a significant account similar to mine. The study focuses on England and Wales, but describes a similar conflicting governmental discourses that promote social inclusion and social justice, while also encouraging problematic and blaming discourse on discipline. She describes the inequality inherent in discourses of 'indiscipline', suggesting young people from particular backgrounds and cultures are singled out, and that these young people are blamed: "it is not considered [for

example] that the school and teachers have a role in producing indiscipline, for instance through conflictive social interactions between teachers and pupils, or failure to resolve disputes between pupils” (Araujo, 2005, pp 246-247).

Howarth (2004) drew on a critical approach to carrying out research with young people experiencing exclusion that involved collaborative, dialectical and ‘young person centred’ methodologies. Considering a re-positioning of school exclusion that focuses on resistance by young people to exclusionary practices, she describes how dominant notions of ‘Black pupils’ serve to co-construct identities for young people that cause an internalisation of oppressive discourse that “invade pupils’ own understanding” of their identities in education. This notion is similar to the account I construct that young people experiencing school exclusion in Scotland resist, but are simultaneously affected by, problematic constructions of their selves that are perpetuated by education. Using constructionist theory, Lee and Breen (2007) also argue that exclusionary practices in school “potentially [contribute] to psychological oppression where the young people [feel] they [are] not deserving of school” (p. 341).

10.3 Research Process

10.3.1 *Praxis*

As described at the beginning of Chapter 1 (1.2.2) and performed and described throughout the thesis, praxis was a complex process in this research that was central to the epistemology, methodology and account constructed. It is the way in which praxis was performed, that has been made visible in this thesis, that demonstrates why key values and assumptions were held, why key decisions were made, and why the knowledge constructed in this thesis is compelling and should be taken seriously.

Praxis in this work involved an exploration and embracing of the very complex relationships at many levels between critical reflection, action and knowledge construction. These relationships between the three elements were countless (and unquantifiable) but they also differed in nature: at times aspects of each element, such as carrying out of a particular method or reflecting on a particular theory, were mutually dialogical, at times they were conflicting. Sometimes aspects complemented and sometimes they challenged each other in resisting ways: in all cases however the research developed and was enriched. Resistances, challenges or contradictions between reflections actions and knowledge construction, just as they were in research material, were attended to most carefully. That particular attention was paid to resistances in the actual process is itself a result of praxis: theories by Parker (2005) that suggest “points of impossibility” and contradictions should be viewed as particularly significant, and this conflicts with the idea in psychology that research material should fit into categories, with few variables and be statistically ‘significant’. Critical reflection i.e., the questioning of the taken for granted, led me to reflect that the process of carrying out research in psychology is assumed to require neatness, coherence, and the moving away from disparate phenomena and contradictions.

On the other hand, as Parker notes, points of impossibility require us to question, resolve and develop greater understanding and I reflected that an embracing of complexities and relationships between, paying particular attention to conflicting phenomena and resistance would allow for more rigorous and transformative construction of knowledge.

Action also played a vital role: for example few researchers have the opportunity to be engaged in so much immersion. This level of immersion allowed the people and the context to affect the research, allowing experience and action to more meaningfully affect reflection and knowledge construction. For example, attempting PAR at the Youth Project (reflected upon below) challenged the writings of Freire and methodologies and methods of carrying out PAR. Simply reflecting upon the theory would have been problematic: the experience of practice with the young people allowed for them to challenge these theories, to ‘talk back’ and for our experiences together to impact upon reflection and knowledge construction.

It is possible to solely act, but without critical reflection action becomes problematic. Education as an institution allows for little space and opportunity for young people and adults to critically reflect, and so serves to maintain its status quo. Reflection by itself is equally problematic: at the start of the project I felt that the theory on collaborative and transformative methodology would be in some ways straightforward to carry out with young people and would be very empowering. Had I not experienced how difficult it was to do collaborative research meaningfully with young people I would not have arrived at some of the conclusions below in the PAR section, nor would I have developed understanding about young people’s experiences and ways of being an adult in an educational setting. A crucial additional element to reflection was that it was critical. Careful reflections, not performed in isolation, where the aim is to question the taken for

granted and to expose underlying assumptions that conceal power relations that exist within society, in dialogue with experience are vital to good research. Without a complex, multi-level and multi-faceted relationship between critical reflection and action, knowledge construction is in danger of reproducing dominant problematic discourse and assumptions. In this way much of the research in literature that was reviewed for this thesis was found to be labelling and blaming towards young people and upholding of problematic assumptions, for example assuming that high 'attainment' and inclusion into schools are 'good' things.

10.3.2 *Participatory Action Research*

The research process did not allow for obvious transformative work, action or social change. It is possible to argue that there were small opportunities for action, and any research where the researcher is deeply involved with people in the field has effects on that field and those people. The account in this thesis is also itself meant to be transformative, as is reports to the three schools and dissemination to others. However, in particular with the young people at the Youth Project, with whom I spent a year engaged in attempts at PAR, community projects involving action did not occur: it did not become possible to challenge education in their community or school in a way that created change. The limitations of working from an academic institution and within the institution of secondary education were powerful and created barriers right from the beginning. Transformative action was made less possible in part by the institutional barriers we faced. A significant implication of this outcome however, was the possibility to experience and reflect upon those barriers, which had implications for doing research within an institution, with young people, but also served to expose the problematic dominating issues in education.

In attempting PAR, this research also raised issues about the methodology itself. The most significant issue was the resistance I experienced from the young people when aiming to

work together and take action. No doubt major causes of this were the institutional barriers, internalised barriers within ourselves, and the problematic ways in which the work unfolded. However, a significant issue arises on reflection of the core assumptions and theory involved in PAR. A way of being for the young people, given their experiences of education and adults, was to ‘self-exclude’: a part of their way of being in much of their lives seemed, justifiably, to avoid participation itself. As inclusive practices and participation in mainstream education, and through much of society involve conformity and can be framed as elements of social control, to resist this conformity is to resist participation. The assumption that people want to participate has been challenged in the literature, and Lansdown (1995) emphasises a “right to participate” rather than a demand (p. 29). However, the account in this thesis goes further, to suggest that the young people I worked with might actively resist the notion of participating, in particular in anything which appears similar to their experiences in education. If we examine dominant notions of PAR, we find ideas of getting involved, working together, creative means of expressing such as socio drama or art work. When considered from the perspective of the young people I worked with, these ideas for research and for social change seem value laden, grounded in assumptions that exclude the young people and their ways of being. The account in this thesis suggests that our notions of radical research are by no means far reaching enough to engage with young people who have experienced multiple forms of social exclusion and who have resisted attempts by education and society of control. At the point where one young person in the Youth Project no longer wished to be part of the research, the ongoing work with that group of young people was highlighted as being excluding in some way, most obviously for that young person. Working with these young people in adult dominated spaces, even youth projects, encouraging projects such as drama or pieces of art, and assuming that conventional notions of participation and action will be

attractive for these young people is limiting and problematic. Notions of working together need to be grounded in these young people's experiences, and need to reflect their ways of being, not adult, academic, or institutional notions of knowledge construction and change: not even the apparently radical methodology that appears to work so well in South America. PAR seems to have become privileged as a radical and meaningful method of working with communities, and is rarely challenged. Treseder (1995) does reflect usefully on both the barriers and issues that should be addressed in relation to working with young people, but he too fails to consider that young people might have valid reasons for not participating. Parker (2006) notes briefly that participation should not necessarily be assumed to be a good thing (p. 129). The claim made in this thesis however, is that our notions of participation and change are bound up in value laden assumptions about what constitutes meaningful participation and transformation. Radical research, which aims to involve transformation and knowledge construction, which is grounded in respectful collaboration, needs to engage in methods and approaches that are meaningful for the community, in this case for young people experiencing exclusion. This research does not offer an account of what this might look like: it was not possible to sufficiently ground the work in respectful collaboration. What it aims to do is challenge current assumptions and promote the idea that further critical reflection, discussion and meaningful research needs to occur so that work with young people challenges rather than colludes in disempowering situations and societal control.

10.4 Conclusions/Meta Claims: Control and Power

The issue of power and control emerged in this research as one of, if not the most, fundamental problem and taken for granted issue in Scottish Secondary Education. Power and control are described as having problematic effects at all levels, from legislation and

practices to the ways of speaking and being that are made available and dominate those who operate within. This came in part from the theory and epistemology reflected upon that positions power as being fundamentally important, but it was also very much research led, and emerged from a period of prolonged immersion and research. During this process I came to understand how pervading and problematic power and control was for those I worked with, particularly young people experiencing school exclusion, as well as my own subjective experience of having the institutional power of education affect me in problematic ways.

The fundamental notion that young people should be controlled, and are incapable and vulnerable is compellingly challenged by literature on the rights of young people (Boyle, 2003, Goldson, 2001, Lansdown, 2001, Treseder, 1995). Nevertheless, the necessity of domination of adults over young people is assumed so fundamentally in both society and education that challenging and examining it becomes very difficult. Education is not the only sphere of society where this problematic relationship exists, but its importance in all our lives means that education serves to legitimise and strengthen assumptions that adults must be in control of young people. As an institution it controls on mass, and to do this, complex discourses and practices are firmly in place to ensure that structure and order are maintained.

The banking approach described by Freire (1970/1996) is very relevant to modern secondary education, as adults have superior knowledge and hold information which can, if young people are grateful and accepting, be imparted and 'taught'. In this context the description by the Scottish Executive of low level indiscipline, such as interrupting the teacher or moving around class becomes acceptable discourse. It is not possible for a teacher to transfer their knowledge without quiet young people who are listening

attentively. One-way interaction requires the adult to be speaking and the young person to be silent. In two-way, dialogical communication the notion of interruptions or of a young person speaking would actually be encouraged, as in everyday conversation, rather than actively repressed.

Foucault's work entitled *Discipline and Punish* (1977) is an important critique of institutional forms of power, and their productive effects. He describes statements, measures, laws and decisions as 'apparatus' found in prisons, hospitals or schools (Foucault, 1977, p. 228). The account constructed in this research of practices and language within secondary education has many parallels with Foucault's work. The process of 'normalisation', found in various apparatus and institutions is described as being a fundamental strategy of modern society. Foucault describes the "corrective" nature of normalising and the polarisation of 'good' and 'bad' where behaviour and actions fall into one of the two categories (p. 179). Behaviour and actions then become distributed along a hierarchised scale, rewarding those who comply and punishing those who resist. The policies, practices and the discourse of inclusion can be viewed as part of this normalisation process, as a technique to control rather than the positive way with which it is often framed. Furthermore the notion of 'positive behaviour' described in this chapter echoes very closely the idea of rewarding compliant behaviour. Where actions fall into the 'bad' category, Foucault describes a 'reversal' of this process, from rewarding to punishment: in this way both inclusion and exclusion, rewards and punishments, are framed as techniques of control and domination (p. 181). In terms of punishment Foucault describes a move in the penal system from overtly physical and capital punishment, to more subtle attempts at correction, in particular of controlling the "soul"; of mind as well as body (p. 30). The methods of discipline and punishment I examine in this research are certainly more subtle methods of physical control involving where and when pupils can move for example, and strategies

such as rewarding 'positive behaviour' can be framed as attempts at a change in 'heart'. Notions such as 'co-operation' and language suggesting young people have a 'choice' to follow rules and expected ways of speaking and behaving position young people as being in control, but are in fact very authoritarian. What this research further highlights in terms of school exclusion, is the way in which it has become possible in education to marginalise young people from their peers and from learning as a form of punishment: punitive measures are bodily in that they can remove the young person, and they are mental in that social interaction and any opportunity to learn (despite its shortcomings) is removed for that young person.

Inevitably, as young people are excluded from conventional abilities of literacy and numeracy and from social interactions, it becomes possible, without the need for prisons or hospitals (though many will enter) to marginalise and exclude people from society, without actually overtly removing them. Furthermore, Foucault takes the notion of discipline a step further, in describing the "internal regulations of disciplinary power... to ensure that subjects adopt certain fundamental self-reflexive, self-monitoring and self-judging relationships *to themselves*" (Hook, 2004, p. 225). This research has described just such practices, for example in school literature when expectations of the pupil focus on self-discipline, which are framed in language of 'agency', of young people taking control, but when reflected on in relation to Foucault can be re-positioned as practices aiming for education's control and domination with less application and more subtlety.

Finally, Foucault describes a process of individualisation, the separation and differentiation of individuals which serves to objectify and dehumanise, which is described throughout this research as emerging from legislation, policy, schools and ways of speaking as individualising and blaming language and practices directed towards young people (1977,

p. 170).

10.4.1 *Inclusion and Exclusion Re-positioned*

My research has examined school exclusion and inclusion, and re-positions inclusion as a method of control and exclusion as an active punishment which involves exclusion from learning and one's peers.

Meaningful descriptions of inclusion emerged at all levels in my research. Academic literature focuses at times on inclusion to education as a right for young people (Allan, 2006; Araujo, 2005). There are also places in legislation and policy where language is rights based, and meaningful ways of speaking about young people being included in education emerged in most discussions with staff in all settings.

However, ways inclusion was described did not match up with practice. When examined carefully at a variety of levels, 'inclusive practices' are not always focused on social justice issues or equality. Engaging in prolonged immersion, in particular with young people experiencing school exclusion, an account of inclusion began to emerge that framed it as a conditional phenomenon and as a method of control. In legislation, the right to inclusion is 'promoted' but not absolute and throughout the research, inclusion into education for young people was dependant on them speaking and acting in very particular ways. From texts describing 'low-level indiscipline' where young people must not answer back or move around the classroom, to the discourse on 'positive behaviour', young people are only included into education on the condition that they behave in very particular, and in my account very problematic ways. In particular my research repositions inclusive practices, as methods of control rather than socially just. Material on 'positive behaviour' in policy is positioned as an inclusive practice, but involves coercion or encouragement of conformity. In this way many inclusive practices can be reframed as subtle ways of controlling, similar

to those described by Foucault (1997) in his work on the penal system as a moves towards controlling the 'hearts and minds' of people.

Inclusive practices can also involve quite specific cultural practices, more relevant to some communities and backgrounds than others: extra curricular activities such as choirs and orchestra can tend to be framed as equally inclusive, but may only relate to particular groups of young people. In this way inclusion not only becomes conditional, but it also becomes culturally and background specific, with young people from particular backgrounds potentially facing marginalisation before they even enter secondary education. Willis' work (1977) focused greatly on this, describing working class culture as being in 'opposition' to what he viewed as the 'middle-class' culture in education. There is an element of Willis' work that still rings true and resonates with my work: most of the young people I worked with were from more economically deprived communities and backgrounds. However, the young people I worked with were from more complex communities I would not necessarily describe as 'working class', not least because the notion of work being available is a questionable one. I would argue that marginalisation is not just about economic status either: young people from rural communities (in my research) or from Black communities (Howarth, 2004) for example experience institutional discrimination that conventional inclusive practices do not challenge but rather maintain.

Inclusion and inclusive practices within education are therefore re-positioned in this research as discourses and practices of control: the aim is not to be socially just, but to include only on the condition that particular assumptions are adhered to and I would argue the these assumptions relating to ways of speaking, reflecting and being are problematic and culture specific. The question in education should not be *are* young people included, but rather: *what* are young people included into?

Exclusion is re-positioned in this thesis, not as the number of suspensions and expulsions that the government problematically focuses on, but as a more general marginalisation of young people, a disciplinary technique at the end of a spectrum of corrective practices, that involves exclusion from learning and from one's peers.

A rights based position on exclusion rarely emerged in my research; that no young person should be excluded from their community's school is an idea very rarely spoken or written of. All legislation, policy, local government guidelines and school policies aim to include all, but all are clear that 'if necessary' a young person can be permanently excluded from their secondary school. All the staff as well as the young people spoke of the notion that permanent exclusion is necessary in some cases, except, crucially, some of the young people I spoke to who had been permanently excluded from a school. From a standpoint with young people, I would argue that it is never necessary or appropriate to exclude a young person from the secondary school they wish to be in and from learning with their peers.

The account the young people conveyed at the Youth Project was conflicting, but at times being excluded was conveyed as a positive experience. Attempting a young person's standpoint, I would challenge this. I do not argue that being outside of the school system is never a positive experience: there are many advantages to not having to operate within a controlling institution. However, I would suggest that much of the argument for exclusion being positive is firstly in response to the negative experiences the young people had within, and secondly at times reproduces problematic dominant notions. Undoubtedly, having experienced education in the way many of the young people described, leaving mainstream school is in some ways a liberating experience. However, the onus should be placed on education to change so that schools are liberating experiences: concluding that

the young people preferred to be out of education and that therefore exclusion might be a good thing would simply serve to maintain the status quo. Furthermore, the influence education had on the young people, in limiting opportunity for critical reflection and limiting ways of speaking and being, I would argue influenced their ways of reflecting on exclusion.

This influence seemed to emerge in two ways: on the one hand, a reproduction of the blaming notion that the young people did not deserve to be in education; and on the other hand a resistance to education's attempt to frame exclusion, and those excluded, in negative ways. The idea that the young people deserved to be excluded emerged at times, in particular in conversation with the young people at the Youth Project. However, other problematic discussions were reminiscent of this. When young people at the Special School for example were describing how authoritarian they thought school should be, the very controlling rules they set meant they would have been excluded themselves. This contradictory, 'point of impossibility' emerged often and suggested to me that dominant problematic educational ways of speaking were emerging, limiting possibility for critical reflection, that meant the young people were often effectively stating that they deserved exclusion.

The positive ways of speaking about exclusion also seemed at times to be a resisting response to education: as education positions itself as the virtuous and exclusion and excluded young people as the extreme negative, young people subvert this and position exclusion as a positive experience and education as a negative one.

What was further contradictorily problematic however was the way in which the young people at the Youth Project attempted to return to school, and at times spoke of wanting to return. This conflicts with their positive framing of exclusion, but resonates with my

argument that all young people have a right to mainstream education. I argue in this research that powerful dominating discourses of education describe it in so many ways as a positive institution and the young people who resist education as dangerous, extreme, and deserving of marginalisation. I argue that this limits so relentlessly ways of critically reflecting for young people, that even those who have had unjust, disempowering and oppressive experiences of education, at times reproduce those dominant discourses. Thus the young people not only described problematic issues in education positively at times, they also often described their selves in negative ways.

Exclusion, especially as spoken about by the young people I worked with, produced some of the most complex and contradictory ways of speaking. Positive and negative accounts emerged in relation to the young people, exclusion and education, within and between groups and within and between individual accounts. This very complex discourse I would argue serves ultimately to efficiently marginalise young people whom education has failed to 'normalise', and to convey to the young people themselves and to others that there was no other alternative but to exclude them and that they deserved to be marginalised.

10.4.2 *Difficulty in Speaking, Reflecting and Acting Critically*

This research has drawn particular attention to how difficult education as an institution makes it for both adults and young people to reflect and act critically. This was experienced by me as I carried out a prolonged period of fieldwork within educational settings and began to reproduce much of the problematic ways of speaking, reflecting and acting that education makes available. Very similar ways emerged from other adults and the young people I worked with, from problematic ways of describing issues in education to problematic ways of describing their selves and each other. Simultaneously, this language emerged in higher levels, in the legislation and policy of schools, local government and

national government. There were patterns that emerged in language throughout the research, at a variety of levels, and they will be described here.

To begin with, a core problem that was pervading and emerged countless times throughout the research, was language which was individualising and blaming, framed here as emerging from education but no doubt embedded in society in general. This problematic language was predominantly directed towards young people, in particular young people experiencing school exclusion, or as I would also term it, young people engaged in conflict with their school. The young people themselves also directed individualising and blaming language towards teachers. A key reason in my account as to why this blaming and individual language was problematic, is that it serves to direct attention away from core problematic, institutional problems, away from the powerful and controlling institution itself, and towards those without power or control. Without power or control over the way education happens, individuals such as young people experiencing school exclusion and finding ways to resist the system cannot be singled out as being the problem: the problematic structure was there before they (or the individual teachers) entered education.

A feature that emerged in several places involved the use of positive language in problematic ways. This featured heavily in written policy and legislation, from mainstream schooling, local government and national government. Language that a critical community psychologist might use, which appears meaningful such as social justice language, was often used in texts which are nevertheless fundamentally problematic and often related to control and power. Similar to this was the use of conflicting discourses or accounts (for example one meaningful and rights related and another problematic and control related), together at the same time or by the same text or 'author' at different times. The conflicting discourses seem to be employed strategically at different times serving to maintain the

status quo, for example: positioning young people as vulnerable and in need of correction, then positioning them as dangerous and in need of correction.

A feature which emerged in my research, but is also introduced in Foucault's work was the comparing of past and present, favourably or unfavourably, but importantly in uncritical ways which mask core issues. This emerged in research done at the High School and in Chapter 6 in relation to ways of speaking available to teachers, and was a feature more of speech than of written word. Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) how an assumption that the penal system has become more humane and less violent masks the controlling nature of more recent developments, and similar notions emerge in this research. In research carried out with the staff at the Special School for example, accounts that education is now 'better' as teachers are 'less strict' and punishment no longer includes physical violence served to draw discussion away from the controlling and marginalising nature of current practices of control and punishment, thus serving to limit meaningful reflection.

Another feature that emerged in my research, is named "reterritorialisation" by Allan, and often referred to as "renaming" by Foucault (Allan, 2006; Foucault, 1972 & 1977). This emerged throughout the thesis, but seemed to stem most powerfully from policy and legislation, where new language used to describe the same fundamental problems in education serves again to mask these problems and maintain status quo. New language, such as the renaming of Special Needs Pupils, to Pupils with Additional Support Needs, gives the appearance of change, but in these cases the language is often all that changes and makes problematic practices that have been renamed difficult to challenge.

'Backtracking' was a feature of speech (flexibility of sentence structure allows speakers to change direction mid sentence) and was a term I use to describe the speaker stating

something and then retracting or negating that statement. This emerged frequently in discussions with adults and young people, but was usually in relation to describing negative aspects of education, school or teachers. Staff at the Special school often began critiquing teaching practices, but would then move into retracting or negating the critique, finding problematic reasons for a practice or quickly finding something positive to say about teachers. Young people, in particular the young people at the High School, would often begin talking about negative experiences of school, but then backtrack by stating school was 'alright really' or 'not so bad'. Speakers seemed to find critique of education, schools or teachers particularly uncomfortable, in contrast with the ease that came with using problematic language in relation to young people (or teachers at other times, particularly from the young people). This is a feature that demonstrates in particular how difficult critical reflection within education is.

Finally, a further feature that made critical reflection difficult was a directing of focus away from core, fundamental issues, towards lower level, small scale, problematic issues. The emphasis throughout education of individualising and blaming discourses seemed to affect discussion that would begin examining higher level or fundamental core issues, but would be drawn further and further towards lower level issues. Discussing these issues is not problematic in itself, but rather it is the direction away from fundamental issues in education which is problematic and serves to mask core issues. For example, the Special School Staff discussed problematic ways in which teachers exert control over pupils, but rather than moving on to discuss what is about education that limits the relationship between adults and young people to a controlling one, discussion was directed to discussing small differences in ways of controlling, such as whether teachers should retain control over pencils or give pupils their own.

These features, emergent in my research and in other's work, are by no means presented as an exhaustive group of 'linguistic' features. What is important to note here, is firstly that these features emerged at various levels in very different educational settings, from written texts to speech from adults and young people. Crucially many of them were evident throughout my reflections or recorded ways of speaking: though I was attempting to be a community psychology researcher I found it very difficult not to get drawn into these problematic features. They are framed as features of a general, dominant, problematic discourse of education, which serves to maintain status quo and therefore requires critical and questioning ways of speaking, reflecting and acting to be very limited and difficult.

10.4.3 Young People

Education constructs a controlled way of being for young people that involves being compliant, unquestioning and unconditionally respectful of adults. This serves society well as young people move into adulthood having learned how to comply with hierarchy and not question or resist, having had no space or enablement for critical reflection or radical action.

Education further positions young people as *in need* of and *wanting* this control, which in part serves to justify its desire for obedience. It also uses conflicting notions to describe young people, on the one hand as being 'vulnerable' and 'incapable', and on the other hand dangerous and in need of correction. These contradicting discourses are used at different times, in different places, but serve further to justify the need for adults to control young people. For example, some rules in school are framed as being related to health and safety, such as not running in the corridors, with the notion that young people will not be safe if they are not ordered to walk. Other rules however, reflect more the need for correction and control of attitude, such as wearing uniform. Further rules reflect the danger young people

might pose to adults, such as being prohibited from leaving school grounds with the reason that neighbours may be disturbed (HS).

Education thus constructs ideas that young people are vulnerable, incapable, dangerous and in need of correction, that they want and need controlling, and that they should be compliant and unquestioning. This is promoted simultaneously with individualising and blaming discourses that position young people as being responsible for problems in education. Education is by no means the only area of society that constructs this way of being: notions of parent and child are very similar, and society generally constructs similar ways of being for adults too. I would argue however that education should or could be challenging these problematic ideas, but is instead not just perpetuating them, but is engaging in actively constructing and promoting them. As every person in society now experiences the institution of education in some way, it is a powerful tool for instilling practices of control and makes possible domination in countless other areas of society, something Foucault came to name “governmentality” (1978, p. 44).

Of course young people do not succumb totally to controlling practices, and even those who are positioned in my research as resisting fervently, are nevertheless affected by education and its desire to control. In my account, I position the young people I worked with, all of whom experienced school exclusion, not as ‘dangerous’ or in need of control, but as resisters of the dominant and controlling practices of education. Not only do they resist all the explicit ways of controlling, such as following rules and obeying in classes, but they construct resistant ways of speaking and being, and of interacting with adults. My own subjective experience with the young people at the Youth Project leads me to describe the young people I worked with as being extremely skilled at resistance and at taking control of the moment. The young people were able to employ skills that education had compelled

them to acquire, to resist my actions and gain control of the sessions.

This resistance and refusal to comply, which is positioned by education as 'deviance', has been undermined in literature and its significance challenged, as some argue that it is non-political action which has no transformative impact. I would argue instead that it can be described as critique of education, different but no less valid, and in many ways much more visible, than academic ways of critiquing. Importantly Foucault's description of critique resonates with the actions of the young people: "if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice... then critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination" (Foucault, 1978, p. 47). Thus their resistance can be positioned positively, as challenging problematic assumptions and revealing to us fundamental problems in education, in short: "[giving] education a kick up their arses" (Craig, YP4). This performance of resistance, and ways of speaking and being that resist dominant notions of being a young person in education (and in society) is not generally viewed as critique however, and I cannot argue that the outcomes of these resistances are wholly emancipatory or liberating for the young people: to do so would be to problematically romanticise the young people's positions. Firstly education does not allow space for critical reflection, dialogical pedagogy or meaningful experience. Education severely limits possibilities for young people to reflect on their experiences. It also relentlessly restricts ways of speaking, being and possibilities for action. Thus within education these young people found windows of opportunity to resist, such as taking control of a lesson through quick wit and humour, but more transformative action was not possible: they could win the battle but not the war. Resistance emerged in Willis's (1977) research in very similar ways. Despite being carried out thirty years apart, Willis's description of 'counter-school' culture, which involved avoiding work and "having a laff", with a general "opposition to authority and rejection of the conformist" resonates strongly

with the account that emerged in my research (1977, pp. 11 & 29).

At the same time, education is exerting influence over all, and the young people's experience of resisting was influenced by the educational context, evident in our discussions together. Problematic ways of speaking and being were conveyed by the young people that seemed to reproduce educational discourses. The most significant ways of speaking that emerged were the ways in which the young people positioned themselves that seemed influenced by very negative subject positions constructed for them by education, which is similar to the 'internalised oppression' described by Freire (1970/1996), and in Howarth's work with young people from Black communities (2004). Foucault describes 'technologies of the self', of 'self government' that forms part of his theories on governmentality. In this way reflexivity and self awareness are further sets of regulatory practices, performed in an often concealed relationship with governmental power, as "a human being turns himself – or herself – into a subject" (Foucault, 1981, p. 208). The account in this research did not position the young people as simply succumbing to describing themselves in ways that had been constructed by education, or in speaking and being in ways education wished. However, what the young people conveyed about themselves, what they seemed 'self-aware' of, was often problematic and blaming, and very similar to the negative subject position of excluded young person constructed for them by education. That they were not deserving of education, or inclusion with peers was described, as were stereotyped and exaggerated selves that involved extreme violence or drugs. At times their positioning of their school-time selves was more extreme than anything that emerged in other areas of education, like poison in a food chain, becoming more 'concentrated' and dangerous as it filters down the hierarchy. Though the young people resisted conforming and compliant subject positions, the power of education is such that it influences even resistant positions and turns them to its advantage, making resistant

selves extreme, demonised and deserving of exclusion, which comes to be “internalised by an individual, or used as a way of regulating and knowing themselves” (Hook, 2004, p. 262). This internalisation of oppressive selves emerges in Howarth’s (2004) research as internalised oppressive representations imposed upon young people from particular backgrounds.

There are two ways in which this research takes the notion of internalised oppression and technologies of self further. Firstly Foucault and others have usually described the positioning of a conforming, disciplined subject which comes to be adopted by individuals. Though education as an institution constructs this way of being for the majority of young people, this research describes education as influencing and co-constructing resistant selves as well, using its power to ensure that resistant ways of being are positioned as being extreme and negative and deserving of exclusion. Secondly, in focusing on conformity and compliance, Foucault and others have often neglected to consider forms of resistance. This research positions education as *co-constructing* ways of being and speaking available to the young people I worked with, not constructing it entirely. Though education powerfully affects those who operate within it, the young people I worked with were actively resisting, re-positioning and finding small windows of opportunity for defiance. I would argue it is problematic to deny that an institution like education is not affecting all of us, even those who have rejected much of its domination and were cast off, but equally I would argue it is problematic to deny agency, to deny that individuals act upon education and upon practices, ways of speaking and ways of being within. Rather I would argue for a relationship between, productive or conflicting, for a co-construction of meaning and continual and cyclical re-transformation between education and people. This was evident in my research, for example in the practices of mainstream schooling, where young people were finding new ways to resist controlling practices in classroom, and in response education was having

to construct further rules, such as the one for mobile phones.

10.5 Conclusions

The most significant issue raised by the knowledge constructed in this thesis is that of the control of adults over young people. In society in general adults exert control over young people in ways that are disempowering and limit ways of speaking, reflecting and being for young people. Education not only colludes in this power inequality, but promotes and furthers conditions of control. Inclusion is spoken about often in education and language and inclusive practice claims to promote equality and social justice for young people in relation to their belonging to a school community and to their learning experiences. However, this research, grounded in a standpoint with young people, repositions inclusive practices as instruments of control. Young people experiencing exclusion are often labelled as 'deviant' and ungrateful of the efforts education goes to teach them, but this research repositions the young people I worked with as resisters of control. The young people I worked with refused to conform to particular ways of speaking and being in education, using windows of opportunity to gain control and disrupt problematic educational agendas. In response to this resistance adults are required to perform disciplinary practices of varying force which are punitive by excluding young people from learning and from their peers, the most extreme of which involves expelling a young person from their school.

Notions and practices of control and discipline, of inclusion and exclusion, and of core assumptions that adults should control young people and that young people are vulnerable and incapable limit ways of speaking, reflecting and being for both adults and young people. Thus individualising and blaming language emerges frequently, and is directed primarily towards young people, in particular young people who are not conforming to education's expectations. This language emerged from both adults and young people in my

research. Importantly, ways of speaking and being emerged from the young people I worked with that seemed in part a resisting response to education, but simultaneously were grounded in a context of problematic, individualising, blaming notions from education that had been internalised within the young people, resulting in them describing their 'selves' in very problematic ways. Conversely, possibilities for critical reflection and interaction, as well as transformative change become very limited, with critical ways of speaking, reflecting and being rarely emerging from the adults and young people I worked with.

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Appendix A: Diagram of Time Spent in Immersion and Research for Three Settings

	First Year of PhD - one academic year of schooling: 09/03-05/04	Summer Holidays: 05/04-09/04	Second year of PhD – One academic year of schooling: 09/04-05/05
Youth Project	Immersion: Participatory Observation as a Member of Staff	Planning and designing PAR	Participatory Action Research Recorded research (PAR)
Special School	Gaining permissions and access		Immersion: Participatory Observation as a Support for Learning Assistant Recorded Research
High School	Gaining permissions and access		Immersion: Participatory Observation as a Support for Learning Assistant Recorded Research

Appendix B: Preparatory Plans for Sessions at Youth Project

Contents:

Personal and Social Development Course Overview

Session 1: Introductory Session

Session 2: Making Ground Rules

Session 3: Conforming vs. Rebellious

Session 4: Consequences

Session 5: Being Included and Taking Part

Session 6: Teenagers around the World

List of Ideas for Activities after Sessions

The preparatory plans were designed to look enough like lessons that the school would feel satisfied, entail critical, conscientizing problem posing ideas, and be informal enough for the young people to feel they could read them and use them.

Steven's Bad Day: Story written for recorded Session 3 (YP3)

Overview of Personal and Social Development Course

Time Length

6 Introductory Sessions, 9/10 Development Sessions (dependant on success of first six), weekly Advanced Sessions in second and third terms (dependant on previous success)

Introduction

This course is designed to be a personal and social development course. It aims to enable the young people to expand their knowledge of themselves, society around them and the relationship between the two. It also aims to show them how all these situations can be improved.

Goals of Course

To increase the confidence and self esteem of the young people

To be enjoyable

To enable the young people to improve on various skills such as:

working together

problem solving

listening to each other

planning

evaluative and critical thinking

self awareness and empathy

praxis ie. reflection and action

To be useful to the young people – the opportunity to gain the core skills; ‘Working With Others’ and ‘Problem Solving’

To learn about the experiences and opinions of these young people

Body of Course

The first six sessions are organised using structured lesson plans. These are:

Introduction

Setting Ground Rules

Conforming vs Rebellious

Consequences

Being Included and Taking Part

Teenagers around the World

These are all designed to initiate practise in all of the skills listed above. They challenge the young people to think about what happens every day in our lives and the choices that we make. They also challenge them to think about others around them and in the wider world, as well as themselves.

If these sessions are successful, the next stage will develop these skills. The young people will become very much part of the planning process for the course, by choosing from a range of activities what they want to do each week. Activities will involve expanding on their skills, completing small projects, and taking the 'Working With Others' and 'Problem Solving' core skills units. Ideas for the activities and projects will be well thought out in advance, with enough flexibility for the young people to be able to make informed, independent decisions. Ideas include:

Short, relaxing, group-work activities:

Research & make collage on favourite sports team

Music or film quiz

Design a Graffiti wall (on paper)

Making papier mache skulls, masks or heads

Origami

Frisbee

Computer Games

Pool Tournament

Card games

Board Games

Penalty shoot-out

Football

Swimming

Projects

Drama – could write, produce and perform plays. One idea would be to do 2 scenes in a classroom – what happens in a bad situation (people shouting etc) and what they have decided is a better situation

Film Making – could produce a film on subjects such as – what they do in Their town, What school was like, or what other young people think of school/The town

Pen Pals – they could find and write to pen pals who are teenagers their age who are in very different situations to them

Open Day – they could plan an open day for parents, friends and teachers to show what they've done. They could organise invitations, the programme of events etc.

Interviewing – could interview each other/other friends/parents on their experiences of school/Their town/the workplace

Media analysis (fulfils criteria for an SQA unit) – would involve collecting local/national/international articles or other forms of discourse, discussing and analysing them as a group (with a predefined topic in mind such as what do people say about young people in the media), and presenting their findings, either in a presentation or writing

Photography – get in equipment and someone who can teach them how to use it, then they could plan in advance what pictures they would like to take etc, possibly around a theme

The course will be under constant re-evaluation, and is therefore designed to be very flexible. After Christmas, it is hoped (but not assumed) that the young people will feel able to undertake more advanced projects. This may be extensions of projects they have already done, such as a larger open day or more complex drama. It is hoped that the young people will feel confident enough by this stage to make most decisions about the structure of the course.

Evaluation of Course

Evaluation of the course will be done on a monthly basis. On the one hand it will be necessary to re-evaluate with the young people in order to get valuable feedback from them. On the other hand evaluation will occur with staff members on the scheme to decide whether the goals of the course are being achieved.

Session 1: Introductory Session

Expected Length 1-2 hours

Materials

White board and marker pens

For Activity:

A Football, or;

Small balloons, blown up

Strips of paper

Glue paste

Aim

The aim of this session is simply to introduce the course, set the tone, and then move on to something fun and team building.

Skills Used

Listening and concentrating skills; thinking about self; group work (football)/ individual creative work (making skulls).

Introduction:

This session will begin with a sit down and talk about what these afternoons will be about etc.

The first task will be for me to introduce myself to the group. I'll explain that I've worked on this programme on and off for 2 years with the other young people that came here. I'll also say that I'm a student at the university, and that I am learning about young people and how they feel about school and their lives. For me to learn this I can't read books and write essays – I need to be taught what young people think by young people, and that's where the group comes in. In a normal classroom the teacher teaches the pupils and the pupils are expected to learn things – without any choice. In this group the young people are gonna teach me just as much or more than I will teach them – there are things that I can teach them, but its really important that they teach me things as well.

I'll then go on to demonstrate this. On the white board, I'll make 2 columns. One about what we're good at and know a lot about, and one for things we're not very good at and don't know a lot about. Things that the young people might say they are bad at are things like maths and English, and I might try and coax them to say things like working together. Things they will hopefully say they are good at and know a lot about are things like sport, music, football, school life, smoking, drinking, etc. I'll also point out that in some way they know a lot about themselves, in other ways they don't, and put it in the middle. At this point I'll do me – I might know a lot about maths and English, because I've done so much 'school time'. However, these things won't be important in these afternoon sessions, so it's not important that I'm good at them or that the young people are not so good at them – so I cross them off the board. On the other hand, I know nothing about their lives, which is going to be a really important 'subject' in these sessions, so I am disadvantaged. Also, because I'm old now, I don't know a lot about school, even less about their school, and absolutely nothing about their time there, so they really

are going to have to teach me in these sessions. The one thing I do know about, that I can help them with, is how groups need to work so that they can talk without falling out, or work together on things. I know these things because I am a youth worker, and have to work with people without falling out all the time, so I can show them how to do this. So things like how to work together, concentrate, think about ourselves and the world can go in the column that I'm good at. This means that we all have things we can teach, and we are bad and good at different things – that means we need each other and can learn loads if we work together. Finally, one thing I especially want to emphasise, is that because I'm older, one of my weaknesses is listening to young people. That needs to go on my bad column, because its really hard for older people to listen to younger people – they need to be aware of this, and they need to make sure I'm listening to them, and remind me if I'm not.

What We're Good at and Know Alot About	What We're Not Very Good at and Don't Know Alot About
Football Music Films, Computer Games Art Life at school Maths English Working together	Maths English Working Together, Concentrating, etc. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Ourselves</div> Knowing about your lives and your school Listening

Development

The next thing is to discuss the whole course. Everything that's written and planned for the course will be on the table for them to read, and I'll explain it all carefully. the title of the course is Personal and Social Development. The idea behind this is that if they want to they can develop their skills, on the one hand personally, as individuals, and on the other, socially, in relation to their peers, family and the wider community. These are skills such as working in a group, concentrating, listening, but most importantly thinking about what they have done in life, and what they want to do in the future. These aren't just wholly skills, they are really important – you need these things when you go to work, and they are part of growing up and becoming an adult – lots of adults don't even have them but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try and get them – at the youth project we want nothing but the best for all the young people, and we want them to want the best for themselves. Because of this, the relationship we're all gonna have in these sessions (and in the rest of the week) is an adult one – I will respect and trust them and treat

them like adults. For the first few weeks, we need to get to know each other, and learn how to work together; we also need to do things like set ground rules, so for the first few weeks I've planned things that we can do. After that, it's up to the young people what we do – there are loads of projects we can do (which they'll be looking at by now), ideas that I've had where we can have fun but also learn lots from each other – we can also make up new ideas. The young people can change the title of the course, decide what we will do for the month at the beginning of each month, or just decide the week before. We can do things that are easy at first and then maybe work up to harder projects, some of which we can get qualifications from. Eventually, if we all manage to work together – which won't be easy – we might decide to talk about our past experiences in life, and what we want out of the future. Although it's not very nice to talk about, people in This town have a certain opinion about the young people in the group. It's time to prove them wrong. We can do that in these sessions – we can show them that they just never gave us a chance, and that they should have listened more – we can even try and change things in This town so that younger groups of young people do get listened to. All this is up to the young people in this group – we won't go faster or slower than they want to. Taking part in this group is entirely voluntary, and one of the computers will always be turned on so that if anyone feels uncomfortable and doesn't want to join in that week they can go on the computer instead – explain the boundaries of this as set out on overview.

Next introduce the idea of the diary. At the end of each session I'm going to write down what happened that day. This is my interpretation of what's happened, how I thought things went, etc, and not the definite truth. I'm then going to leave the diary at the youth project all week. This means that the young people can read it whenever they want to, and also, can write in it. Stress that it would be better for them to put useful things in it, like how they thought the session went, or if they disagree with me, and why. However, I'm not going to tell them off no matter what they put in it (as long as its not nasty things about other people) – they can do what they like with it as it's theirs as much as it is mine.

Conclusion

Make sure they have understood everything and go over what they can do for the next 5 weeks. Especially emphasise that next week we'll be looking at ground rules, making our own and finishing/making papier mache skulls, and show them the lesson plans. After that, its time for something fun!

Opt Out/End of day Activity

For the rest of the afternoon, either play football (dependant on the weather) or do the first stage of the Papier Mache skulls (see lesson plan)

End the day with the talking pen – one thing we have learned and one thing we enjoyed.

Session 2: Making Ground Rules

Expected Length 1-2 hours

Materials

Pictionary game

White board

Coloured white board pens

Laminate made-up Pictionary rules

Laminate rule ideas and blank card

For Activity:

Scissors

Paints and Brushes

Masking Tape

Or, if 1st stage not done last week:

Mache Glue

Strips of paper

Small blown up balloons

Aim

Ground rules are an important part of group work as they help to create an environment that is non-threatening where people feel free to talk about their opinions, share ideas and experiences. Confidentiality is very important for some group discussions. Also by giving us the opportunity to be involved in the setting of ground or boundary rules it helps us to share the responsibility of the successful running of the group. It is important we all understand the ideas behind ground rules and make sure everyone gets a say. Some ground rules might relate to practical aspects, like when to have a break etc., whereas others may be about how the group should discuss things. It is often useful to have 'To also have fun' or to 'Have an enjoyable time' on the list of ground rules as well so that there are 'positive' rules as well as 'negative' ones. It is good to mention that once the list has been made that it is not closed and that other points and issues can be added if they arise during the sessions

Skills Used

How to set ground rules; which rules are appropriate for different settings; which rules are unnecessary/inappropriate in different settings

Working in a group to an achievable outcome

Critical thinking, relating to rules which have been imposed on the young people and those which they deem important etc.

Listening, communicating, concentrating.

Introduction

Begin by summarising last week – who I said I was; what the course will be about; what we will and will not be learning on the course; some set boundaries we will have to have etc.

Next start the session with a game of Pictionary. After the game has got going, introduce one or some of the following useless rules:

Have to Draw with a certain coloured pen

Not allowed to draw arrows

Have to stand on one foot

Can't draw horizontal lines

Have to draw with other hand

Can't draw vertical lines

Do this by getting each person who goes up to play a round to pick a rule from the pile, then stick it up on the board to remind them.

After ½ an hour to an hour, we can discuss rules. Talk about the rules needed to play Pictionary, and talk about why it has to have them for the game to work. Then move on to discuss the useless rules I added to the game. Discuss the fact that they were not needed to play the game, and that although some of the rules may have made the game fun, in other places useless rules make things worse.

Discuss settings where there are rules, such as school, board games, the law, when driving. Think of lots of rules that are important in these settings and why, eg driving rules stop people getting hurt, laws let everyone live together peacefully and you need rules to play board games. Then pick school as an in depth topic. List all the rules your school has and discuss which ones are good and useful, and which ones are bad and not useful. Discuss these with an emphasis on the school needing change that could happen

Development

Now we can make our own ground rules for the PSD course. Discuss each rule, and decide whether it is going in the pile that will become the groups set of ground rules. Some will need more discussion than others. Confidentiality in particular will need explaining, emphasising the projects policy (that if the young people tell us about something that might be harming them or others we might have to tell someone else, but that we would discuss it with them 1st). Emphasise that the rules are made by us, so its up to all of us to keep them – also that if we feel they should be changed/added to at any time then we can do that.

Possible Rules:

Confidentiality is important
People do not interrupt or laugh at each other
You do not have to join in if you do not want to
Give respect and listen to other people's views
Start and finish on time
Have an enjoyable time
Respect each other
Be specific
One person talks at a time
Be punctual
Don't judge others
Be supportive of the other group members and what they have to say
Keep discussion relevant
No mobile phones
Everyone is equal
Disagree with ideas, not people
Keep an open mind
Ask questions
Be yourself

Conclusion

End the day by rounding up what's been said. Include that some rules are necessary, while others seem a bit stupid. Sometimes we have to follow rules in order to get what we want. Also mention that the rules we made today are going to be up on the wall, and that if we think it's important, we can change them at any time.

Opt Out/End of day Activity

If there is time, cut to size and paint the skulls (see plan for papier mache) or, if not done last week, start the skulls.

End the day with the talking pen. Pass it round and everyone had to say one thing they enjoyed and one thing they learnt.

Session 3: Conforming vs Rebelling: Graffiti Painting

Expected Length – 1-2 hours

Materials

White board and marker pens

Statements on card

For Activity:

Pens, pencils

Scrap paper

Aim

For us to start thinking about what conforming and rebelling mean, and partly how they often relate to sticking to rules.

Skills Used

Working together; critical thinking; enforcement of new group rules; thinking of self and others.

Introduction

Before starting this week's session go over the ground rules we made last week, and how we made them – have them displayed on the wall today and each week.

Introduce by looking at what the two words mean. Put pieces of card out with the following statements and try to put the statements into the right category:

Conforming

Sticking to the rules

Doing what others do

Doing what others want you to do

Doing as you're told

Not being rebellious

Fitting in

Rebelling

Going against what others do

Breaking the rules

Doing things others wouldn't do

Doing things others disapprove of

Being rebellious

Choosing not to fit in

Not thinking about your actions – this statement can fit in either column, and is important to discuss – people who just go along doing what everyone else does aren't necessarily thinking about their actions either. Once you look closely at some of the other statements as well, you can see that some of those don't easily fit either – doing what others do might be seen as rebelling if you're breaking the rules with other people. Discuss these using a few examples, for instance people often break rules/the law because other people are doing it.

Development

Next we need to think about lots of ways people conform or are rebellious. All these will be used next week when we discuss consequences, so write them either on the board or sheets of paper. Talk briefly about each one, deciding whether it is a more conforming or rebellious thing to do. Also talk about the good things and bad things about each action, and about conforming and rebelling in general.

Examples are:

Paying for the bus	Getting really drunk
Vandalising buildings	Smoking
Eating McDonalds	Graffiti
Getting into a fight	Going to school
Sticking to all the rules	Avoiding going to school

Conclusion

Go over the definitions we decided for conforming and rebelling, and that some of them fit into both categories. Also show the examples we just came up with, and remind everyone that we'll be using these examples next week to look at what consequences can happen from these actions.

Opt Out/End of Day Activity

Move on to the activity – making a graffiti wall – something rebellious but also without breaking any rules. The idea will be that we eventually make huge sheets of paper with really good graffiti on them, to put in our bedrooms for instance. Today won't be enough time for the whole thing, but is enough time to design what we're going to paint.

Using pencils or pens, we can draw out our ideas first on pieces of scrap paper, just as graffiti artists do, using the examples from the internet as ideas.

At the same time we can talk about where graffiti comes from, and maybe discuss some of the questions below:

Possible Discussion Questions

Why do people dislike Graffiti?

Who do we think wrote each of these pieces of writing?

Why do people do graffiti?

What are the bad things about it?

What could people do instead of graffiti?

End the day with the talking pen. Pass it round and everyone had to say one thing they enjoyed and one thing they did for someone else in the past week.

Session 4: Consequences

Expected Length – 1-2 Hours

Materials

White board and marker pens

For Activity:

Paint, Pens, Pencils

Rolls of paper

All materials from last week

Aim

To get us all thinking about what happens when you rebel or conform; what the positive and negative consequences are.

Skills Used

Critical thinking, about self, others and society; working together; problem solving.

Introduction

This week we're going to go over the types of conforming and rebelling we looked at last week, and discuss the consequences. Consequences are all the things that could happen, bad or good, if you choose to do a particular thing.

First go over what we did last week, looking at the meanings we had for conforming and rebelling, and the other things that we wrote down.

Development

So on big pieces of paper, we need to choose some of the actions we thought of last week. We can write around them the good and bad things about doing them, and what might happen if we did do them.

Conclusion

Once the paper is filled with ideas, we need to step back from everything in the last 2 sessions, and decide what we've been discussing. Some things we might come up with; rebelling is fun, but it can have some bad consequences; conforming keeps you out of trouble, but it can be very boring; it is ok to be a bit rebellious but sometimes there are good reasons why we have to conform, even if we don't agree with the rules.

Opt Out/End of day Activity

Now it's time to finish what we started with the graffiti. All our designs need transferring onto the large rolls of paper, and then need painting. It might be easier to draw, or even trace the designs on first, and then add colour to them with paint.

We could carry on talking about the stuff we've learned, but it might also be nice to just forget serious stuff and get some painting done!

End the day with the talking pen. Pass it round and everyone had to say one thing they learned and one thing they enjoyed at the weekend.

Session 5: Being Included and Taking Part

Expected Length 1-2 hours

Materials

White Board

Marker Pens

Role Cards

Statement Cards

For Activity:

Scissors, Paints, Brushes, Masking Tape

Or – Uno cards

Aim

That we explore some of the barriers to being included and participating, that we understand both of these concepts, and that we can relate them to our own lives.

Skills Used

Critical thinking; thinking about others; thinking about self; working together; problem solving.

Introduction

Start the afternoon with rounding up what we did last week – the consequences of rebelling or doing as you're told. Remind that; rebelling is fun, but it can have some bad consequences; conforming keeps you out of trouble, but it can be very boring; it is ok to be a bit rebellious but sometimes there are good reasons why we have to conform, even if we don't agree with the rules.

Development

Two people need to stand at the board with markers. The group is given the 2 role cards, of Patrick and Steven. They have to think how much the 2 characters can take part in things. Each time a statement is read out, the group has to decide how much the 2 characters can take part, and then get the 2 people at the front to each draw part of their person – the characters either get a large, small, or no body part, depending on how much they would be able to take part – discuss at the end, how much each character could take part and why, with the emphasis being on other people being at fault. So for example, Patrick can't go bowling on a Saturday, but Steven can – so perhaps Steven gets drawn a head – the drawings can be as silly and as rude (inevitably) as the young people like! If need be, use some of the following discussion points:

Who got the most body parts? Why?

How do you think it feels when you can't take part?

What could have been done to make the characters be more included?

Choose one character and discuss what could be done to allow him or her to join in.

Who is to blame for either character not being able to join in?

Statements: Can you join in?

- All your friends want to go bowling on Saturday. Can you join in?
- Your English teacher wants you all to do an internet research assignment at home and assumes you all have the internet. Can you join in?
- Your school wants you all to go to France on an exchange programme – the trip will cost £100 and last 2 weeks
- A questionnaire is sent round primary and secondary schools about health issues – can you join in?
- There is a meeting at the local library on Tuesday evening at 6pm about leisure facilities for young people – can you join in?
- A survey is sent through the post for young people to express their views about drugs and alcohol – can you join in?
- There is a workshop at the local college about doing photography – can you join in?
- A drama company are touring schools and running workshops about ‘education is fun’ – can you join in?
- A questionnaire on issues that young people are concerned about is put on the web by the Scottish Executive – can you join in?
- You are asked in the street about your views on the health service – can you join in?
- There is a large event in Glasgow (on a week night) where adults want to tell you all about your rights in Scotland – can you join in?
- You are asked to read a summary paper on how education is organised from the government and write down your responses – can you join in?
- A graffiti wall is drawn in your local library on young people’s views on the area – can you join in?

Role cards

Patrick is fifteen and lives with his mother and younger sister. His Mum is a single parent and works during the evenings. When he gets home from school he looks after his sister until his Mum gets home from work at about 7pm. He has a Saturday job to earn money for CDs and going out.

Steven is 14 and lives with his parents, older brother and younger sister. His parents work long hours so his brother takes him to school and back. At weekends he likes watching Sky TV, surfing the internet and going out with mates

Next its time to think about how much we take part and get included. Make a table on the board with the following columns;

Are Included	Aren't Included	Would Take Part	Wouldn't Take Part

Think of real life situations in your past where you have been included by others, not included by others, where you have chosen to take part or have chosen not to take part. So for example when I was at school I hated sport. I tried my hardest to not take part in that activity, and tried to get out of it every week. On the other hand though, my school didn't make it very easy for me to join in – sport was very competitive and you were expected to succeed and win, rather than just have fun – I also hated the really strict rules you were expected to abide by. So sport for me would go in both the 2nd and 4th column. Try to think of things that apply to more than one person, so as not to single anyone out – school is really good for this. Examples can be from little things to really big things: being included in a group of friends; being excluded from a class, or even a subject; refusing to wear uniform; choosing not to come to school; being left out by teachers, or deliberately misbehaving in order to not have to join in; and of course, being physically excluded from the school premises.

Conclusion

Round up the discussion, discussing how in some ways people are not included in things – people who have less money or are less educated, and that this is bad and is not their fault. In other ways however there are times when people choose not to take part in things; at school, in their town, even in their country. This should maybe be their choice, but does mean they might not be included in decisions that may affect them.

Opt Out/End of day Activity

If the skulls have not been painted, then now is the perfect time to finish them, so refer to the papier mache lesson plan. If they are finished, then play an Uno tournament – with the scores up on the white board and everyone taking part.

End the day with the talking pen – one thing we have learned and one thing we enjoyed at the project this week.

Session 6: Teenagers around the World

Expected Length 1-2 hours

Materials

White Board

Marker Pens

World Atlas

Teenage excerpts

A3 paper

Paints and brushes

Aim

To get us thinking about others who are the same age as them – to think about the difficulties they face, what life is like for them, and to compare their lives to other peoples.

Skills Used

Critical thinking about self, others and the world we live in; discussing together;

Introduction

First talk a little about the last 5 weeks; how we've learned about rules, conforming and rebelling, what the consequences are, and what being included in things means. In other countries, people obviously live very differently, and that affects all these things. So teenagers in other countries might feel more included, less included, they might have to stick to a lot more rules, or they might be able to do anything they want to. This session is going to be about what other teenagers live like, so we can see that in some ways people the same age all around the world are similar, but in other ways they live very differently. There are some advantages to living in other countries, but in some cases we have a lot more freedom and are a lot luckier in this country – our lives might seem pretty boring and rubbish, but next to other people, is that really true?

Next we need to go through some of the chosen countries. These are; Ghana, Guatemala, Vietnam, Tanzania, and Honduras. Show where each country is, but in the end focus on just 2 of them. For each country, we want to get a general idea of what we think of the place – this needs to be written on the blackboard for each. We need to decide the following:

Where in the world it is?

Are people rich or poor?

Do they have more or less freedom than us?

What is the weather like?

What do people eat?

Is there anything else we know?

We don't want to know these answers exactly, and if we get them wrong its ok. So we need to know where they are (show people on an atlas) and then for each country:

Ghana –that most people are poor, that they have rules and laws just like us, that it's extremely hot (very near equator), Ghana's people eat rice, potatoes and spicy food, and that like most of Africa a lot of people die from AIDS

Guatemala – just below the US; $\frac{3}{4}$ of people are really poor; they have rules and laws like us; really hot; they eat food we would think of as Mexican;

Vietnam – its just below china; $\frac{2}{3}$ are very poor; communist – everyone's the same, but a lot less personal freedom; very hot weather; eat rice and 'chinese' food; they have also had a lot of war (French then US).

Tanzania – in Africa; one of poorest countries in world; do vote like us but might be less freedom in voting; very hot; rice, coconut and spicy food; mountain called Kilimanjaro, a lot of AIDS

Honduras – just below US; huge divide between rich and poor; vote like us but have more military so less freedom; quite hot; Mexican food; has loads and loads of beaches.

Now we have some idea of the 2 countries, its time to read about some teenagers that live in them. Read out each excerpt, and then go through it again, perhaps writing interesting things to remember on the white board under each country.

Development

Now its time to draw and paint. We each need to divide our piece of paper into 2 – one for our lives and one for our chosen other person. Draw or paint 2 images of the same place, for example what my bedroom looks like and what Jovia's bedroom might look like. This is going to need lots of discussion between each other, which is why its best to only look at 2 of the excerpts. The place could be bedroom, home, school, village etc, and good and bad points on both sides should be drawn – try not to use words

Conclusion

Go through everyone's drawings, and sum up – that there are bad things about living in our country, but then other countries might be worse. We might think we have to follow too many rules here, or work too hard, but we have a much better life than we think we do!

Opt Out/End of day Activity

Either, finish off activities that have been started in previous weeks, or spend any time needed playing pool.

List of Ideas for Activities after Sessions

Frisbee

Simple throw and catch the park – a rest from rules and competitiveness, unless you want to try and come up with the weirdest throws!

Football

Could play 3 or 4 a side, and I could be the umpire – first you would all have to teach me the rules of football though!

Penalty shoot-out

See who is the best scorer, or even the best goalie

Board Games

Monopoly, Pictionary etc – all relaxing and easy

Card games

We could learn how to play poker, black jack, or just play uno – could even have a tournament

Pool Tournament

You design it, you make the rules – you play it! Could play as pairs, teams or just individually

Computer Games

Maybe games like Sim City, Sims or Zoo Tycoon, in small groups where you build things together

Swimming

Would need to be planned in advance so that everyone brought their swimming stuff

Origami

Easy to do – lots of paper folding to make things such as planes and boats (see instructions)

Making papier mache skulls, masks or heads

See instruction sheet

Graffiti

Make huge paintings and designs of graffiti – can make great designs and then hang the finished product on your wall at home – graffiti that doesn't upset anyone! Maybe learn about where Graffiti comes from as well, and perhaps have a discussion about whether people should do it.

Music or film quiz

Each make up a few questions about the music or films you are into and then design a whole quiz on them – I'm thinking the staff will lose the most on this one!

Research & make collage on favourite sports team

Look up loads of things on the internet about your favourite sports team and then try to explain the details using a collage – either stick things onto your design or paint things on – the idea is to explain your team without any words (except for the name of the team!!)



Steven's Bad Day



Steven slowly walked into the classroom. He was having such a bad day. On top of everything else he was late for maths. He hated maths and didn't get on well with his teacher. He was about to sit down when he was jolted out of his thinking.

"Why are you scowling at me son? It's you who's late. Are you not even going to apologise? With your poor track record in maths I don't think you can afford to be late son." The rest of the class laughed.

"I'm no scowlin at you so shut up" said Steven as he went to sit down.

"Sit down!" shouted the teacher. "Not there, sit at the front there... hurry up, I haven't got all day"

Steven felt himself getting angrier and angrier. He grabbed his bag, stomped to the front, threw his bag down and sat heavily in his chair.

The rest of the class were silent, except for a few of his mates who were sniggering. Normally he would laugh back and joke around with them to wind the teacher up. But today, with everything so messed up, he felt they were laughing at him, and it just made him angrier.

"Where's your jotter?"

The teacher was still on at Steven. He was shouting really loudly and sounded like he was ready to explode. Steven, above everything, was not going to show anyone he was upset.

"I dinae have it – my dog ate it" he said, his voice dripping with sarcasm. And just for added effect, he quietly muttered "ya stupid puff"

"WHAT DID YOU SAY?!"

That was it – oh well, Steven hated maths anyway.

"You are a good for nothing lay about my boy. You saunter in with that stupid look on your stupid face. There's no wonder you're in bottom set – at this rate you will never pass an exam and you will amount to nothing. You will stand outside the class for the rest of the lesson where you can think about your actions."

Steven stormed outside. As he stood there, feeling like he wanted to punch somebody, he tried to imagine all the things he would say to his teacher if he could, all the while with his best 'I don't care' face on. This might have been a bad day, but Steven wasn't going to show anyone he cared.

Appendix C: Preparatory Plans for Research at the Special School

Contents:

Plans given for Observation and Fieldwork Diary

Preliminary Ideas for Research with Teachers

Preliminary Ideas for Research with Young People

Session plans with young people:

Session 1: Best and Worst Experience at School

Session 2: Classroom Role-play

Session 3: Feelings

Session 4: My School

These sessions are cited throughout the thesis as SS1, SS2, SS3, & SS4, respectively.

Information Pack given to staff prior to two afternoon sessions with them. Includes: general description; topic guide for the first session; details of first session.

The first afternoon session involved the staff splitting into two groups and discussing, and are cited throughout the thesis as SS Staff 1.1 & SS Staff 1.2. The two groups then met to discuss together, the transcript cited as SS Staff 1.

The second afternoon session involved whole group discussion and is cited as SS Staff 2.

Observational Work

Observation is an important part of the kind of research I do, but is perhaps the least explicit or obvious. It is about absorbing everyday life in a school to understand how the school works, and how people work within it. In reality this just means I spend time getting to know the school and people in it, while at the same time staying receptive to things happening around me.

Absorbing everyday life means observing at a few different levels. Part of this work involves getting a broad picture of the schools policies and the policies it follows from the education authorities. Other observations are closer to the ground and involve noticing good strategies that teachers employ or good ways of communicating with pupils.

If I had a perfect memory, I would remember all these things, but unfortunately I have a terrible memory, so I in particular need to write these things down! The observations I make are written in a research diary. I make them each week, and they include anything I think might be important or that I might need to remember. Things I do not include are firstly people's names. I actually try to keep the whole diary anonymous, and so try not to mention the schools name, people's gender, or people's names. I especially try not to single out particular people, or describe them in a personal way or a way that they could be recognised. I feel it's unnecessary to describe these things, but also unfair for the individuals.

The diary is also confidential. The only people who will ever see it in its whole form are my supervisor (who knows little about the school and is not involved in education) and relevant people featured (anonymously) in the diary. If I come to writing my thesis and decide I want to include information from it, I would only do so with the relevant people's informed consent.

Ideas for Research with Staff

Individual Interviews

I would like, if people have time, to carry out individual interviews. I would like to talk to a broad range of staff, including subject teachers, guidance teachers, teachers who work in inclusion, special needs and behavioural support, and management staff. The topics I would like to discuss include;

- the strategies or ways individual teachers/other staff manage a classroom and the pupils they find challenging
- how the school (or how the individual feels the school) works with pupils who find it hard to conform to school life. Whether the methods used in the school similar to other schools or different
- what policies the local authority as a whole has for coping, reducing or preventing school exclusion – whether they are similar to other authorities and whether they could be improved
- what views the interviewee has on exclusion in general and the policies and strategies in place just now
- what views the interviewee has on the education system as a whole
- what views they have on young people in general today

A more specific topic guide would be discussed with each interviewee prior to the interview, to check they were comfortable with it, so they could think about the questions, and so they could add any other relevant questions. Interviews would be unstructured (not overly led by the researcher) and questions would not be leading.

Group Discussions

I would very much like to start group discussions amongst all staff. I think this could be quite a positive thing for staff as it is an opportunity to discuss the general aspects of education, and would require no planning or paperwork on your part. There are some interesting theories and ideas, some from education and some from other fields that I would very much like your opinion on. The discussions could be like seminars, and I could organise the format and specific details. The format could involve simple debates, or could be more structured with perhaps short reading material and brainstorming in smaller groups. The content and format of these sessions would really be up to those interested in taking part – ideally the first group discussion would be to plan the rest. Topics could include the above, as well as discussion on the following theories:

- the banking concept of education
- peer mediation
- what excluded young people need most
- social justice

Ideas for research with young people

Group Sessions

Group sessions could be carried out with pupils who have experienced exclusion, as well as pupils who have never experienced exclusion (for example prefects). A group of between 4 and 6 is best. Age is not of primary importance, although the group would benefit from being the same age and possibly knowing each other. The session would basically just be a discussion about one or more of the topics below and would be tape recorded.

Topics – What we like and dislike about school; what counts as a bad lesson vs what counts as a good lesson; what makes a good teacher; what makes a good pupil; what makes a good school; what the rules should be at school; what is fair and unfair at school. Topics would be discussed with the pupils before hand to make sure they are comfortable, to give them time to think about the subject and to ask if they have any questions that could be added.

Individual Interviews

More potentially uncomfortable for the individual but they may find it easier to talk on their own. Would involve asking similar questions to the previous ones. The interviews would not be leading and would be unstructured. The topic guide would be shown to the young person in advance and the interviewer would make sure they were comfortable answering these questions. A teacher or staff member could be present if the school felt it would be appropriate.

Ethics

The research would be recorded. However, I would sign a contract with the young people, explaining what was going to happen in the sessions and that the tape and its written version would only be seen by me, them, and my supervisor (also explaining who he is). I would explain that their identity would be changed so they could be anonymous, I would later show them what I was going to include in my project and that I would only include them if they were happy with this. If they changed their minds before I finish the project, I would remove them from it and destroy their information. Finally, I will also emphasise that none of the discussions will be about their personal lives outside of school time – everything will focus on school life.

On top of this I ask for parental permission. Again, the process is fully explained to the parents, usually in the form of a letter. This letter is sent with a consent slip and a prepaid envelope. The slip can either be;

- a slip which needs sending back if the parents agree
- one which they only send back if they disagree

Both these methods have advantages and disadvantages. If they only have to send it back if they disagree, then if they forget or seem not to care the research will not be affected. However, it also means the young person may have deliberately not given the letter, which puts the parent at a disadvantage. This should really be discussed between your school and me to see which would be most appropriate.

Session 1: Best and Worst Experience at School (SS1)

Aim

This gives the group of young people a chance to: talk about concrete examples of their experiences; express how the events made them feel; discuss what was fair/unfair and express all this creatively.

Introduction

The idea of this session is to each think about 2 real life events at school; the best one and the worst one; the one they liked best and liked least. It would be best (but only for me!) if this could be confined to Secondary school. The creative input involves drawing the scene to describe each event.

During the drawing activity, the informal discussion is really important. The teachers could draw their experiences as well to encourage discussion. The first outcome of the discussion should be to establish verbally exactly what happened in each event (as long as they are comfortable talking), the sequence of events, how it started, what the outcome was, how long ago the event was. The second aim is to get the group talking about how the event or parts of it made them feel. It might also be appropriate to talk about what was fair/unfair about the event; good/bad; nice/horrid; easy to remember/hard to remember. It also may be appropriate for them to talk about what they wished had happened (probably only for the negative event), ie a solution to the problem.

Materials

Art materials

Tape recorder (if possible)

Session 2: Classroom Role-play (SS2)

Aim

This session gives the group a chance to use more of a solution focused approach. It can, in simple ways directly feed into my recommendations for how classrooms could change. It also gives the group a chance to describe their experiences and opinions in a creative way.

Introduction

In this session, the idea is to act out 2 different classroom situations: one which is negative and one which is positive, in the young people's opinion.

Session

Without leading too much, the group should first role-play 'bad' classroom situations. This might include; the teacher being aggressive, unfair, shouting, sending someone out; the pupils being aggressive, unfair, shouting, getting sent out. Questions to pose to them could include:

Has this happened to you?

Is this how it would actually happen in class?

How often do you think that happens?

It's important to first establish that their chosen role play is realistic. But it's even more important to discuss at the end how a situation like that would make them feel and what is fair/unfair about it.

So the solution focused approach then kicks in for the second part. Now the group needs to think of the best classroom situation, what the opposite, ideal situation would be. As they role-play this, they need to think what would change, including; the teacher; the pupils; the classroom itself (eg layout). Would they like other kinds of people in there, or less people even? Further questions to ask could include:

What's so different about this role-play?

How are all the people different?

What makes this situation positive?

Has this happened to you?

How often do you think this happens?

How does/would this classroom situation make you feel?

What is fair/unfair about it?

Materials

Tape recorder (if possible)

Video camera – if they have decided they want to film it

Classroom furniture and props (suit and tie for teacher?!)

Session 3: Feelings (SS3)

Aim

The idea of this session is to link feelings with hypothetical events, with a possibility of recounting actual events.

Introduction

The idea of this session is to make a big collage on paper of events that happen at school, both positive and negative, such as being listened to, and being told off, and linking them with ways the young people think that would make them or other young people feel.

Session

This session is designed to be fairly flexible so that the young people can talk about the events as personally as they want to – if they don't feel comfortable talking about their own experiences and feelings then the session can simply be about sticking the event pieces of paper next to the feeling pieces. There will be the following examples of events on cards:

<u>Negative</u>	<u>Positive</u>
Being told off	Being listened to
Being put down by a teacher	Treated fairly
Being put down by other pupils	Respected
When a teacher expects you to fail	Treated like an adult
Treated like a child	Complimented
Ignored	When a teacher expects more of you
Given punishment exercise	Pushed to work hard
Being suspended	Accepted no matter what you've done
Being expelled	Being praised

The activity could be done together as a group or separately, but the idea is to match the events with feelings and to display them in some way (eg events followed by feelings; feelings surrounding the events) on large pieces of paper. The feelings are also pre written so they have lots to choose from – there will be cards with feelings in words and cards with pictures, such as faces depicting emotions. There will be tonnes of duplicates, but this way the young people don't have to think of emotions from scratch, but have many to choose from so they are not too led.

Throughout the session, it would be great if informal discussion can take place. If the young people feel comfortable talking, it would be good to ask them whether these things have happened to them, what happened, when was it etc. If they use the same emotions for different events, we could discuss which event would make them feel stronger, ie which out of 3 would make them feel most angry? If they are discussing specific events, we could discuss how they would have liked the event to have happened differently, what they would have done if they were the teacher.

Materials

Tape recorder (if possible)

Coloured paper, glue, pens, event and emotion cards, extra pictures to finish the collage

Session 4: My School (SS4)

Aim

This session gives the group a chance to use a very solution focused approach. It can, in simple ways directly feed into my recommendations for how schools could change. The session is also aimed at focusing more on the fair and unfair parts of school life.

Introduction

In this session, the idea is to produce a school brochure, where the young people decide what the rules will be, how people (young people and adults) should act in the school, what the lessons will be, uniform, discipline and so on. As well as producing their own solutions to problems they see in education, the session is meant to encourage them to think about what aspects of school are fair/unfair and why.

Session

How this session is structured will depend largely on what the young people choose, and partly on how well they work as a group. The making of the brochure can be done parts at a time with the whole group, or each person can do a different part, or different parts in pairs. If they really don't want to work together they could make separate brochures but group work would be nicer!

Throughout the session its important to keep asking the young people about what they're doing and why – to keep challenging their choices. They may make fantastically fair and just decisions about rules etc, in which case it would be interesting to let them know this, and to find out why they think so fairly. They may well on the other hand make far more oppressive rules than most schools do! In this case, it would be good to ask them why, but also to gently challenge them about why, sort of pose problems to their decisions, situations where there rules would be unfair. It's also really important to get their opinions without us interfering too much, or trying to teach them too many of our assumptions! I guess what I mean is that they have a certain way of thinking that helps them to survive in their community and I don't want to remove that from the session because I think it's no less valid, but at the same time I want to find out how they would make a school that would make them feel accepted and positive.

Materials

Art materials for the brochure; coloured paper, pens, magazines, stencils etc.

Tape recorder (if possible)

Information Pack

Discussion Groups 1 & 2:

School Exclusion

17th February & 24th March
2.15pm-4pm

Rachael Fox

Content of Discussions on Exclusion

The first session is designed to be a series of small group discussions where we talk about various aspects of education and exclusion that you have experiences of and in many ways expert knowledge about.

In small groups of 3 or 4 I would like you to discuss some of the topics and questions I have posed for you on the sheet (in this pack). The idea is to draw on your past experiences and your opinions when discussing the questions. I'd like you as groups to think carefully about all the angles of a question and to consider different opinions in the group. Don't feel you have to answer all of the questions – some might mean more to you than others – you might find some more interesting, and you may even want to talk about a different aspect. Don't worry, if I feel you're getting really off track I will tell you!

I would like one member of the group to briefly record what's being said in the group – obviously if you want to say something in confidence during discussions you don't need to write it down, but I would like each group to have something to feed back to everyone at the end. If you get stuck for something to talk about or have any other problems, don't worry – I will be moving between groups to pose more questions and sort out any problems

I suggest that this person could also make sure the tape recorder is running. It is extremely helpful for me to have an audio recording of conversations so that I can remember everything that is said. Please try not to be too put off by it. If you don't want to, you will not have to listen to the tape. I will create a transcript for each discussion, which I will show you for approval. I sign an agreement with each person, stating that no-one except me, you and my supervisor will ever see these transcripts or listen to the tapes. If I want to put comments in my report, people will be unidentifiable, and I will show relevant people what I would like to say. A copy of the agreement is in this pack.

The next session we do will build on this one. Between the first and second session I will analyse the group discussion you have had, and feed back some thoughts to you at the beginning of the second session. I'll say a little bit about the discussions and about the Special School in general. I'd then like to go on to tell you a little bit about some of the theories I am considering which relate to education in general. Using things we discussed in the first session and some of the thinking and theories I'm going to present to you, I'd then like us to focus on some wider issues. Whereas in the first session we will have talked about what it is about the young people we work with that makes it hard for them to fit into education, I'd like us to move on to discuss what it is about education, society and adult-child relationships in general that make it difficult for these young people to fit in.

So that you have some idea about the kind of theories I would like us to discuss in the second session, I would like to give you some homework before hand! I would like everyone if possible to read the few pages photocopied from a book by Freire (I'll give you all copies at the first session). The excerpt is pretty extreme and not very positive towards teachers, so please don't be too angry at me if you do read it! It is primarily intended to spark debate and not a reflection of my opinion of teachers!

I hope this explains a bit about the sessions. If you feel I've missed out important questions relating to exclusion, or if you would like to ask me anything, please let me know. My email address is: rachael.fox@stir.ac.uk

Rachael Fox

Postgraduate Student
Department of Psychology
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA
01786 466851

Discussion Topics, Session One

How would you define “school exclusion”?

Experience of schools in relation to exclusion

What kind of school do you need to make inclusion really work?

In what ways does this Special School combat exclusion, as a school but also in and around the local authority?

How does one create the right ethos/environment for a school like the Special School? Does this transfer to mainstream education?

Experience of Teaching in Relation to Exclusion

In what ways do you feel you include excluded young people?

What strategies do you use to include young people in your classroom, such as; curriculum; interaction between you and your group; your personal skills; your classroom environment, etc.?

What skills does a teacher need to create an inclusive environment?

Experience You Have of the Young People Who Encounter Exclusion

Next week I’d like us to discuss a little about what it is about schools and education that makes it difficult for some young people to fit in, but for now I’d like us to consider it from the other aspect – what is it about the young people (and their lives/experiences) you work with that makes it difficult for them to fit in?

What do young people need in order to survive in (and not be excluded from) mainstream education?

What have you learned about exclusion from the young people you work with?

Session One

Content of Discussions

You can talk about any of the questions – some will mean more to you than others – you can even veer off a bit!

I'm trying to get your opinions and experience relating to school exclusion – you are all experts in a lot of ways. Think carefully, use the experiences you've had and try to think about all aspects of the questions

If you do get stuck for things to say, don't worry – I will be spending time in each group, posing more questions to you, depending on which way the discussions are going, maybe asking specific questions to each group.

You will all go off into your separate groups – all in groups loosely related to the kind of job in education you do (it will be different at the next session). Then we will all come together for some feedback and whole group discussion. For this reason I'd like someone from each group to take 'minutes' – just the main key points in each group, so that you can remember what was said.

For me to know what was said however I would like, if its ok to make a tape recording of each group discussion. The recorders are totally set up, just need to press play and record together, and turn tape over if it gets to end.

Worries

First worry I imagine is the tape recording, where it ends up: only people in the group, me and my supervisor will ever listen to it. If you ever want to listen to it just ask and I will make you a copy.

Then I type the tape into a script. Again, only I, my supervisor and people from your group will ever read it. I will give each group member a copy so that you can check I transcribed it right!

Next it comes to me using what you said. I might include your opinions in my final project report, in other written reports or in things I say. **HOWEVER**, you will not be identifiable to anybody. I change details so that it is not possible even for people at this school to identify you, let alone the outside world.

I'm also going to say a bit about the discussions and the Special School in general at the next session, but again, I'm not going to be identifying anyone, and I'll only be making broad comments.

If you say things in the group that you want to keep confidential, just don't write them down for the feedback, and say so during the discussion – when I go back to that part I will know immediately! If you decide you want things left out, or you decide you want to opt out of my research altogether, you can tell me at any time and I will erase all information about you.

The contract we sign binds me to all of this. All this is set up very carefully because I want you to feel you can have a normal discussion, like a conversation in the staff room, without having to worry about what will happen – I am not looking to single out personal information or even individual opinions – I really am only trying to get an overall look at how people approach exclusion and young people

Another worry you might have is saying things about particular young people or even adults. It is useful if you try to be quite vague – as you would if you were talking to someone outside of the school. Try not to worry too much however; if you do mention people I will simply make them anonymous in things as well.

So, these are your groups. If we can break at 3.15 for 15 mins, or have a break when you want, then have a final half hour discussion together.

Appendix D: Preparatory Plans for Research at the High School

Contents:

Description of observational work during immersion as Support for Learning Assistant

Preliminary ideas for research with young people

Preliminary ideas for research with staff

Plans for Sessions with young people:

Session 1: General discussion

Session 2: Best and worst experience at school

Session 3: School brochure

These sessions are cited throughout thesis as HS1, HS2, HS3, respectively.

General Topic Guide for individual interviews with teachers. Involved five interviews with: Anne, Susan, Jessica, Emily and John (all alias names). These interviews are cited using the alias first name for each teacher followed by HS for High School, for example 'Anne, HS'.

Observational Work

Observation is an important part of the kind of research I do, but is perhaps the least explicit or obvious. It is about absorbing everyday life in a school to understand how the school works, and how people work within it. In reality this just means I spend time getting to know the school and people in it, while at the same time staying receptive to things happening around me.

Absorbing everyday life means observing at a few different levels. Part of this work involves getting a broad picture of the schools policies and the policies it follows from the education authorities. Other observations are closer to the ground and involve noticing good strategies that teachers employ or good ways of communicating with pupils.

If I had a perfect memory, I would remember all these things, but unfortunately I have a terrible memory, so I in particular need to write these things down! The observations I make are written in a research diary. I make them each week, and they include anything I think might be important or that I might need to remember. Things I do not include are firstly people's names. I actually try to keep the whole diary anonymous, and so try not to mention the schools name, people's gender, or people's names. I especially try not to single out particular people, or describe them in a personal way or a way that they could be recognised. I feel its unnecessary to describe these things, but also unfair for the individuals.

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Ideas for Research with Staff

Individual Interviews

I would like, if people have time, to carry out individual interviews. I would like to talk to a broad range of staff, including subject teachers, guidance teachers, teachers who work in inclusion, special needs and behavioural support, and management staff. The topics I would like to discuss include;

- the strategies or ways individual teachers/other staff manage a classroom and the pupils they find challenging
- how the school (or how the individual feels the school) works with pupils who find it hard to conform to school life. Whether the methods used in the school similar to other schools or different
- what policies the authority as a whole has for coping, reducing or preventing school exclusion – whether they are similar to other authorities and whether they could be improved
- what views the interviewee has on exclusion in general and the policies and strategies in place just now
- what views the interviewee has on the education system as a whole
- what views they have on young people in general today

A more specific topic guide would be discussed with each interviewee prior to the interview, to check they were comfortable with it, so they could think about the questions, and so they could add any other relevant questions. Interviews would be unstructured (not overly led by the researcher) and questions would not be leading.

Group Discussions

I would very much like to start group discussions amongst all staff. I think this could be quite a positive thing for staff as it is an opportunity to discuss the general aspects of education, and would require no planning or paperwork on your part. There are some interesting theories and ideas, some from education and some from other fields that I would very much like your opinion on. The discussions could be like seminars, and I could organise the format and specific details. The format could involve simple debates, or could be more structured with perhaps short reading material and brainstorming in smaller groups. The content and format of these sessions would really be up to those interested in taking part – ideally the first group discussion would be to plan the rest. Topics could include the above, as well as discussion on the following theories:

- the banking concept of education
- peer mediation
- what excluded young people need most
- social justice

Ideas for research with young people

Group Sessions

Group sessions could be carried out with pupils who have experienced exclusion, as well as pupils who have never experienced exclusion (for example prefects). A group of between 4 and 6 is best. Age is not of primary importance, although the group would benefit from being the same age and possibly knowing each other. The session would basically just be a discussion about one or more of the topics below and would be tape recorded.

Topics – What we like and dislike about school; what counts as a bad lesson vs what counts as a good lesson; what makes a good teacher; what makes a good pupil; what makes a good school; what the rules should be at school; what is fair and unfair at school. Topics would be discussed with the pupils before hand to make sure they are comfortable, to give them time to think about the subject and to ask if they have any questions that could be added.

Individual Interviews

More potentially uncomfortable for the individual but they may find it easier to talk on their own. Would involve asking similar questions to the previous ones. The interviews would not be leading and would be unstructured. The topic guide would be shown to the young person in advance and the interviewer would make sure they were comfortable answering these questions. A teacher or staff member could be present if the school felt it would be appropriate.

Ethics

The research would be recorded. However, I would sign a contract with the young people, explaining what was going to happen in the sessions and that the tape and its written version would only be seen by me, them, and my supervisor (also explaining who he is). I would explain that their identity would be changed so they could be anonymous, I would later show them what I was going to include in my project and that I would only include them if they were happy with this. If they changed their minds before I finish the project, I would remove them from it and destroy their information. Finally, I will also emphasise that none of the discussions will be about their personal lives outside of school time – everything will focus on school life.

On top of this I ask for parental permission. Again, the process is fully explained to the parents, usually in the form of a letter. This letter is sent with a consent slip and a prepaid envelope. The slip can either be;

- a slip which needs sending back if the parents agree
- one which they only send back if they disagree

Both these methods have advantages and disadvantages. If they only have to send it back if they disagree, then if they forget or seem not to care the research will not be affected. However, it also means the young person may have deliberately not given the letter, which puts the parent at a disadvantage. This should really be discussed between your school and I to see which would be most appropriate.

Session 1: General Discussion (HS1)

Aim

This session gives the group a chance to discuss their opinions and experiences at school. The discussion is not designed to be too leading, and there is no pressure for everyone in the group to talk equally. Where people are slow to express themselves, the idea is to give gentle encouragement rather than pushing them as some will find talking about their opinions and experiences more difficult than others. As well as the discussion, if the pupils feel comfortable doing so there is a drawing exercise to make the discussion seem less formal.

Introduction

Generally the topics for discussion are things the young people like and do not like about school. The aim is to get an idea of actual concrete experiences; how they have felt about these experiences and how they themselves would solve any situations they feel are negative. There is primarily an emphasis on inclusion. This will take the form of questions around times when they young people have felt part of the school; included in groups; made to feel part of a class by a teacher; or on the other hand have felt 'left out'. It is difficult to find out about 'inclusive practices' from young people who may not be aware that they exist in policy, and these questions are designed to do this.

Session

To begin with, pupils will be introduced to the drawing exercise. If they feel comfortable drawing, the topic is to draw things they like at school and things they don't like, for instance on 2 halves of a page. Once settled in this activity, discussion can begin.

At first discussion can focus on the things that the pupils like and dislike, moving on to why they like or dislike certain things. Is there a particular example they can think of? Has that actually happened to them? Has that only happened once or quite a few times? The idea is to get them to think about actual events. The next stage is to try and get them to think about how those events made them feel. This may be quite hard for some, so the idea is be quite careful. How did that event make them feel? How does it feel when that happens? Do you like/hate it when that happens?

Moving on from this, the discussion needs to turn around to feeling included/left out. I will need to instigate this obviously, but the following questions will guide discussion:

Do you feel part of the school?

Can you think of examples when you've really felt part of the school?

Has there been a time when a teacher has tried really hard with you: to make you enjoy the lesson; to help you with your work; to include you in what everyone is doing; to get you to join in when you didn't feel like it?

Are there ever times when you feel left out? Why?

Do you sometimes choose not to join in with things?

What do you think teachers could do to help you join in more?
(classes/school/lessons/subjects)

Materials

Art materials, paper, felt tips etc.

Tape recorder (if possible)

Session 2: Best and Worst Experience at School (HS2)

Aim

This gives the group of young people a chance to; talk about concrete examples of their experiences; express how the events made them feel; discuss what was fair/unfair and express all this creatively.

Introduction

The idea of this session is to each think about 2 real life events at school; the best one and the worst one; the one they liked best and liked least. It would be best (but only for me!) if this could be confined to Secondary school. The creative input involves drawing the scene to describe each event.

Session

During the drawing activity, the informal discussion will be very similar to the last one, and use the same question guide. The difference here is to talk about more specific events, to go through each one sequence by sequence, and to look at what people in the event could have done differently. How did it start? What happened all the way through? How long ago was it? The next stage is again to try and talk about how the events made them feel, and what was fair/unfair about the event.

The final aim is to analyse the two events. For the positive one, we need to look at all the people involved and discuss how they made the event so positive – what was it that the teacher(s) did to make them remember the event so positively, what did they themselves do so well? For the negative event, the discussion needs to be a more solution focused approach – what would they have done differently, what could everyone have done differently to make the event a positive one?

Materials

Art materials

Tape recorder (if possible)

Session 3: School Brochure (HS3)

Aim

The idea of this session is to look at the current school brochure and discuss what we like/dislike about it, and to make our own school brochures of our own imaginary schools

Introduction

The session will start by looking at the current school brochure. Major emphasis needs to be on the parts of the brochure relating to inclusion, guidance, pastoral care and rules. Once we have discussed this brochure we can begin making our own, with simple methods we might use for making everyone feel included and happy.

Session

Everyone should have a copy of the school brochure. The first thing to establish is whether they have ever read it before. Even if they have not, its also important to establish whether they have heard of the policies in it before. Again, particular emphasis must be placed on the inclusive policies. We need to discuss which parts the young people like, which they feel are good for getting everyone involved, which are fair. Its also important to see whether there is anything they don't like, anything they think is unfair or leaves people out.

At this stage we can move on to making our own, so we can change anything we might not like, but also include things we liked best about the brochure. We can have new names, a set of rules, 'strategies' we would use for involving everyone, ways of tackling bullying etc. at each stage it is important to challenge the pupils (gently!). if they have chosen something as important, why? If they have really unfair rules in their brochure, why? If they choose to excluded lots of people, where does that leave them?! The ideas can be quite unrealistic, but it's important to encourage the pupils to think carefully about their choices and to think about how to get everyone joining in and happy at school.

Materials

Art materials

Tape recorder (if possible)

Topic Guide for Individual Interviews with High School Teachers

- Background to teaching career: training; other schools; length at High School
- Definition of inclusion. How important is it?
- What makes inclusion difficult? Conventional assumptions; policy; school; parents; pupils
- Impression of High School:
 - Change in structure
 - Pupils: relationship with
 - Parents
 - Community: and education authority
 - Staff: how supported?
 - School: curriculum; ethos; rules etc. What makes it difficult for school to be inclusive?
- Discuss issue of ethos of empowering the young people, enabling assertiveness, versus teaching the young people to conform or fit in. to what extent are both things important?
- Inclusive strategies and practice in the classroom: ethos, beliefs, rules, etc.
- Why do some young people find it difficult to manage in school? What is it about education that makes it difficult for some young people to be in school?
- If the High School had the resources, how would you improve it?

Appendix E: Ethics

Contents:

Example Agreement for young people

Example Agreement for staff

Example Parent/Guardian Consent letter

Two agreements were signed by every participant, one copy for them and one retained by me. A permission slip from a parent or guardian was obtained for each person under 16 years. Ethical permission to carry out research was applied for to the Department of Psychology at the University of Stirling and to the relevant local education authority for each of the three settings. A letter of support from a key member of staff was included in each application to the authority, and permission was granted in all cases.

Example letter sent to young people to disseminate findings (similar one sent to adults).

Example Agreement for Young People

I would like you to do some research with me, about what you think of your main school [and where you are at the moment] for my project.

I would like to tape record any discussions we have – this is so I can remember what we said. After tape recording the discussion I would copy out what was said and this copy would only be seen by you, me and my supervisor and no one else. If you decide that we should make art work or film to describe what you think, I would like to keep a copy of these things to talk about in my project. I would not show these things to anyone except you and my supervisor. Once I have finished with them I will destroy them or give them back to you.

If I decided I wanted to include bits of what you say in my report I would change details so nobody could identify you personally, would show you what I was hoping to include and would only go ahead if you agreed with that.

The final report will be available to everyone. No one will be able to identify you personally in it. Only after you have agreed it is ok, will others be able to read it.

If you agree to take part now but change your mind later, I will destroy the information you have already given me.

If you are happy with this agreement, please sign it. I will too then we can each have a copy to keep.

Interviewer: Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Interviewee: Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

If you want more information you can get hold of me by writing to me,
Rachael Fox, Department of Psychology, University of Stirling, FK9
4LA

Example Agreement for Adults

I would like you to involve you in some research as a staff member of _____ for my PhD Thesis.

I would like to tape record any discussions we have – this is so I can remember what we said. After tape recording the discussion I would copy out what was said and this copy would only be seen by you, me and my supervisor.

If I decided I wanted to include bits of what you say in my report I would change details so nobody could identify you personally, would show you what I was hoping to include and would only go ahead if you agreed with that.

The final report will be available to everyone.

If you agree to take part now but change your mind later, I will destroy the information you have already given me.

If you are happy with this agreement, please sign it. I will too then we can each have a copy to keep.

Interviewer: Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Interviewee: Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

If you want more information you can get hold of me by writing to me,
Rachael Fox, Department of Psychology, University of Stirling, FK9
4LA

Example Parent/Guardian Consent letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Rachael Fox and I am studying at Stirling University. I am doing a project on school inclusion and how all young people can be best included in schools. I would like to involve your son/daughter in my research, by talking to them about their experiences and opinions. I would like to hear from them what kind of experience they have had at school, and what their opinions are of education.

I will not be asking about your son/daughter's personal or home life for this project and they would not be identifiable individually in any write-up. If you and your son/daughter agreed I would like to tape record what is said so I can write about it for my project later on. No-one other than your son/daughter would see any of this, except my supervisor who has not met your son/daughter and does not live in your community.

Even if you agree to them taking part, your son/daughter can stop helping me with my study at any time, and I will not use anything they have said or made if they feel uncomfortable with it. When I have finished my study I will show them what I want to write in my report so they know what is being said.

Please let me know if you are happy for your son/daughter to help me in my study by filling in the slip below and returning it in the envelope provided (which doesn't require a stamp) or handing it to your son/daughter to give to me. If you want to ask me anything else about my study you can contact me at the address above, call me at the number above or I can even come and visit you.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely,

Rachael Fox

I agree / do not agree for my son/daughter to take part in the study being conducted by Rachael Fox

Name of Parent/Guardian_____

Signature_____

Name of son/daughter_____

Date_____

14th November, 2006

Dear

Hello, hope you're well! I am writing to you to tell you all about what happened to the research we did together over a year ago. If you remember we did some sessions with a tape recorder where we talked about your experiences and opinions of school.

So it has taken me a very long time to put every thing together! The report I had to write was very long and included views from other young people, as well as teachers and schools. My report is all about what problems there are in education in general. The first part describes all the kinds of research I did, and where I did it etc. The second part describes all my findings, from people like you, other young people and teachers. Finally the last part sums everything up and tries to explain what I think are problems in schools and education.

One of the most important parts was the experiences and opinions from all the young people and I have included our discussions in that section. Everything in my report has to be unidentifiable, so I have changed your name to the one you picked, changed the name of the High School, and I don't even mention the name of the area. I have included in this envelope all the bits of my final report where I talk about what we discussed on tape, and as you can see your sections are titled High School.

It was really difficult to write as I was trying to make judgements from what you had said, without actually being able to talk to you directly about it! So you may disagree with these or other sections – if you feel very strongly please contact me.

The stories and opinions from your group and other young people are a very important part of my research. Young people like you guys don't often get a chance to tell people how unfair school can be for you, and don't often get to be involved in describing what is wrong in schools (or what is good about school). I have made your opinions some of the most important parts of my report because I think that you all had some very valuable things to say.

As you can see, I'm afraid the report had to be written in very complicated English, and so I'm sorry if it's a bit hard to understand – I would rather have made it easier! The scripts that I typed up from the tapes are really long – about 30 pages each, and so they were too big to send – if you do want copies you should ask me and I will

send them (I showed you all a couple of them at the time if you remember). The bits of conversation I have then included in the report then come from the sessions, and are in italics. I am I: (Interviewer) in the quotes, and your name is shortened. Under each quote in brackets is a description of where the quote has come from – so HS1 means High School session one, the first discussion we had. Another important thing to note, is that I have tried as hard as possible to make you all unidentifiable in the descriptions you gave me. So for instance when someone spoke of being excluded from another school or particular instances of suspension, I have been really vague and haven't said it was one particular person. I have done this so that if people at the school ever read it (they might not) there would be no way of knowing who said what. Despite this the staff at your school fine with you saying anything – they assured me none of it would be talked about and were really open to you expressing your opinions.

Finally I just need to explain to you what happens next. As long as everybody is ok with what I have put in my report, I will hand it in. Two people will read it and mark it – they will have to read our discussions, but they won't know who anybody is, and they are not from education. Then once they have marked my report, the report can be read by anyone (it goes into Stirling University Library), but only parts such as the sections I have sent you will be in the report. The tapes I made of us are destroyed, and the transcripts remain confidential. So the only parts people will read that include you are the parts I have sent you – where you are unidentifiable. In the future I would like to tell people about the research so that schools or education might make changes – for this I might need to tell people your opinions but again, I would not tell them who you were or where you were from.

If you are unhappy with any of this, or you are unsure, or you have some questions you would like to ask me, I have put a stamped addressed envelope in this envelope which you can use to contact me. You can post it without a stamp. You can also email me if you have email – my address is rachael.fox@stir.ac.uk. I will assume you are ok with the report if I don't hear from you, but please do write to me if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you so much for agreeing to do the discussions with me. I really learned a lot from the discussions we had, and I think you all made really interesting comments about school. I really enjoyed the sessions we did together, and want to say thank you for giving me your time.

Good luck with everything in the future,

Best Wishes,

Rachael Fox

Appendix F: Information on Alias Names of Participants, Citations of Research Material and Transcriptions

Alias Names of Participants

All names have been changed throughout the research, including those of young people, adults, schools, cities and education authorities.

	Young People	Adults
High School	Jonti	John
	Jimmy	Susan
	Cammy	Anne
	Mitchell	Jessica
	Richard	Emily
	Mark	
Special School	Steven	Jane
	James	Emma
	Andrew	Anna
	Ryan	Lynne
		David
		Helen
		Ian
		Patricia
		Sarah (Principal Teacher)
		Christine (Headteacher)
		Chris (Teacher involved in young people's sessions)
Youth Project	Raul	
	Craig	
	Mark	
	X (withdrew permission)	

Summary of Material Collected in each Setting

Local Authority Policy and Guidelines

The Youth Project and High School both operated within this authority, and the relevant department's name has been changed to 'Department for Children and Young People'.

Department for Children and Young People. (2004). *2004/05 Service Plan: 2004-2005 and Beyond*. A manifesto which sets out a clear vision for the development of the local authority area and Council service delivery, and describes how the Department for Children and Young People intends to provide integrated education, care and support services of the highest quality to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. (Review date: 2009).

Department for Children and Young People. (2003). *Positive Behaviour*. Leaflet providing information about the Positive Behaviour policy in Schools. (Review date: 2009).

Department for Children and Young People. (2002). *Standards and Quality report on Schools performance 2002/03*. Report on Schools performance 2002/03. (Review date: 2009)

High School

Fieldwork diary which included: subjective experience of a Classroom Assistant; observation of lessons; observation of staff meetings; notes made after recorded research

Textual Material

HMIE (2005). Full Report for High School. Report on the HMIE inspection for the High School. (19 pages).

High School Prospectus (2005). School brochure detailing ethos and focus of the school, structures and school rules, and performance results for 2001-2004. Begins like all school prospectuses in the local authority with a foreword from the Director of the Department for Children and Young People, which describes among other things the Scottish Executives National Priorities and the local authority's aims in relation to young people. What follows is then a message from the Headteacher, the aims of the school, and details about every aspect of the school, including: school rules and its expectations of pupils, parents and staff; learning support details; details of curriculum and assessment; and details of extra curricular activities (52 pages).

High School Staff Handbook (circa 2004). Section one of handbook contains 32 detailed policies of the school, which are reviewed periodically and are under the following headings: Curriculum; Learning and Teaching; Attainment; Support for Pupils; Ethos; Resources; and Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance. The Handbook states that policies are reviewed and revised regularly in consultation with "teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, a representative group of pupils and possibly members of the local community". Section 2 of the Handbook details the organisation of the school, including job descriptions and procedures for staff,

details of pupil life at the school and details of committees, meetings and support systems (Approx. 200 pages).

Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership and Management (SQH) (2004). A commentary written by one of Deputy Head Teachers for the course, of their experience managing staff during a period of change in the High School. The report, written by a Depute Headteacher, reflects upon the management team's introduction of several major changes to the school. One of the main aims in the school's changes was to shift to a 'whole school' approach to inclusion and pastoral responsibilities. Where previously responsibility lay with staff employed to solely be guidance or pupil support staff, the structural changes brought in meant that the ethos of the school became directed towards all staff working to include all young people, and that social issues as well as learning and teaching were the responsibility of all in the school. Structurally this has seen the school spreading responsibilities of guidance and pastoral support across the teaching staff, with particular roles for Depute Headteachers, Principal Teachers (the heads of subject departments), and the introduction of more involved Form Class Leaders supporting just twenty pupils. Another major change the report documents is the management staff's attempts to introduce greater communication between teachers, to introduce more critical reflection on teaching, and to develop opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills (16 pages).

Promoting Positive Behaviour (no date). Power point presentation written by a Deputy Head Teacher to facilitate a session on positive behaviour strategies with teachers. There are 32 slides describing seven sections: clarity of rules, directions and procedures; building a culture of praise and achievement; need to manage good behaviour; consistency in the application of consequences; stressing pupil responsibility and choice; involving parents at an early stage; and having a calm, professional and dispassionate approach.

Young People (6 people in total)

3 recorded sessions with 6 young people, roughly 1 hour each (Mark absent from Session 1)

Adults

5 recorded individual interviews, ranging in length from 1 hour-20 minutes

Special School

Fieldwork diary which included: subjective experience of a Classroom Assistant; observation of lessons; observation of staff meetings; notes made after recorded research

Young People (4 people in total)

3 recorded sessions with, 1-2 hours each (in Session 1 recording failed)

3 Pictures made in Session 1 (Ryan absent from session)

1 film made by young people from Session 2 (Ryan absent from session)

4 collages made during Session 3

3 brochures made by young people, equating to 13 pages of picture and written text, during Session 4 (Andrew absent from session).

Adults (11 people in total)

Individual interview carried out with Headteacher, Christine, approx 2 hours

Individual interview carried out with Principal Teacher, Sarah, approx 1 hour

Group Session 1

- 2 recorded small group discussions lasting approx 45 minutes (8 people present)
- Group 1: Sarah, Jane, Emma and Anna
- Group 2: Chris, Lynne Helen and David
- Session 1 Whole Group recording discussing together for approx 30 minutes

Group Session 2

10 people present (all except Christine). Recorded large group discussion for approx 2 hours.

Youth Project (4 young people in total)

Fieldwork diary made during one year of work with young people

Material collected, made by us as a group, prior to the six recorded sessions, which was compiled into 29 photographs, taken of raw material including: drawings; diagrams; cognitive maps; notes made on white board; stories written and a map we made of the town.

6 recorded sessions, approx 1-2 hours each

14 photographs taken of material made by us as a group during recorded sessions (as described above).

Description of Reference Formatting for Research Material

Local Authority Policy and Guidelines

Referred to as Department for Children and Young People, referenced as DCYP

High School

Referenced as HS

Textual Material

Referenced as for cited literature, with anonymity maintained

Young People

3 sessions are referenced as HS1; HS2; HS3

Adults

5 interviews are referenced using name of interviewee and HS, e.g. Anne, HS

Special School

Referenced as SS

Adults

SS Staff 1.1; SS Staff 1.2; SS

Staff 1 Whole Group

SS Staff 2

Two individual interviews referenced as Sarah, SS; Christine, SS

Young People

Four sessions referenced as SS1; SS2; SS3; SS4

Photographed material from sessions referenced using: description of material, name of young person, session number it was made in. For example: "Excerpt from James' High School Brochure; SS4"

Youth Project

Referenced as YP

6 recorded sessions referenced as YP1; YP2; YP3; YP4; YP5; YP6

Photographed material is referenced as follows: the nature of the material, the name of the young person, the recorded session number, or if from prior to recorded sessions, the date it was made. For example: "Drawing by Raul, YP2"

Transcribing Format

Transcriptions are typed with interrupted speech appearing at the point when the speaker interrupted, similar to play writing. Below for example the text from Jane appears at the point she speaks, when both speakers are talking at once:

S: I think it's more about trying to teach the kids isn't it, how to cope in that kind of

J: aye the kids how to cope

S: environment and how to approach the teacher and be assertive, in a nice way

J: yeah mm-hmm, that's right

(SS Staff 1.1)

Features

- , short pause
- ... longer pauses
- xxx untranscribeable, unable to hear conversation (sometimes to remove confidential info or a person who has not given permission)
- ? Voice rising in questioning style
- () sound, eg laughter, sighs or noises
- [] explanation of text
- X people who do not wish to be part of research